

MEETING CHANGING STUDENT NEEDS IN A CHANGING ACADEMIC WORLD – A STRATEGY FOR COOPERATING WITH FACULTY

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***SUMMARY.** At the Bergen University Library changes has happened within the Library as well as in the environments. These changes force the Library to reconsider its role as part of the University. The changes have had an effect that is visible in the library building, in an information literacy course for students, and in the fact that the electronic/digital library is being implemented.*

The paper outlines a strategy for coping with the new situation, where libraries are even more relevant for students, and the need for a coordinated effort from both faculty and library is evident. In Bergen, the University Teaching Committee will make a policy statement about this cooperation. This is seen as a good strategy, as long as the Library has the resources to follow up this initiative.

My topic today is cooperating with faculty and university teaching staff in order to meet changing student needs.

Let me first say a few words about the University of Bergen and the Bergen University Library.

Bergen is a city on the western coast of Norway, with 220.000 inhabitants. The University of Bergen has 18.000 students and 2.500 staff. The University is funded by the government. The Bergen University Library is organised in 7 branches, roughly following the seven faculties. The Arts and Humanities Library serves 6.000 students and 400 staff, within subject areas such as languages, history, philosophy, arts, culture, archeology, and history of religion.

Changes has happened on different levels:

On ministry level we have been part of the European Bologna Process, which has led to a Quality Reform, as well a a reform in financing. At the same time, the University it self has been reorganizing. Different faculties also has experienced a radically different teaching situation, e.g at the faculty of Law, with a Master program being implemented, or the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, where we see a lot more of BA students writing papers. Within the library we have been building, and the Arts and Humanities Library are going from closed to open shelves.

So here we are. In this changing academic world, how do we cope ?

In the following, I will present some of the thoughts and plans and actual work that the Arts and Humanities Library in Bergen has employed during the last 2 – 3 years.

Our aim: To provide better library services for students.

Better, as in helping a growing number of students.

Better, as in being more tailored to student needs.

And of course we also still maintain a high level of quality in the service we provide for research fellows and other staff employed at the University.

I will tell you about three processes:

- 1) Building
- 2) Information Literacy
- 3) Electronic/Digital Library

I will take you through these three processes, and finally sum up our experiences in a strategy.

BUILDING

I could talk for hours about this...

Our University Library was built in 1961, at Haakon Sheteligs Plass 7, HS7, as a new central Library. The building was a gift from a rich sponsor, and it was built in the German tradition where scholarly libraries had closed stacks. However, in the 1970 – 1980 – 1990s the different branch libraries moved closer to their designated faculties, often as a result of the faculty itself moving or building, and in 2002 the library administration with the central acquisition and computer departments moved out, and the Arts and Humanities library was left alone in HS7.

At the same time, plans for changing the building was accepted by the University, and they even decided to pay for it over the U budget, and not wait for government funding ! The planning has taken 10 years, and the building and moving itself about 1,5 year. In this 1,5 year we have upheld our service in another building close by.

The service level has been reduced, but adequate in this 1,5 year, and will become extremely much better after august 2005 !!

The new building is planned for flexibility.

We see new student needs:

- Space for work, singly or in groups
- Facilities for writing
- Possibilities for accessing electronic documents
- Social space

We provide:

- Different workplaces, with or without computers, for groups or single places
- Computers
- Coffee shop.

INFORMATION LITERACY

Information Literacy is a skill that our students need in order to cope with the essay-writing, and we follow Carol Kulthaul (2003) and her definition which focuses on the process of information gathering. We have developed our own courses in information literacy, adapting a course from the University Library of Aalborg, Denmark, The course is made up of five parts from Aalborg on information literacy, and two parts that we have developed ourselves, on citation ethics and evaluation of sources. The different parts of the course can be put together in different ways, in order to fit the students and their needs, at their specific point in the essay-writing process.

These last two years we have offered our course in Information Literacy to several student groups at different levels of each study subject. We have found that our rate of success is largest when we have had the possibility to embed our course in a methods or essay-course that has been given by a department, when we have been able to discuss and cooperate with the departmental teacher, and when this teacher has actively promoted the Library course in his/her teaching. We define success as when many of the students participate in the course, give us positive feed-back, and the teacher also is pleased.

ELECTRONIC/DIGITAL LIBRARY

Also these last two years has seen a fast growing market in the electronic library-world, with several interesting databases, journals and reference works available for the Arts and Humanities. Bergen University Library has accepted the challenge to use the digital versions of research material, and have been able to gain some extra funding for this. We have for a long time had “subject pages” on the net where special resources for the different subjects have been displayed, and are now even more conscious of this aspect. This spring we visited all the departments, showing the staff all our special electronic resources for their subject. This was welcomed, and we have later had special courses for staff in particular resources, and also in EndNote. We are now implementing a software called MetaLib as our Library Portal, and hope that this portal will help in presenting the resources in an even easier accessible way for the students and staff.

STRATEGY

The underlying assumptions are these:

- The students need their library and all our resources – books, journals, electronic resources, and knowledge – more than ever.
- The library resources needs to be available, for the students to have a better learning environment
- Faculty and teaching staff are very busy, and will rarely cooperate with the library unless the library manages to demonstrate a profit for the faculty.

Our strategy, based on our own experiences as well as those of other university libraries, will focus on implementation from the top of the university hierarchy. We have, for decades, tried to tell individual faculty and university departments that we have resources for the students, and have only succeeded in a limited way to be accepted and included. Now, we see that we need to be a part of the teaching resources as never before. We have tried to show our resources, and faculty are happy and pleased and some are even willing to cooperate, but as the next term comes, we are back to scratch and seem to be forgotten.

The university Senate gave the University Library funding to develop learning resources. Some money has been used for furniture and computers, and some to develop the course in information literacy that I told you about. The next step is for the University teaching committee to decide that all departments need to cooperate with the library in order to provide the best learning environment for the students. The teaching committee has asked for a brief on how the Library can help. They will then instruct the rest of the University departments in how to cooperate with the library, and we are very ready for that. We expect that the strategies and plan that we receive from the departments will not be similar, but depending on local factors. We can handle that, and are planning how to raise the level of pedagogical competence within the library staff, not only among the subject specialist, but also among the librarians and auxiliary staff.

So at the same time we, at the Arts and Humanities Library, are planning our own strategy for cooperating with our faculty. We have a diverse group of subjects to provide resources for, and a large group of new students to meet. We will try to meet as many of the newest students as possible, within the first-term study-programs. In order to do this, as many as possible of the library staff needs to be involved in the teaching and information work. We feel, however, that the time invested in getting the new students into the library and into using the resources in an efficient way, will pay tenfold, both for students, in terms of having a better learning experience, and for the library.

Some web-pages for you to look at:

<http://www.uib.no/elin/php/phpnyhet2.php3?xmlfil=020305093142.xml> (in Norwegian)

<http://www.ub.uib.no/index-e.htm>

<http://www.ub.uib.no/e-ressurser/index-e.htm>

<http://www.ub.uib.no/fag/med-odont/index-e.htm>

KUHLTHAU, Carol C. 2003. *Seeking Meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services*. (2nd ed.). Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited.