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FINNISH RESEARCH LIBRARY SCENE - COMPUTERS, COOPERATION, CONFLICTS

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the history of the library system in a small country. It gives an overview of introducing data processing for Finnish research libraries and puts its emphasis on experiences made in the Helsinki School of Economics Library. The author also presents some information concerning HELECON on CD-ROM.

Background information

Finland is a northern country with ca. 5 million inhabitants where one third of the area is within the Arctic Circle. It has a decentralized university system with their library resources being available also for general public, not just for members of their own academic community. The country is officially bilingual, the majority (93%) being Finnish speaking and the minority (6,5%) having Swedish as their mother tongue.

Normally after 12 years of elementary education students have a chance to apply to university. Their selection is based on an entrance examination as well as a national grading system received from the secondary schools. Highest level of library science education in Finnish language is available at Tampere university where the first Scandinavian professorship in library science was established in 1971. Swedish language Åbo university is another university giving library science applicants in recent years. It takes ca. 5 years to get a university degree in library science.

Library systems

National library collects the annual statistic for the most important research libraries. These statistics include since 1940's 20 academic libraries which have the main responsibility for the scientific information supply in the country, and 28 specialized libraries. Altogether in 1993 these 48 libraries had some 17,5 million items in their book stocks of which the university libraries had ca. 15 million volumes. The local lending of university libraries was around 4 million items and the acquisitions 333.000 monographs.

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The *national resource library network* was created in 1970's and today there are 10 research libraries specializing in the following: business and economics, statistics, technical studies, medicine, agriculture, forestry, sociology and social studies, communication, sports, education and humanistic subject areas. These centers have responsibilities to collect the material in their speciality as widely as possible, to give service as well as interlibrary loans to all interested persons within the country and also abroad, to function as information centres for both the input and the retrieval of the material in their subject areas. Unfortunately these obligations have not been followed by increasing amount of finances. Taking into consideration the fact that the national research libraries are all except two also academic libraries connected with universities the terminology concerning them is rather mixed. National research libraries while being university libraries are at the same time special libraries in their subject areas for the public service. In all cases the parent organizations are the ones who totally decide the funding of the libraries. Today the big question is to what extent the financing will continue also to outside users as the recession in the country cuts considerably the budgets of the universities. All the academic libraries are governmental, there are no private universities in Finland.

The *university libraries* on the whole form the backbone of the library services for academic research in Finland. They provide 85-90% of the services given to all those engaged in scientific research, not only at the universities but in the whole country.

There are seven *legal depository libraries* which get all the printed publications of the country. There is also a *national repository library* in Kuopio. It acts like a huge, automated storage for older materials and all the libraries have the right to send there their older monographs and serials. The library was established in 1989 with 3100 m² and now they need more space for their growing volumes. Their annual intake has been ca. 5000 m/year. All the material is available in an online catalog and their interlending and copy-service is still free of charge.

Some statistics

According to the national library statistics the costs for all research libraries were in 1992 divided into:

- acquisition 31%
- personnel 59%
- others 10%

Acquiring textbooks for students required ca. 24% of all book acquisition finances nationally. The acquisitions were divided further to

	Books	Serials
purchase	50 %	36 %
gifts/exhchange	25 %	41 %
depository copies	25 %	23 %

The personnel costs have steadily kept going up, and this expenditure is the most difficult one to be accepted by the university administration. All recent statements and recommendations require diminishing personnel in governmental jobs - until now by natural reasons like retirement - not by dismissing persons. The budgets as a whole have been regularly cut during the last 3-4 years and the situation seems to continue for the coming years. The new demand urged by the Ministry of Education is that libraries should start rationalizing more their functions and earning money with their services. In 1993 a statute was made informing which services can be free of charge and which ones not! In traditional libraries this has been a big source of worries and reorganizations. Debates about the functions of libraries and equality of services for all customers are eagerly discussed. The Ministry had made strong recommendations for uniting small service points in large university library systems to make them more effective. This phenomenon of centralizing services is also valid in special libraries which often are privately owned and have been forced to cut their staff and acquisitions.

Perhaps an unusual feature in Finnish research library system is the role of inter-library loans. Our country has always been in receiving end of the operation. In 1993 all of the interlibrary loans given the number sent abroad was only 5%. On the other hand of all those received 20% were from abroad. One explanation is evidently that the Finnish language belongs to the so called Finno-Ugrian group to which on the western side of Ural belong also Hungarian and Estonian. The language group is tiny and does not have any worldwide importance. This means that international communications to and from scientific study and research are necessary with foreign languages historically and grammatically quite different from our's. On the whole the use of interlibrary loans, information retrieval for a fee and copy services have diminished considerably in recent years. One reason undoubtedly is that universities lost their free postage right and interlibrary costs have to be covered by the customers.

Library automation

Finnish research libraries have been using automated systems for more than 20 years. The first library investigation for the national automation policy was com-

pleted in 1972. The basic idea was to create a common solution for all research/university libraries aiming at flexible and multiple use of records once produced within the system. One of the prerequisites was a strict standardization which all libraries should follow. Also a joint planning unit for all research libraries was established by the Ministry of Education.

In 1984 the Ministry commissioned a study of data processing, and a recommendation for library automation for Finnish research libraries was presented.

VTLS (Virginia tech library system) was selected to be the national system for all 20 research libraries. It would have been impossible to get all the universities and other academic institutions to choose, on a voluntary basis, one and the same library automation system and to install it according to a common time schedule. The Ministry, therefore, provided central financing for the acquisition of both the hardware and the software. Universities in this way received their library automation system free as an additional resource. The Ministry took responsibility for the group licence of the software, for the purchase of the computers (Hewlett Packard), as well as the peripherals needed for maintenance of the local systems and conversion of the existing databases into the data structure of VTLS. The universities are responsible for the recurrent costs caused by system support, the service of the hardware and the staff time.

VTLS installation started with the National Bibliography which went online in May 1990 and its database FENNICA was opened for outside users. Altogether the installation of VTLS took several years to be completed (1989-93). It is used for cataloging, lending, interlibrary loan, reservations and sometimes for acquisitions. Each library can select what modules of the system they want to use.

The final result of the activities and financing of the Ministry of Education using the VTLS in Linda. It is the recent online union catalog of research libraries, most important and largest co-operative activity within the country. It covers the acquisitions of the 20 participating libraries - for some all their book catalog, for others only recent years. It is a co-operative project where the cataloging information made by one library or the National bibliographic institute can be used by other libraries, lending, and interlibrary loans can be executed, reservations made etc.

However, some libraries like Helsinki School of Economics Library (HSE) had started their own automation projects much earlier. In late 60's and early 70's union catalogs of economic and business periodicals were produced by computer. Thereafter the emphasis of automation was placed on information retrieval, especially of periodical articles and research papers. In 1977 HSE had two databases

(SCIMP and SCANP) which were available online in all Scandinavian countries 2 years later via SCANNET network. Today the production has grown to 8 online databases with national and international materials and 2 CD-ROMs. A good overview of Scandinavian databases is given in *Nord guide 1994* published by Scannet. According to it there were ca. 700 databases publicly accessible, and the largest subject group was business and economics. Shares of different types of Scandinavian databases have changed only slightly in recent years.

As a whole Finnish libraries are eager producers of their own databases. In 1993 there were 170 national ones publicly online: reference, full-text and numeric, and over 18 000 online searches were made by research libraries in 1992. There are some strong centers today like HSE, Technical university library and National library which produce many online databases for public use via national and international networks.

Finnish universities network (FUNET) functions under the control of the Ministry of Education. Its purpose is to connect various university networks and to act as a data communication means also for researchers in enterprises. Commercial activity is forbidden, but many separate computers have their own X.25, so the connection to PTT Datapak is possible, and from there forward to international databanks. Via FUNET it is possible to take contacts to INTERNET which is the "hot" topic of today. There is a lot of discussion and experimenting with the huge data resources it is offering. Everybody is excited about it! Many library catalogs, content pages of periodicals, full text publications, etc. all over the world can be used quite easily free of charge - at least for the time being.

CD-ROMs

CD-ROMs are also a recent invention which library customers have started to use with great enthusiasm. In Finland there is a union catalog of all CD-ROMs acquired by research libraries. Altogether it includes 253 different titles in September 1994. The most frequently repeated are Finnish national bibliography, Books in print Plus, a CD-ROM encyclopaedia in Finnish language and HELECON. The last one is the economic and business information co-operative product of HSE with information from different libraries in Belgium, Germany, Scandinavia, other Western European countries, China and South America in ca. 30 languages.

HSE was the first producer of library CD-ROMs in Scandinavia (1989). Today some others are also producing them; in addition to those mentioned there are disks in subject areas like technique, and labor protection. HSE has its own CD-ROM production in the university's own computer center with the American soft-

ware "CD-Answer" by Dataware. The service is available also to outside customers. The local use of CD-ROMs has diminished the need of foreign online services to some extent, even if foreign bibliographic databanks are available more easily than ever before. The students have seldom earlier been able to use foreign online services free of charge, but the use of CD-ROMs is almost always without any payment in libraries. Most universities have networks of their own where CD-ROMs can be placed. The problem of putting them into networks is usually not technical but the discs themselves: some of them can be used simultaneously only in limited multi-user environments. Others have such high licensing fees for multi-user purposes that they do not "invite" subscriptions, on the contrary.

Some libraries have always been closely connected with their foreign counterparts. HSE has participated in e.g. Scandinavian co-operative projects since 1950's by exchanging article references on cards, later in providing online databases and CD-ROM products. Latest example is a HELECON Nordic CD-ROM where contents consist of different databases produced at the schools of economics libraries in Stockholm, Sweden, Bergen, Norway, Aarhus, Denmark, HSE and Swedish school of economics in Helsinki. The same principle applies to willingness to produce national references for international services like AGRIS, INIS, or NORDICOM. Personnel exchange is one lively form of cooperation also e.g. between HSE and Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague or INSEAD in France of Manchester Business School libraries.

Conclusions

As the research libraries in many cases are automated to a great extent the customers have to learn how to find what they need with different technological systems and gadgets. Fortunately many students are quick in understanding modern technology and the huge possibilities it offers. The goal of information producers is to have various computer systems so simple that all necessary advice is given on the screen. Unfortunately that time seems to be still far ahead. The use of computerized catalogs for books, online information retrieval for periodical articles and INTERNET usage is taught in many libraries to customers as a part of their regular user education courses.

Geopolitical, historical and linguistic background in a small country like Finland influences strongly the need and use of foreign literature. Presentday economic and political unification developments in Europe force people to become even more internationally oriented. On the other hand knowledge of foreign resources and the ease and availability of telecommunication connections open immense new possibilities. Various conflicts are there because of intense requirements for more

"productivity" with less financing than before. The business idea of earning money with library services is also new to many librarians. Automation helps in rationalizing activities but the technological development is very fast. How do we keep up with all the changes that is the big question for the library personnel.

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