Libraries for all?

Visions, challenges and economic realities in Norwegian libraries.
Who we are:

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• Faculty of Journalism, Library and Information Science, LIS-studies
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Where we come from:

• Capital city of Norway
• The O in BOBCATSSS
• Only institution for bachelor and master in Library and information science in Norway.
Content and methods of our lecture

• Background
• Government reports – summary
• Statistics
• Public library leaders - Interviews
• Conclution
Background

**Reading skills among norwegian children**

Progress In Reading Literacy Study - **PIRLS**
Programme for International Student Assessment - **PISA**

**Results from 2006 tests:**

- Lowest of the Scandinavian countries
- Lowest among OECD - countries

Libraries important for strengthening the reading skills
Library reform 2014


Report No 24 (2008-2009) National strategy for digital conversion and providing access to Norway’s cultural heritage
Summary of the library reports:

• At least one public library in every municipality
• Library services are to be free of charge
• The academic libraries will not be opened for the general public
• Discusses transfer of some services from ALM - development to the National Library
• Discusses the possibility of removing the obligation of providing libraries in every county
• Promote voluntary consolidation of public libraries in to larger units
• Has been accused of vague formulations and lack of specific goals
• The ambitious digitalization program that aims to preserve our National heritage
The government’s intention with their library policy:
- Resilient libraries that can meet future challenges with new technologies and developments
- Promote democracy
- Promote cultural identity
- Preserve the cultural heritage for future generations
- The physical libraries as important meeting places
- The library as a place for lifelong learning
- Include all user groups
- User groups with special needs should have services specially made for them
- Libraries should give simple access to both services and digital content
2010 – The national year of reading

Existing reading initiatives

• Summer reading for children
• “Reader seeking book”
• Books in foreign languages
• “The book is coming”
• Libraries in prisons and hospitals
Government’s budget proposal for 2010
presented October 13, 2009

• 7 mill € for Libraries!
• But... almost half to The National Library
• 715 000 € for The national year of reading
• (only) 500 000 € for public libraries
• Public libraries are funded by the local governments
A presentation of our six chosen public libraries and their municipality
Enebakk

- Popl: 10 153 and rising
- 239 km² (Malta 316 km²)
- Close to Oslo
- Rural area
- Young population
- Low number of immigrants
- Not recently refurbished or renovated
Nordre Land

- Popl: 6,680 descending
- 995 km² (Hong Kong 1092 km²)
- Forest and rural area
- High number of +80
- Low number of immigrants
- Renovated and organised with the local employment agency in Feb, 2007
Vestre Toten

- Popl: 12 714 constant
- 249 km² (Malta 316 km²)
- Industrial and rural area
- High unemployment rate
- Low rate of immigrants
- Totally renovated and reopened in Jan 2008
- 20 000 books discarded
- "Opening the book" concept
Vadsø

- Popl: 6 076 constant
- 1 258 km² (Hong Kong 1092 km²)
- Rural and coastal area
- High unemployment rate
- High rate of +80
- In proximity to Russian border
- Near Sami region
- New library opened March 2003
Tromsø

- Popl: 66,513 and rising
- 2,524 km² (Luxembourg 2,586 km²)
- Rural, coastal and urban area
- Mainly young popl.
- New Library opened March 2005
- Voted the best Norwegian public library in 2009
Drammen

- Popl: 61,405 and rising heavily
- 137 km² (Liechtenstein 160 km²)
- Urban and industrial area
- High rate of immigrants
- New large library opened as part of renovating the hole community and the river banks
- Voted the second best Norwegian public library in 2009
The opening of Drammen public library
March 2007
## Statistics for 2008

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Visitors per inhab.</th>
<th>Loans per inhab.</th>
<th>Employees per 1000 inhab.</th>
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Interviews

1. Your thoughts on the government report (No.23) especially regarding “e-citizenship”?
   • Small libraries feel it does not concern them.
   • Large libraries are more or less fare ahead of this report and are creating guidelines for the next.
   • In educating new beginners a 1-on-1 approach is important.
   • To learn in their mother tongue is also important.

2. Your thoughts on the government’s resource implementation of the library report in the 2010 budget?
   • Disappointment – too much to National library and too little for the public libraries.
   • Have little or no benefit from the digitalization program.
   • Do not want to lose the ALM-developement
3. What will the report mean for your library in terms of financial investment?
   - Small libraries will go ahead as planned. Positive to the National year of reading.
   - Some use the report in their argumentation towards the local government for more funds.
   - Shows that the government wants other medias in addition to books in the libraries
   - The large libraries get all the funding they need for new projects and developments.

4. What will the report mean for your library as an arena for digital competence?
   - Confirm the library as an arena for increasing digital competence among the citizens

5. Which user groups in your library do you think need to improve their digital competence?
   - The senior citizens +60
   - The immigrants
   - People with little or no experience in using computers in their line of work.
6. Which measures has your library taken to reduce "the digital divide"?

- All are offering 1-on-1 learning for those who need it and ask for it (not always well advertised)
- Larger and modern libraries offer computer gaming for children and young adults (game-nights) X-box, Play station, Wii...
- Help for job-seeking
- Have PCs and internet connection available for all to use

7. In what way can libraries contribute to the reduction of illegal downloading?

- Give access to legal files, not yet many available
- To much for the local library, need guidelines from the central government
Conclusions

• The economic realities for the public libraries are determined by the priorities of local politicians. Not in government reports.

• A contrast between commitments and the small amounts allocated to public libraries

• The report means more for the large libraries.

• A discrepancy between economic realities and visions when it comes to actual amount.
In short:

Money Talks
Thank you for your attention!