Teaching Library Co-operation to Library Students

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1. There have been 30 million unique titles published since Gutenberg - how many libraries have anything more than 5% of these - I guess some have less than 1/2 %.
2. There are 50-100 thousand journals published currently - how many libraries subscribe to more than 10-15% - some will buy less than 1/2 %.
3. About 300 thousand books will be published world-wide in 1974 - how many libraries will buy more than 10-15% - some will buy less than 1/2%.

Given this situation it is like finding a needle in a haystack to pick the "right" materials that will be both useful and used. Since the needle is not frequently found, presidents, chancellors, provosts, deans, and librarians sometimes are confronted by students and faculty who demand a better acquisitions budget to try to relieve their frustrations.

(Resource sharing in libraries ed. Allen Kent)

1. My topic in this paper is teaching library co-operation to library students. The title could be read as a half statement implying that library co-operation is a good thing that ought to be taught to library students. Personally I do believe that library co-operation is of vital importance to improve the library's services, and consequently it becomes a matter of equal importance to include in the library education the teaching of the skills and attitudes necessary to reach the library's goal to provide a best possible service to its patrons. In a conference arranged in Pittsburgh in April 1973 a group of 175 people discussed how to accelerate the process of resource sharing in libraries.

This conference established the following points, which I find most useful in the way they sum up the rationals for library co-operation and thereby also the need for including this in the curriculum of library education:

1. It is impossible for libraries to be self-sufficient - nor has it ever been possible in modern times.
2. Aside from library materials required in connection with specific courses, it is seldom possible to predict precisely which materials will be useful, and for how
long. Despite this, some or much of the library budget, particularly in research libraries, is spent in stock for future needs; accordingly, substantial portions of library collections are seldom used.

3. There is no reason why all library materials of potential usefulness on a campus must be physically stored on that campus - if materials can be made available at the point of need when the requirement arises.

4. The mechanisms for resource sharing are reasonably well understood.

5. There are no reasonable alternatives to effective resource sharing.

6. Based on the state of the art of resource sharing, the time for acceleration of effort is "Now."

The recent years development has also come up with terms like "the self-renewing library" and "multitype library co-operation". These developments together with the relations to other professions in the information handling field, the impact of new technology and developments on the international scene will be the background for my discussion of the teaching of library co-operation to library students.

2. One of the more promising trends in library and information science work in recent years has been the growing awareness of the need to focus on the user.

User and use studies have given a new momentum to better library services, and this is also reflected in the library education. In this connection it seems appropriate to point to the fact that librarians are just one part of the total picture of information agents. Alongside us we find journalists, teachers and a number of new brands of "media specialists" - all occupied with the task of communicating knowledge, each in his own fashion. And as library co-operation grows, it is wise to keep in mind the necessity of co-operation also with other information handling agencies. Our relations to these other neighbouring professions should be seen as an important part of our libraries' co-operation and extension work. If we look at librarians and teachers for instance, we find that they are basically doing the same thing - communicating knowledge. They are more or less aiming at the same groups, but traditionally the methods of communication differ. If we see their work plotted along a continuum with teachers in one end and librarians in the other we will find that somewhere in the middle their work and methods tend to overlap. And we are aiming at the same goals more often than not. So, library co-operation should therefore also imply co-operating with other professionals with related tasks. And if we look at other bodies occupied with information, like postal services, telecommunications and broadcasting, and note how they are organized to run an effective national and international service, do we then get ideas or perhaps arguments for library co-operation to provide library customers with a better service?
3. The international scene of library and information work has seen a number of developments aiming at better library co-operation in the past five years. Within the UNESCO/IFLA programmes for UBC and UAP we have been provided with tools to cope with the more technical problems of library co-operation.

The main obstacles today are more to be found on the national and institutional level when it comes to the point of really getting interlending schemes, bibliographic control and other co-operative efforts to work. Very often the difference between formal and informal co-operation is illustrated by the difficulties in setting up resource sharing budgets devoted specifically to not buying materials but rather for developing the mechanisms for getting them from elsewhere. On this level there is not so much the question of teaching skills in co-operation, but rather one of teaching attitudes and beliefs. And in many instances this involves the persuasion of politicians more than the professional librarian.

4. By and large it seems justified to say that we have the necessary tools for library co-operation but that we in many instances lack the structure, legislation and organizational backing to do it in an efficient way, if at all. A new dimension has also been added to this by the introduction of computerized services. Whether one would look at library co-operation as a platform for library automation or vice versa, either way the possibilities of this new technology will be significant. The growth of international databases for bibliographic and fact retrieval indicates a trend of changes in the organization and retrieval of information. The possibilities this opens up for the future, needless to say, will have an enormous impact on the housekeeping routines in libraries and of course also on the teaching of various aspects of library and information science. I will not develop this any further in this presentation, but simply state that the aspect of new technology is of utmost importance when library co-operation is being considered.

5. From this follows that the profession of library and information science is in a state of transition - and that this has to be dealt with by educational institutions so we today can make tomorrows librarians and not those designed for the tasks of yesterday. In this process, quite apart from whatever subject content goes into the library school’s curriculum, there are always the problems related to the status of the profession and the attitudes of the same profession towards any education for change. On the whole it seems fair to say that librarians as professionals have not acquired the status they ought to have compared with other professions. In his book "Libraries and cultural change" Ronald Benge has made some observations on this when he says:

"At first sight it seems that status in this wider sense is mainly determined by the remuneration which society pays for services rendered. But further examination reveals that this is far too simple. What is the status of a stockbroker vis-a-vis a
docker, both of whom may be relatively well paid? Some people get high wages; others get a low salary. Clergymen and teachers have always been poor, but in an unlettered world their status was nevertheless secure; now this may not be so. In fact, this is another chicken-and-egg syndrome - which comes first, the pay or the recognition? In some societies even now people may be respected because they are not well paid, and the respect is their only reward. Yet sainthood is not a profession. This circumstance is mentioned because librarianship, like the teaching profession, is recognised as being of great importance until the time comes for the provision of money for it. Our real values are reflected by what we spend our money on. With regard to librarianship, or any other profession, there are naturally several levels of reality. First, what the world says about the profession; second, what the profession says (officially) about itself, third, what librarians think about each other and fourth, what they actually do. If these levels could be added together, the result might be the formulation of a status for the librarian - as distinct from a particular librarian in a particular place. But since this type of analysis is not an addition sum, we cannot arrive at a simple solution."

The profession and its status has also been affected by the new technology mentioned earlier. Since World War Two we have been witnessing a number of separatistic movements, usually linked up with some new technological development, that want to be recognized as something very special and consequently use a lot of their time to prove that they are doing a job totally different from what librarians do. I will return to this point which deals with unity of the profession later in my paper, but at this stage I will join in with Douglas Foskett when he says: "Nothing distinguishes an information scientist from a librarian - unless it be that a librarian lacks the ability to comprehend and transfer or circulate information, and I do not believe that this is the case."

6. In the introduction to this paper I mentioned the term "multitype library co-operation". This has been defined by Orin F. Nolting as:

"A means of mobilizing total library resources to meet the needs of the user without regard to the type of library involved and without classifying the user as a public, school, academic, or special library patron. The goal is to help all library users make more effective use of all library resources and services related to educational, work, and recreational needs. The primary responsibility of each type of library is respected, but no one library can economically satisfy all demands made upon it."

An approach like this will of course mean a much closer co-operation between different types of libraries, in a regional, national or even international network. What we are after is to build a synthesis of library user education for research, work, school, recreation and life-long learning, all the time focusing on the users of our services,
which again means that information retrieval ought to be taught in schools at all levels, and that the information specialist, the librarian, should have a place in the staff of most schools over a given size. Or to make it as a statement: Every school of a certain size should have a librarian on the staff. And if the library schools are to prepare future librarians for this as one vital requirement for co-operation, that would mean bringing into the curriculum aspects of education and psychology linked up with sociology and communication. And this is just what a number of library schools have been doing for quite some years.

7. I have already touched upon the fact that librarians often want library education to be like the one they got themselves, or rather, as close to the "real world" as possible. Now, if this were to be true also for the teaching of library co-operation I am afraid that not much would be found in the curriculum. This problem can be summed up in another statement saying: Any library school will have problems in teaching and motivating students for something that does not seem to exist in the real world of libraries. And when it really comes to promoting library co-operation through the various parts of the curriculum of library education, one will soon find that both for new students and for experienced librarians there are problems to be dealt with on the cognitive as well as the emotional level. Taking care of the knowledge, understanding and the conceptual framework on the cognitive level is normally far easier than being able to alter attitudes, values and beliefs that operate on the emotional level.

8. I have already mentioned what I call "the unity of the profession". Both for running effective library services and for the teaching of librarianship with an emphasis on library co-operation, the unity of the profession makes a better platform for future co-operation and resource sharing. The overriding problem in library co-operation is in getting people to work together productively. The writing on the wall seems to prophesise the death of the single collection, universal library, and the birth of the "self-renewing library" dependent on depository collections and library co-operation. So, if the librarians of today want their new colleagues of tomorrow to have their mind tuned to library co-operation they had better set a good example now. Or to say it in a more cryptical way: If your parents didn't have children there's a good chance that you won't have any either. I have seen my job in this paper as one of advocating library co-operation and its implications for library education. I am fully aware of a number of obstacles and limitations to such co-operation, but I do believe that we ought to start now. And that the teaching of library co-operation to library students should be a shared responsibility between the profession and the educational institutions, and with the providing of the "real life" examples of how this is working out. So, this leads up to my closing statement which underlines this shared responsibility in saying that: Every profession gets the education it deserves.
DISCUSSION

Mr. G.A. Hamel: Do you give your students some practical training in group cooperation?

Rugås: Yes, we do. We think this is very important. In our school an ever increasing part of the work is carried out in the form of group projects. This creates some problems - the students want to be evaluated on a group basis. The increase in group work is typical of other Colleges of Librarianship. We need help from the libraries in providing opportunities for practical projects for students. I know that this means extra work for you, but we really need help in providing practical work experience.

Mr. S. Westberg: It has often been said that people became librarians because they did not want to become teachers. Would you say that this is an attitude that is changing?

Rugås: I think that there is a change in attitude now. Library school students are more open-minded today and more like students in other disciplines.