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Follow-up evaluation of library and information services 2004

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PREFACE

University of Helsinki has set the goals for its activities in its strategic plan for the years 2004-2006. According to this strategy, the University aims at maintaining its position among the best research universities in Europe, and its libraries definitely have an important role in this ambitious task. The University libraries have envisioned the future scenarios in a strategy paper of their own entitled *University of Helsinki Libraries – your partner in shaping the future.*

In spring 2004 the University of Helsinki invited an international review team to assess the development of the libraries. The evaluation was a follow-up to the assessment of library and information services in 2000. In this earlier review the international assessment panel issued a comprehensive report about information and library services in the University of Helsinki and made several suggestions for the further development of the library system. It also recommended that a follow-up evaluation should be done during next few years.

The Library Committee made decision about the follow-up evaluation in late autumn 2003 and established a steering group to prepare and co-ordinate the review. The steering group was chaired by Vice Rector *Hannele Niemi.* Dean, Professor *Hannu Niemi*, Student of Chemistry *Päivi Lehtinen*, Library Director *Heli Myllys*, Librarian *Marja-Liisa Seppänen* and University Lecturer *Juhani Sipilä* were invited as members. Planning Officer *Aimo Virtanen* worked as an evaluation coordinator in co-operation with Planning Secretary *Ari Kotonen.*

The University of Helsinki invited as reviewers the following experts:

> *Hans Geleijnse*, Director of Library and IT Services & Chief Information Officer, Tilburg University, The Netherlands, Chairman of the Panel

> *Gunnar Sahlin,* Director of the National Library of Sweden

> *Sinikka Koskiala,* Director (retired) of Helsinki University of Technology Library

The evaluation in 2004 started with self-evaluations of librarians and library staff, deans, directors of independent institutes, researchers, teachers, and students. The Panel was provided with these reports as

well as with the strategy of the University and action plans concerning libraries and information technology at the University of Helsinki. The data and statistics concerning library activities, annual reports and other relevant information were delivered to the reviewers through the internet. The Panel visited the University of Helsinki on 17–18 May 2004. During the site visit they held discussions with the Rector and Vice Rectors, librarians, many researchers and students.

I have the pleasure of expressing my warm and sincerest thanks to the Panel for its highly competent work.

Hannele Niemi
Vice Rector, Professor
Head of the Evaluation Steering Group

Follow-up Evaluation of Library and Information Services 2004

Management Summary

In the year 2000 an International Assessment Panel made an evaluation of the services and the organisation of the libraries at the University of Helsinki and presented a number of recommendations for the future.

An international Review Panel has assessed the subsequent developments and is pleased to report that significant progress has been made since 2000, in particular with respect to access to electronic services, the clarification of the role of Helsinki University Library as Finland's National Library, the appointment of a Director of Information and Library Services Development, the creation of the Alexandria Learning Centre, the development of the Kumpula campus and the reduction of the number of libraries in the city centre.

The Review Panel has identified both challenges and opportunities for the near future.

The most important recommendations for the next years are the following:

- Further clarification of the tasks that are being performed by the National Library for the university and the development of a new relationship based on a service-level agreement.

- The need for further cooperation within the university library system on a significant number of new tasks, such as the development and support of the virtual university and the development of an institutional repository of electronic publications for open access.

- The need to increase the central funding of the Unit for Information and Library Service Development and confirmation of the position of its Director.

- A sustainable staff strategy is required. A set of scenarios should be developed in which the number and the level of staff are based on agreed future goals and tasks.

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Introduction

In 2000 an International Assessment Panel chaired by the late *Ian Mowat,* Librarian to the University of Edinburgh, made an evaluation of the services and the organisation of the libraries at the University of Helsinki.

The most important recommendations of this panel were the following:

- A clear distinction should be made between the tasks and responsibilities of the National Library of Finland with national missions and obligations and on the other hand the University of Helsinki library and information organisation that can act fully as a complete service organisation to all parts of the University.

- Clear distinction between funding for national activities and funding for the libraries of the University

- The appointment of a Director of Academic Information and Learning Resources with the responsibility to develop and implement a coherent information strategy for the University Helsinki and to co-ordinate all library activities in the libraries of the University of Helsinki

- Development of a clear policy on the management of electronic information

- A University-wide human resources strategy is required in view of the forthcoming retirement of staff and new library responsibilities in the future

- The introduction of quality work methods and performance measurement

- A more optimal centralisation of buildings in the city campus in order to reduce costs, notably space costs

- Re-examination of the balance between centralisation and decentralisation of library services

- The need to integrate professional instruction on the use of information technology and electronic information into the curriculum

- A retrospective conversion programme in order to improve access to valuable resources which are not yet recorded in HELKA

- A review of the impact of these recommendations within two to three years.

The goal of this review is to "assess the process of development within the library and information services at the University of Helsinki since the evaluation of 2000."

The University has requested the Review Panel to answer the following questions:

- How is the structure of Helsinki University Libraries compared with that of 2000?

- How is the division of labour organised between libraries, as well as with the centralised unit, compared with 2000?

- What is the situation concerning the funding of libraries, compared with 2000?

- How has the policy for human resources developed from 2000?

- How are the information services managed and how should leadership be organised on the various campuses?

First of all, the Review Panel will make an assessment on the progress made since 2000 and will address main topics that have been stressed in the previous report.

Subsequently, the Panel will give some comments on key issues for the future:

- The organisation and the structure of the libraries of the University of Helsinki: the role of the campus libraries, the National Library and the Unit of Information and Library Services Development

- Joint efforts and challenges for the future

- Staff policy

- Other issues: Information technology, Space, Acquisitions and Quality assessment

- Funding

General Assessment of the Developments since 2000

The overall impression of the Panel of the current status and developments of library and information services at the University of Helsinki is very positive. This judgement is based on an evaluation of the detailed, open and honest reports, self-assessments and statistics, the very useful and well prepared discussions with a number of key players and users, and the visits to some premises.

In general, students, teachers and researchers are satisfied with the library services and the support provided by library staff. In particular researchers emphasise the beneficial role of their campus libraries. Useful comments and suggestions for improvements were provided both by these users and by library staff.

The libraries of the University of Helsinki are part of a complex organisation with important differences. In science and technology, 'electronic only' is becoming the rule, while in the area of the humanities the acquisition of and access to printed material will have to be continued for a long period of time.

The overall assessment of the Review Panel is that significant progress at the University of Helsinki with respect to the organisation and services of the libraries has been made since the Mowat report in the year 2000. Progress has been achieved particularly in the following areas:

- The electronic services for the end-users have been enhanced. Campus-wide access is being provided to a large amount of journals, bibliographic and full-text databases, obviously based on good and efficient cooperation between the FinElib team in the National Library and the campus libraries of the university. This progress can also be regarded as a result of the good cooperation within the library organisation of the university. However, the growth of electronic services will be a continuous process in the coming years.

- The university has managed to clarify the role of 'Helsinki University Library'. A distinction is being made between the role of the 'National Library' and the University libraries that primarily serve the University. This is a significant improvement compared to the situation in 2000.

The Panel understands that for various reasons (collections, buildings, property, vicinity of the location) a total split would not be beneficial. However, further clarification of the lines and level of funding and clear arrangements with respect to the services the National Library should provide to the university are recommended.

- The Panel would like to stress that the appointment of a Director of Information and Library Services Development and the creation of a small central unit has been a very good step. It is extremely important to have someone in place who takes care of the interests of the university library system as a whole and has an overview on what is happening in the information environment and at the various campus libraries.

  In general, the campus librarians are very pleased with this coordination and with the joint projects that have been launched. Thanks to the cooperation between the libraries and the pro-active role of the Director, the university libraries can now speak with one voice in the discussions with the National Library and in the negotiations with the Rector about common services, library strategy, staff strategy and funding. This, in particular, is a great advantage of the creation of this new unit. However, the role of the unit and its mission are not without their problems.

- The Alexandria Learning Center provides new, advanced facilities for students, in particular the undergraduate students. The Panel was pleased with the activities that are being undertaken in the area of user instruction (information literacy training) and the rate of participation in these sessions. However, the physical, organisational and service connection between the Alexandria building and the Undergraduate Library could be improved.

- The Kumpula campus has been created and the number of libraries in the City Center has been reduced. The Library of Arts has now two bigger units instead of several small ones. The number of Terkko's branch libraries has decreased and operations have been centralised. However, this process of consolidation has to be continued.

The most important obstacles, problems or questions the Panel has identified are the following:

- A continuing tension concerning what should be done on a central level and what on a decentralised level in the campus libraries.

- The management of the important differences between the campus libraries.

- A solid funding model for the future.

- A coherent staff strategy in view of retirements, the pressure on the libraries to reduce costs and the need to have well-educated, pro-active staff to accomplish the important goals for the libraries in the future.

- The cost of space and the fact that the available space is partly underused. This problem will become worse when printed journal collections can be removed from the stacks because of the availability of electronic equivalents.

- The need to make a better use of the expensive information resources that have been licensed and the need to promote these resources more effectively.

- The functioning and support of central IT Services such as HELKA, Encompass, and SFX.

- Clear service agreements between the University of Helsinki Libraries and the National Library on these and other issues.

- The role of the independent research institutes and the way they should contribute financially to the libraries

The Panel will come back to a variety of requests from the students, such as their demand for more textbooks and for more study spaces in the Law Library.

In the next section the Panel will comment on these questions and will address key issues for the future.

The Structure and Organisation of the University Libraries

Most universities are decentralised with rather independent faculties. At the University of Helsinki the library organisation is also extremely decentralised. The situation at the University of Helsinki is even more complicated because the library system comprises two large entities: Helsinki University Library/National Library and the University of Helsinki libraries. Furthermore, for some years a third party – the Unit of Information and Library Services Development – has been playing an important role in the library infrastructure. The Review Panel will give its views on the current situation of the campus libraries, the National Library and the Unit for Information and Library Services Development.

The important role of the campus libraries

The University Helsinki is divided in four campus areas: City Centre, Kumpula, Meilahti and Viikki. The library service and the four campus libraries are currently organised in accordance with the subject fields of the campuses.

The campus libraries receive most of their resources from the faculties and have their own committees chaired by a professor (often one the deans). The respective library directors prepare the matters for discussion in the committees. Of course the deans have great power over the campus libraries in this decentralised organisation. With this structure inevitably comes a natural tension between the interests of "one's own library" and the more general view on the interests of the whole university library system that should be taken by the Library Committee, the Director of Information and Library Services Development and the Rector.

Obviously deans, professors, students and librarians are satisfied with the campus libraries and the campus library concept. In the hearings during the visit of the Panel and in the self-assessments, the concept of campus libraries was presented as a success story. The library system with the campus libraries seems to be working well and good progress has been made in all campus libraries.

The library directors generally seem to do a good job. They support each other, and during the last years the cooperation between them has increased. Of importance in this respect are the regular meetings arranged by the library directors.

Although the system with campus libraries is successful, some current issues and future problems can be identified:

- The first and the most import question is whether the University can manage the campus libraries in the future the same way as today. Efficient use of resources, rationalisation of work and interdisciplinary studies are being challenged in this system. Open communication and full cooperation of all participants are required to make this type of organisation work well in the rapidly changing information environment.

- The quality and the resources of the campus libraries are different. Terkko has built up a very good reputation, but it also seems to get more resources than the other campus libraries. The economic situation in each faculty indicates the extent to which it can dedicate its resources to the library.

   In most discussions the funding problem was addressed at the general level of funding for the library. It will also be important to monitor how much each faculty will spend on "its own library". In the next years the Library Committee should pay full attention to annual evaluations of the economic situation and carefully monitor discrepancies in the level of services provided by every campus library.

- The new generation of users, especially in the sciences, use electronic materials extensively. They don't need the library in the same way as before. They get their information from the Web and will not visit and use the physical library. Are they willing to spend money on the physical (local) library in the future? The libraries always have to compete for funding with strong representatives of education and research. They will regularly have to present data on the usage of printed and electronic resources and show their added value for the core activities of the University.

   Because the libraries will gradually become more ''invisible'' for many users, we can anticipate funding problems in the future. The Rector, the deans and the Library Committee must pay attention to this.

- The situation on the City Campus is completely different from that on the other campuses because the City Campus still has a number of locations with various departmental libraries with their own librarians, their own policies and rules, and strong

collections of printed materials. The departments seem to be keen on keeping their traditional facilities and services.

- It can be difficult to introduce changes in a system with separate campus libraries with great power. The local libraries will do very little to reduce their staff. Maintenance of all these separate local libraries will result in excessive overhead costs. The Panel stresses that more cooperation is needed in some library functions, for instance in the area of cataloguing. The campus libraries and some of the smaller departmental libraries presently catalogue their own material. The Panel emphasises the importance of following central recommendations for cataloguing and other activities. The Panel stresses that there are possibilities for rationalisation. It is possible that the National Library can play a role in this area.

- The 2000 Report points out the large number of small branch libraries. Since then, the number has been reduced and some of the smaller libraries have merged. However, the Review Panel would like to stress that this process should be continued with further integration of some smaller branch libraries. Especially on the City campus it is necessary – for economic reasons as well as to meet the need of sufficient staff competence in every library – to integrate departmental libraries.

The new role of the National Library

The ambitions for the National library are as high as they are for the University of Helsinki. The National Library of Finland has a key role in the development of libraries in Finland. Cooperation between the research libraries, including Helsinki University Library, and the National Library, is increasing. A good example of this rather unique development is the nationwide implementation of the Voyager system a few years ago and the development of the FinELib program.

According to law, the University of Helsinki Library is the National Library of Finland. In its role as a national library, it is a common resource for all university libraries, but in national cooperation the library is usually perceived as a part of the University of Helsinki.

This situation is going to change on 1 January 2006. The Helsinki University Library will become the "National Library of Finland". The National Library will still be a part of University of Helsinki, and the

expenses of the National Library will be a part of the budget of the university. Representatives of the University will participate in the annual negotiations between the Ministry of Education and the National Library about its mission, projects and resources. Funding for the National Library is being provided through the University of Helsinki. The National Library will become more independent, but there will be no total separation.

At the same time the mission and the duties for the National Library are going to be broader and will increasingly concern not only university libraries but also other various research libraries. The duties of the National Library will also include a role as coordinator of the public libraries.

The Review Panel is convinced that this is the right approach. However, it is not without complications and we will mention some points that could be taken under consideration in the following years.

- This separation is favourable for the National Library, which can play its national coordination role in the future in a better way. However, the National Library is not fully independent. The National Library is working for all Finnish libraries but it is also providing special services to the University of Helsinki. This role should be clarified even more. The budget that is being used to provide general services to all libraries and special services to the University of Helsinki should be clarified and specified. More transparency is needed at this point. Clear service-level agreements should be developed.

- The Director of Information and Library Services Development represents the university in the contacts between the National Library and the libraries of the University of Helsinki concerning FinELib, Voyager, cataloguing, etc. This is a good arrangement but not without its complications. The fact that the position of the Director of Information and Library services Development is temporary places the Director at a disadvantage in important negotiations, for the participants in them speak with an equal measure of authority. Furthermore, it will take a lot of time to coordinate all the opinions among the chief librarians and the library specialists so as to reach a consensus.

The Unit of Information and Library Services Development

The Assessment report of the year 2000 recommended that the University should appoint a Director of Academic Information and Learning Resources for coordination and development. The Review Panel is very pleased that this recommendation was followed. The role of the Director and the Information and Library Services Development Unit is to coordinate and build up a network between the campus libraries. The tasks of the Unit include the coordination and strategic development of library operations in following areas:

- financial surveys and monitoring
- processing and maintenance of electronic materials
- joint communication
- staff training
- development of cooperation

In addition to the regular meetings of the library directors organised by themselves, the Unit arranges meetings for librarians. The Unit is supervised by the Library Committee.

During the hearings of the Review Panel all participants stressed the importance of this new office. It "brings flowers" to the different campus libraries and to the users. It is not surprising that various parts of the University have expressed their satisfaction with what the Unit does for electronic resources. Without any doubt, strong capable coordination within the University of the different licenses for electronic journals and databases is needed to serve the users in an efficient and effective manner.

Even if everybody is satisfied with the new coordination unit, its position and tasks are not without problems.

The Director of Information and Library services Development is a member of the Rector's team and everybody is convinced that this is advantageous. As the Panel understands it, the relations between the new unit and the other parts of the central administration have progressed well.

The directors of the various campus libraries represent the faculties, while the Unit Director is responsible to the rector and the central administration. The coordinating role of the Unit Director and her position in the organisation are difficult. The Unit Director is independent of the faculty libraries but at the same time dependent

on their collaboration with her. The Director has to look after the interest of the whole library system, but has little real power. The power that is needed to perform this important coordinating role will only come with a clear definition and allocation of responsibilities and with a budget to achieve the goals set by the Rector and the Library Committee.

In this context the Library Committee has to play an important role. It is responsible for the whole library concept at the Helsinki University. At the same time all campus libraries have boards, which take local decisions. Representatives from different campuses are members of the central committee, but they simultaneously have their local obligations. This situation is not easy. Of course the duty of the Library Committee is to give support to the Unit and its plans for the whole library concept. It is necessary to discuss these matters in the Library Committee in order to increase awareness of the situation.

Given the increasing costs for licenses, the Review Panel believes that it is necessary to work with more centralised economic resources in the future. The joint tasks that will be discussed in the next paragraph give new and good grounds for strengthening the position of the Unit, particularly with respect to the funding of the activities.

The organisation of the libraries at the University of Helsinki is complicated. It also is a ponderous organisation with a lot of strategies and negotiations that take a long time. In this structure the Unit of Information and Library Services development play central roles. The Director has to lead the strategic discussion. Particularly the strategies and the evaluations on how well the campus libraries fulfil their duties according to the plans are crucial tasks for the Unit.

Future development of the organisational structure

The future development of the organisational structure needs to be assessed and reviewed regularly. It would be beneficial to study what is happening at other universities with a high profile and with similar problems and structures.

Joint Efforts for the Future

It will be an important challenge to find a good balance between the functioning of strong and well-equipped campus libraries and joint, and sometimes centralised, activities that are needed to serve the users in the electronic age.

In these circumstances it is not only important to identify common interests, but also to operationalise and fulfil the common goals.

The libraries of the University of Helsinki are committed to provide top-class services and to serve the prime goals of the University in a pro-active manner. To achieve these goals it is very important to find a good balance between what should be done at the campus level and what should be done jointly, in close cooperation with each other, with the Director of Information and Library Services Development playing a coordinating role.

The 2000 Assessment Report gave an overview of what was happening in the Information Environment. The trends that were mentioned in this overview are still valid, and most of them have now become a part of the reality of the library world.

Taking the current international developments into account, an emphasis on the following challenges can be observed at this moment. It must be stressed that these challenges and changes are occurring in a context of enormous financial pressure on most universities, and consequently on most libraries:

- The gradual changes in the educational process (E-learning, distance learning, new communication methods between students and teachers, collaborative learning, increasing migration of students due to the bachelor/master developments, internationalisation). These changes are requiring libraries to engage themselves in new activities, and they offer new challenges for any university library to show its added value.

  These global developments with respect to E-learning are completely in line with the strategy of the University of Helsinki to move towards a virtual university. The Panel understands that all departments will have to review their curriculum and will

have to discuss the role libraries can play in supporting the renovation of the educational process and in serving teachers and students in a new fashion. In this respect it is an important challenge to integrate the Digital Library with the Digital Learning Environment.

- The process of scholarly and scientific communication is in flux. An increasing number of authors are looking for ways to get out of the regime of traditional publishing dominated by commercial publishers who continuously strive for higher profits.

  The Open Access movement is a promising signal that researchers want to re-establish the control of the global research community over the publication and distribution of scientific and scholarly information and to put an end to continuous price increases.

- A third trend is the revival of the idea of new organisational structures within the university, bringing together the library and information services, IT services, multimedia centres, and educational technology units. New combinations are being developed either at an operational level or at a strategic level.

In view of the current situation of the libraries at the University of Helsinki the first two challenges require joint activities of the libraries. It is obvious that these are important and difficult tasks that cannot be fulfilled by separate campus libraries on their own. Cooperation is required to be successful.

The consequences of the third trend for the University of Helsinki are more difficult because of the local organisational structure. Further reflection on it is needed, especially on the future relationship between the library organisation, the Alexandria Learning Centre and the IT Department.

Based on the analysis of 2000, the new challenges of 2004, the current status of the libraries, the important dedicated roles of the campus libraries and the suggestions and remarks made by users during the hearings, the Panel would like to identify the following important joint tasks and efforts for the next few years:

- Continued cooperation with respect to the joint licensing of electronic information. This needs a clear central direction in order to be as effective and beneficial to as many users as possible.

- The need to make the information that is available accessible to as many users as possible, from anywhere, at anytime, and as easily as possible. New information technologies (library automation systems, university and library portals, Web-based services) offer tools to gradually realise this goal, but specific local adaptations and activities will still be needed.

- An important challenge is the integration of the digital library with the digital or electronic learning environment and to identify ways how the library could play an optimal supporting role in the development of the Virtual University.

- The creation of an institutional repository of the relevant electronic publications of researchers and students. The creation of such a repository will enhance the visibility of the research at the University and is a well-organised pre-requisite both for Open Access publishing and other forms of publication (including the traditional forms). Also digital learning content (including students' theses) could be part of such a repository.

- Co-operation between the campus libraries in the area of user training and user support. Agreement on standards and methods, exchange of experiences, promotion of best practices. In this respect it would be important to have information literacy training included into the new undergraduate curricula that are now being developed in the framework of the new degree structure. It would also be advantageous to include a virtual information literacy course in the digital learning offerings of the university.

It is important that all libraries agree on a joint strategy that addresses at least these five key issues. The development of this joint library strategy should be co-ordinated by the Director of Information and Library Services Development.

However, it should be stressed that user needs should be the most important driving force in the definition of new joint tasks. The commitment of user representatives and library committees will therefore be of the utmost importance.

Once a decision has been made on a new task, it will be necessary to define the project clearly with goals, milestones, a time schedule and with required personnel and financial resources. Of course, resources need to be in place before a new activity can be undertaken. These can

be new and added resources or resources generated by a redistribution of current resources.

At that point, the question is who should – under the coordination of the Director of Information and Library Services Development – carry out these projects. In some areas, such as the licensing of electronic information and the development of an institutional repository, it would be advisable to make a clear service agreement with the National Library. In some other activities, joint efforts and cooperation of library staff from various campuses – sometimes in cooperation with the Information Technology Department - would be advisable.

In all these areas specific and tailored activities in the campus libraries are needed, because these librarians work closely with the faculties. However, these activities should preferably be based on common tools and standards coordinated by the Development Unit.

For this reason the Review Panel recommends that the already applied model of joint task forces be elaborated. Task-oriented teams on these issues could be created so as to make optimal use of the expertise of many librarians throughout the library system. Instead of increasing the number of staff in the Development Unit, more staff from the campus libraries should take part in the joint task forces. The model of the network organisation could be applied.

The Review Panel recommends that at least 10%, but preferably 20% of the campus library staff work on joint services and contribute to these joint task forces.

More possible joint activities could be envisaged, but the issues mentioned above are keys for the next few years.

Staff issues

The 2000 Assessment Report stated that a University-wide human resources strategy for the Helsinki University Libraries was needed. A staff strategy document has indeed been produced and it takes some important aspects, including the working environment and additional staff training, into account.

The Panel would like to emphasise that there is still a long way to go to arrive at a sustainable staff strategy for the future. Several of these questions have been raised and discussed during the intervening years:

- the retirement of a large number of staff members in the next five to ten years

- the recruitment of new staff

- definition of staff skills and qualifications

- development of a new salary structure

- number of staff needed

A danger in planning for the future is that it will be done piecemeal over time. Instead, it is necessary to develop a set of potential scenarios that will lead to the defined goals of stated library service functions and levels.

The inevitable constraints include stagnant budgets and prospect that the retirements will not coincide with urgently needed new skills at any given point in time. In this respect it would be important to review the current library salary scales and to align them with the defined future qualification demands when the whole university salary system is totally revised.

A joint effort by the Information and Library Services Development Unit and the Libraries coordinated by the central Unit should define what tasks, skills and competencies are required in each library within the next 3 to 4 years. A comprehensive staff plan should be developed including

- the number and quality of staff that is really required to accomplish the agreed tasks in the various libraries

- the time frame to complete these changes

- a clear and regular staff assessment and evaluation program

- a training program for current staff focusing on capabilities in the E-learning and E-publishing area

- a mobility plan for staff focusing both on internal and external opportunities

- requirements for the recruitment of new staff with the necessary library, IT, and subject knowledge competencies

It may not be easy to reach an agreement on staff numbers among the libraries when some units may lose staff positions, but it is better to take this problem in hand in a pro-active and well-considered manner than to wait until external pressures could dictate abrupt and sometimes dysfunctional savings.

Fair assessments should be made on the number and level of staff that are required to accomplish the agreed goals and tasks. The Panel recommends an independent internal review, coordinated by the Development Unit, on this specific issue.

Other issues

The Panel would like to comment briefly on some other topics that are highly relevant for the development of the University libraries: information technology, space, acquisitions and quality assessment.

Information technology

An up-to-date IT infrastructure is of high importance for a university that would like to develop virtual services for its current and future users.

Decisions as to what hardware and software the library should provide and what should be made available at the Learning Centers on the various campuses have to be made in good cooperation.

The Panel would like to stress the need for a stronger cooperation with the University IT Department. Cooperation should be intensified in the face of increasing needs of libraries for major assembly and maintenance of equipment and networks. It is not feasible to think that libraries will have their own staff for these tasks.

The possibilities of IT to improve library processes and to make the library operations more cost effective have not yet been exhausted. An example is the possibility to introduce more self-service facilities in libraries. This would make it possible to reduce some of the routine jobs in the library, especially in areas with a high number of loans.

In the specific situation of the University of Helsinki there are currently two major players in IT developments that are relevant for the libraries: the IT Department and the National Library. The joint tasks that have been elaborated previously include important IT issues. They can be handled effectively only in a spirit of close cooperation.

It will be important to clarify roles and to monitor carefully – from an IT point of view – the development of the service level agreements that will be made with the National Library. Key services for users are dependent on the performance of HELKA, the Voyager system and the SFX system. In these areas a normal business-like customer/service provider relationship also has to be established.

Space

Everyone will agree that the rental costs of the university premises are extremely high. This fact puts a lot of pressure on all units, including libraries, to try to reduce the space they have to pay for.

The transition from print to digital materials will gradually decrease the need for collection space as well as for sending more of the little used material to the Repository Library in Kuopio. Unfortunately this space is often not easily convertible for other than library use.

The various libraries of the University of Helsinki seem to be in different situations regarding space. In some campus libraries more space is available than required, while in other libraries such as the Law Library users complain about the limited working space. The libraries that still should be moved or combined into other locations will have to make a very careful assessment on the space they will need in the next 10 to 20 years.

During the Panel discussions in May the students often expressed the need for more study places, also silent places. Though instruction at the University of Helsinki still relies largely on traditional methods requiring solitary study facilities, the trend towards problem based learning and other such methods which assume group work (such as collaborative learning) cannot be neglected. In the near future an increasing demand for group study facilities can be expected.

It would be advantageous if the user survey that the Development Unit is planning, would also take the student needs for study space in connection with the various libraries of the University of Helsinki into account.

Acquisitions

The increase in the amount and costs of digital material is of concern to everyone, yet there is no turning back.

The cooperative planning between the University libraries and the Development Unit and the centralised handling of matters pertaining to electronic materials is an excellent solution in the specific situation of the University of Helsinki. The Panel also emphasises the importance of centralised funding (from multiple sources) of the license fees.

The e-learning and virtual university material will apparently increase considerably in the coming years and will require attention as well. Obviously usage costs will have to be assumed by the Libraries as well.

Regarding the print materials acquired by the University Libraries the large percentage of gifts, exchanges and free materials is somewhat surprising. Hopefully the scientific relevance of this material is judged high in each case to warrant the handling and storage costs involved. The cost-benefit of the processing of these acquisitions should be continuously and carefully assessed.

During the Panel discussions in May the research staff expressed their concern about the selection of material to be purchased by the libraries. It was considered very important that the decisions to purchase would be made by the faculty and not by librarians alone. However, many libraries already have an acquisitions committee.

Finally the Panel would like to mention the problem of the availability of textbooks – in printed and electronic form – raised by the students. Theory and practice on this matter vary from country to country. The primary task for the future is to develop or make available more electronic material for the students, but definitely not more printed copies of textbooks. The Panel would like to stress that the students' demands should be carefully discussed in the Library Committees.

Quality assessment

Quality assessment is also a topic that has been discussed by the 2000 Panel and has been addressed in the evaluations.

The Review Panel would like to make the following remarks:

- It would be good to develop unified service level standards in the University libraries. A review of current procedures, such as the obligation that students have to return books to the branch library where they were borrowed and the old-fashioned mailing of reminders for late books by post, is recommended.

- Benchmarking studies could be carried out, either on campus level or at departmental level with other (domestic or foreign) libraries. It is advisable to focus these studies on specific issues where comparison is useful and feasible.

- A systematic performance measurement based on a selection of suitable measures must be made

- The promoting of best practices remains always an excellent way to improve quality and to stimulate each other.

Funding

The Mowat Assessment Report has elaborated extensively on the funding issue. The 2000 Panel expressed its concern about the balance between expenditure for staff and the expenditure for acquisitions, notably in some of the City Centre libraries.

The Review Panel agrees with the previous Panel on the preferred funding model that was elaborated in Chapter 6:

- Central funding for the central unit, central services, project funding and top-up funding for poor faculties with expensive information needs

- Faculty funding based on University-agreed minimums for basic library services and top-up funding by individual faculties for local requirements

The Panel understands that it is not very likely that the level of central funding of the libraries will increase in the next years. At the same time the funding of the FinElib programme by the Ministry probably will gradually cover less, while the prices of electronic resources will increase.

As a consequence, it will be necessary for the Rector to increase the funding of centralised services and decrease the funding of the faculty libraries.

The Panel believes that it would be advantageous for the libraries if more of the Rector's money would be provided for joint tasks from which the whole University would benefit. This would include funds for the licensing of electronic resources and the development of the other joint tasks, in particular those identified above. It could also serve very well to get things started.

The budget should be under the control of the Director of Information and Library Services Development, who should spend it in close cooperation with the directors of the various campus libraries. The Library Committee should provide general guidelines for the use of this money.

The library budget is under pressure. The question is whether there are ways to increase the central budget for library services. Four options could be considered:

- The National Library is partly funded by the University. In 2003, the University paid 2.8 million Euros and in 2004 3.5 million Euros for services rendered to the University, but it remains unclear what these services exactly are. This amount of money should definitely be specified.

  Because the National Library is a part of the University, it also gets other resources through the University. Therefore, the need for a clear separation or distinction of the budget of the National Library from the University budget should be stressed. A service agreement between the two 'entities' would be beneficial.

- With respect to the contribution of the independent institutes the Panel would like to express its support of the 'Guidelines for funding library and information services' that was approved by the Library Committee in 2003. The Panel recognises the problem of license agreements (both for Viikki and for Terkko) because some institutes and hospital staff are not included in the license agreements. It agrees that "the independent institutes should also participate in the costs for library services on all campus areas. The services form part of the basic University infrastructure. The proportions to be contributed by the present independent institutes need to be determined individually."

- The space costs for the university libraries are substantial: 27 % of the total library expenditure. The Panel would like to stress that these costs need to be reduced. In the city campus a reduction of the number of premises should always be an objective. Other campuses will gradually have too much space when the transition from printed journals to electronic journals is complete. A part of this library space could be dedicated to the creation of learning environments. In that case a part of the learning space should no longer be counted necessarily as "library space", which would make it possible to use these savings to enlarge the collection development budget.

- The question is also whether savings on staff can be made and used for collection development. It will be necessary for the libraries to define their tasks for the next 3–4 years and to assess the consequences of tasks that will be carried out jointly by the Development Unit and of those that will be done by the National Library. Because of these rationalisations and because of the move to electronic resources, the impact on the staff structure of the various departmental libraries will be substantial.

In view of the forthcoming retirements, fair assessments should be made of the tasks of the various libraries and of the number and level of staff that are required to accomplish the accepted goals and tasks. An independent internal review of this specific issue is recommended.

Staff planning should lead to management decisions on the number of staff and the staff structure in the future. This planning should be made along the same lines and structures in the various libraries in order to make it comparable, and it should be discussed with the departments and the Library Committee before approval by the Rector.

Recommendations

The Review Panel is very pleased with the developments of the libraries at the University of Helsinki and with the serious and active way the recommendations of the report of the 2000 Assessment Panel has been followed.

This report has made various comments and remarks on the present and future situation. The Panel would like to summarise only the most important recommendations for the next years:

1. The Panel is pleased with the efforts to distinguish between the tasks and responsibilities of the National Library and the University library organisation. A further clarification of the tasks that are being performed by the National Library for the University is needed. The relationship should be based on a service level agreement with appropriate funding.

2. In the next years important joint tasks for the libraries of Helsinki University can be identified. The Director of Information and Library Service Development should coordinate the development of a joint strategy to achieve common goals.

   The application of the model of joint task forces is recommended in order to make optimal use of the expertise of staff of the various campus libraries.

   This is one important reason why the position of Director of Information and Library Service Development should be made permanent.

3. The Panel recommends that the central funding of the Development Unit to perform joint tasks, including the licensing of electronic information, be increased.

4. A sustainable staff strategy for the future is still required. It is necessary to develop a set of scenarios in which the number and level of staff are based on agreed future goals and tasks. An independent internal review of this matter is recommended.