

Charting the landscape of an innovation university library

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CHARTING THE LANDSCAPE OF AN INNOVATION UNIVERSITY LIBRARY WITHIN THE NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY STRATEGY

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Abstract

The digital age calls for strategies in issues regarding access, dissemination as well as preservation of information. The global digital environment offers new and exciting possibilities to share knowledge across boundaries. In terms of scientific information access to information is crucial for research and innovation. Indeed, universities and libraries have in recent years made considerable investments in providing access to online information.

The European Union has invited the member states to reinforce national strategies and structures for access to and preservation and dissemination of scientific information. Furthermore, the member states of the European Union should ensure the long term preservation of scientific information - including publications and data - and pay attention to scientific information in national information preservation strategies.

In this paper the recent strategic outlines regarding university libraries in Finland will be presented. The third national information society strategy, the strategy of the Council for Finnish University Libraries, and the forming of the innovation university are discussed.

Keywords: Finland, information society, university reform, university libraries

Background

Finland joined the European Union (EU) in 1995, the year of the first national information society strategy. There was great enthusiasm as the country had just pulled through a deep economic recession into a new prosperity driven by information and communication technology. Access to the Internet required broadband and computer equipment and strategic measures supported the upgrading of the infrastructure. Furthermore, extensive further education programs were initiated to familiarize people to the Internet. Libraries in general were very active in incorporating the electronic environment into their services.

The second information society strategy emphasized Finland as a human network, rather than technology. The strategy, launched in 1998, focused on the way of life, learning, and competitiveness. In retrospect many of its ambitious visions have not fully materialized. For instance, in spite of its acknowledged high quality, the educational system renewed itself quite slowly considering the potential. Furthermore, contrary to the expectations, the information society development did not curb migration to the regions of growth.

The third information society strategy, prepared during the 2003-2007 cabinet, aims to enhance competitiveness and productivity, social and regional equality as well as the well-being of the citizens through the use of information and communication technology.

In Finland, the current challenges of the information society include slow reaction to global changes, inability to renew structures and models of operation, and vulnerability of the information society infrastructure. The growing regional and social inequality, deficiencies in encouraging life-long learning as well as decrease in entrepreneurship are challenging the development. There are also acknowledged difficulties in combining family life with working life and concern about expatriation of decision making, production, ownership, and knowledge. [National Knowledge Society Strategy 2007]

A renewing, human-centric and competitive Finland. The National Knowledge Society Strategy 2007–2015

By 2015 Finland aims to be an internationally attractive, human-oriented and competitive competence and service society. In order to achieve this, areas of focus will be on skills and learning for individuals and organizations, transforming ideas into products and services, and renewing the innovation system.

In terms of information society strengths in Finland, libraries are recognized as places for citizens to utilize traditional library services, use the Internet for personal business purposes, and receive instruction in the use of electronic services. The strategy implementation plan, launched in March 2007, put forward in total 72 concrete proposals for action. [National Knowledge Society Strategy 2007]

From the libraries point of view the most significant are the following actions:

1. A national digital library focusing in the national heritage materials will be established and national digitization strategy will be formed, incorporating all memory organizations, libraries, museums, and archives. In this process the digitization unit of the National Library will receive appropriate support. An assessment to the long-term preservation of digital materials will be made to evaluate the possible organization, management, and finances of the preservation.
2. Citizen information service strategy and model for the infrastructure will be prepared. A centrally maintained citizen information portal will be developed. It will be a route to all libraries – including university libraries – other search services, as well as to public services. Public libraries are ensured sufficient equipment and further training for the staff. Services for cell phones in general and a national mobile library interface will be developed.
3. Institutional repositories and an open portal will be developed to enhance open access to research information.
4. The development of the national copyright system via operations models, licensing as well as legislative measures. The system must both respond to the needs of the information society as well as support the Finnish digital content production industry.

All the above mentioned actions concern foremost the National Library, but they will require an input from the university libraries, too. However, the changing environment of tertiary education calls for additional visions of the future. The Finnish university libraries, through their Council, have expressed their common outlook in their joint strategy.

Changes in the legislation and the role of the National Library

Some recent amendments in the legislation are quite significant in terms of defining the role of the National Library. After several years of preparation the Parliament of Finland has passed three laws, all of which affect the university libraries. In 2006 both the University Act and the Copyright Act were revised and the new Legal Deposit Act will come into operation January 1st, 2008.

The role of the National Library is defined in the University Act. Traditionally the National Library, among its other duties, has functioned as the service and development center for the

university libraries. In 2006 this duty was widened to include all other library sectors as well: polytechnic libraries, special libraries and public libraries. This has led to a new challenging situation where the university libraries cannot fully rely on the support of the National Library anymore. Therefore the university libraries have decided to take a more independent role within the Finnish library community with their own strategy.

The Copyright Act, which incorporates both the printed as well as digital material, was harmonized with the European Union legislation. In Finland the adoption of the EU law has been quite hard and fast. The strict interpretation of the new law has caused problems in interlibrary lending and article delivery in university libraries.

Finland is about to get a new Legal Deposit Act. It is the fourth one; since 1707 every century has had its own (1812, 1920 and 2008). The new act takes into account digital documents. The National Library is granted permission to harvest and keep the Finnish digital material from the Internet and it will be responsible for the long term preservation of the digital material. The Act also grants the National Library the permission to instruct how the electronic documents are to be delivered. Furthermore, the fact that the National Library wishes to couple this matter with institutional repositories with plans to establish one single national repository has caused worry and opposition in some university libraries.

University libraries, the core of research and learning infrastructure 2007-2012

The strategy of the university libraries, prepared by the Council for Finnish University Libraries coordinates and develops the co-operation within the university libraries network. The Council membership constitutes of the university libraries and the national library. The repository library participates as an expert in the Council meeting, where the university libraries are represented by their respective directors.

The Council was established in 1996 and its task is to advance the co-operation between university libraries, launch development projects, make statements, take initiatives, contracts out investigations, and nominate joint representatives to various institutions. The Council enhances the visibility of library activities and the efficiency of shared services as well as monitors change in the operational environment. The Council works in close co-operation with the focal stakeholders and other library sectors, nationally and internationally.

In its strategy 2007-2011 the Council for Finnish University Libraries identified three major challenge areas: the government demands, internationalization, and the rapid pace of development of information and communication technologies.

In universities, internationalization has been seen as the response to the impacts of globalization, which often is associated with competition. By contrast, internationalization is attached with co-operation. It has been defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global extension into the purpose, functions or delivery of tertiary education.

The Council will respond to the challenge of internationalization in working actively with scientific disciplines. The Council will follow closely the national and international developments concerning research infrastructure, open access, copyright issues, and preparation and application of legislative measures concerning libraries. The Council will deliver to the national decision makers the viewpoint of university libraries.

In terms of responding to the challenges of internationalization the individual university libraries have agreed to increase services offered in foreign languages, take care of cataloguing and indexing in a coherent high-quality manner in order to stay competitive and enable international co-operation in this field, develop information literacy issues for the benefit of the international students and researchers, define the role of the library in the publishing process as part of the scholarly communication cycle, and pay attention to copyright matters in their operations.

As a joint response to government demands regarding increased productivity, expansion of the area of activities, and university restructuring, the libraries will continue to discover and create services, which can be managed and outsourced in a centralized manner. Efficient exploitation

of information and communication technologies together with work-flows will be developed. Standardized core processes and defined basic levels for services will advance the network-based activity among university libraries. The university libraries will advance their network operations through standardizing their core processes and by defining the basic level for the services. They will also elaborate models to produce joint services for local consortia consisting of different actors. The libraries will specialize in their acquisitions e.g. to the strong areas of their respective universities and at the same time look after the nationwide collection coverage and easy accessibility for the users. The university libraries will respond to the expansion of tasks also by reallocating resources.

Regarding the overall development of information and communication technology the user-initiated service concept presupposes that university libraries will ensure in co-operation access to nationwide, compatible, and user-friendly web-based information resources. They will continue and expand the nationwide acquisition co-operation (acquisition consortia, maintenance, dissemination, management of authorizations, licenses etc.), promote the co-operative use of information resources, and work for the integration of library services into teaching, learning and research processes. Furthermore, the university libraries will continue to develop compatible ICT techniques and tools in co-operation with the national library, library sectors as well as other actors.

[Council for Finnish University Libraries 2006]

The innovation university

One of the focal areas of the third information society strategy 2007-2015 was the renewal of the innovation system. This included a radical proposal to merge three existing universities into a new *innovation university*.

Today the innovation university is one of the flagship projects in the extensive higher education reform currently being implemented by the Ministry of Education. According to its programme, the Government will increase the financial and administrative autonomy of universities. In this connection, university governance and decision-making will also be reformed.

In Finland, all government sectors had been a subject for a productivity program since 2003 and the structures of the tertiary education had been under scrutiny. The previous policy, executed for over 40 years, had been to establish a network of universities all across the country for the sake of regional equality and well-being. As a result, the country of 5.5 million inhabitants has 21 universities, many of them quite small. The Ministry of Education is responsible for all but one university (National Defense University) and the education sector has not been privatized.

Initially, the Ministry of Education set out to investigate a merger between the art universities. However, just one week after the investigation had been launched to survey the question of the art universities in 2005 the rector Yrjö Sotamaa of the University of Arts and Design came up with another proposal: a merger between the Helsinki University of Technology TKK, Helsinki School of Economics HSE, and the University of Arts and Design TaiK would give birth to "*a tri-campus innovation university which would have a unique profile even in international comparison*" [Sotamaa 2005]. Among the universities themselves this idea first matured into a plan to form a joint innovation institute. The government, however, wished to go a step further and hence the matter was included into the new government program in spring 2007. The most important incentive of the merge is of course financial, the innovation university expects to receive a substantial increase in its basic funding.

As illustrated in table 1, the Helsinki University of Technology is the largest of the three universities, with its 15 000 students. The planned innovation university will be the second largest university in Finland after the University of Helsinki (close to 40 000 students).

University	First established	Number of Students (2006)	Budget (2006)
TKK	1849	15 000	230 Mill eur
HSE	1911	4 500	39 Mill eur
TaiK	1871	1 900	35 Mill eur
Innovation university	2009	>20 000 ?	> 300 Mill eur ?

Table 1. The expected size of the innovation university. [The Innovation University 2007]

The planning of the innovation university started in the fall of 2007. A steering group, chaired by State Secretary at the Finnish Ministry of Education was set up to lead the project. The steering group will also give its opinion concerning the foundation charter of the innovation university based on a proposal of the preparation committee [Innovation University Project 2007].

The representatives of the three universities involved as well as the Ministry of Education formed the project group. It oversees the work of 15 theme based subcommittees (including a library subcommittee) that have the task to plan the structures and functions of the innovation university. However, the final decisions will be made by the trustees of the to-be-established foundation.

The formal government decisions about the innovation university were made in November 2007. Helsinki University of Technology, Helsinki School of Economics, and University of Arts and Design will together form a new, foundation-based innovation university. The government in conjunction with the industry will participate in forming the financial base of the foundation.

The university legislation will be renewed accordingly, and the innovation university is expected to start its first academic year in August 2009. The university staff will lose its current status as civil servants and enter a new contract-based employment. The decision making process within the universities themselves will follow the academic traditions of autonomy. [Innovation University 2007]

Overall, the rapid pace of the change has left the staff of the universities puzzled. This was clearly revealed in a survey that charted the potential of the new university among the staff and students of the three universities. There was substantial apprehension about the growing financial resources being funneled into swelling administrative bureaucracy. Skepticism about the merge has increased due to the lack of information. Especially the students of the University of Arts and Design have been suspicious. In general, the staff of all three universities seemed to have similar views about the new university and some 60 % of the staff respondents were quite positive in their views about the new university. The consultant responsible for the survey concluded that the most important challenge is to have the project spirit up. It is not only about administrative structures but the construction of the new university must start with the people and good ambiance must be generated among the people. [Fountain Park 2007]

The innovation university library

The three library directors began to meet regularly in the beginning of 2007 and later, during the fall 2007 monthly staff meetings were introduced. The idea has been to acquaint people and their work to the others, and through discussion find common ground for the merge. The basis for the planning has been the present coverage of the services. However, the assignment given to the libraries theme group also called for new perspectives and businesses for the library. That is why the group embraces its theme from the vision of creating a new knowledge and learning center for the innovation university.

So far, four themes have been selected for more detailed analysis: library systems, in-house information systems, publishing activities, and acquisition of electronic resources in order to define work-flows, calculate financial aspects, and identify development ideas. The planning will subsequently concentrate on the detailed planning of working processes and services.

Similar to their respective universities, the three university libraries differ in size, TKK being the largest component. Interestingly enough, the circulation activity is highest at the Helsinki School of Economics (table 2).

University Library	Library staff (2006)	Circulation (2006)	Budget (2006)
TKK	79	272 000	5.2 Mill eur
HSE	20	463 000	2 Mill eur
TaiK	17	98 000	1.2 Mill eur
Innovation university	>110 ?	>833 000 ?	> 8 Mill eur ?

Table 2. The expected size of the innovation university library. [Finnish Research Library Statistics Database]

There are some essential questions that make the planning difficult. At the time of writing, the formal organizational structure of the new innovation university library has not been decided. The question of the physical location of the university is also still open, and the library must be prepared to serve a tri-campus university. However, a common IT-infrastructure will probably be one of the first tasks to be implemented. Therefore the virtual innovation university library will be the likely candidate to demonstrate the innovative power of the merged libraries.

Conclusion

The way the 3rd national information society strategy will be implemented will be quite momentous for university libraries in Finland. In the worst scenario there is a whiff of the past, of planned economy principles where investment and development are determined according to a centralized plan. If the digital library sphere is governed by the National Library with strict rules and central commands and individual libraries are left limited choice only, it hardly will advance the creativity required in the globalized environment. Furthermore, the networked research environment does not necessarily call for centralized services that reside at organizations far away from the user. In service development it is more important that the services respond quickly and flexibly to the needs of the client, the market demand of the network economy. In this respect the strategy of the Council for Finnish University Libraries is focusing in the networked power of university libraries. They are all experts of their own clientele and can develop services in close co-operation with their patrons.

An innovation university that combines seamlessly the whole process from invention to commercial production in its research and curriculum is an exciting concept. Indeed, there are great expectations in the interdisciplinary nature and versatility of the innovation university.

The innovation university library will, along with other university libraries, participate in the actions set forth in the national information society strategy. It will also participate in the implementation of the university libraries strategy. But the innovation university library will also have its own unique profile, something that is more than just the sum of the factors. The vision is to build an agora for the whole of the innovation university: a world-class research library and information center that enhances the research, artistic, cultural, educational, and economic competitiveness of the university as well as supports life-long learning and further education.

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