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## Continuing professional development: trends and perspectives in a Nordic context

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# Continuing Professional Development: Trends and Perspectives in a Nordic Context

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## Abstract

*How might the development of the hybrid library and the change of tasks and roles of libraries influence on performance planning of the entire staff? And how do we maintain and update skills and competencies acquired maybe 25 years ago?*
*This are  key questions – not only to be addressed to library managers, but also to be considered carefully by those institutions responsible for continuing education and professional development of library staff.*
*What kind of training programmes will we have to develop to support the challenges of the staff in the hybrid library? The paper discusses these issues and gives a number of recommendations.*

> **"How will the hybrid library influence on performance planning of the entire staff? "**

## The Nordic Context

The hybrid library, as it is developing today, combines the physical library and the net-based. The physical research library means the classical library: the collections, the study place for students and researchers, where the staff is taking care of collection development and management, and serve the users with all kind of materials and reference and enquiry services. The physical public library covers a good mix of 'content' (printed end electronic materials, music, computer games, video, etc) and provides a broad selection of user oriented services. Public libraries play an increasing role in life-long learning, in stimulating cultural identity and democracy. The physical meeting place - the building and its 'content' is still important. A recent study[1] in Denmark shows that more than 50% of users in public libraries visit the library for other purposes than lending.

An increasing amount of efforts and resources in Danish libraries are, however, being spent on the provision of access to electronic resources and services. Today's challenges are *content management*, *creation of institutional repositories*, *copyright negotiations*, *licence agreements* and *digital rights management*. Qualified guesses from directors of Danish research libraries are, that 50-65 % of total staff resources goes into net-based activities. The trend is almost similar in many of the larger public libraries. Previous working tasks, such as lending routines are carried out as self-service, acquisition of new material is outsourced, etc.

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[1] Brugernes adfærd på folkebibliotekerne – Kommunernes Landsforenings trafiktælling 2004

Library staff is heavily involved in projects on _developing e-services_, _creation of subject portals and gateways_, and to _customise access_ to e-resources to the individual faculty, to the individual researcher and student or to other target groups.

But how does the electronic library materials influence on library loans and usage? Library statistics from Danish research libraries from 2003 shows that 62% of library loans were 'down-loans' (print -outs of e-journal articles) and it is estimated that the use of electronic resources in _Denmark's Electronic Research Library_ (DEFF)[2] will increase by 25% per year during the next couple of years.

Research libraries are close connected to their mother educational institutions. In the Nordic countries, universities are facing a lot of challenges: the population of students are changing (from elite to mass education), knowledge production in new forms (i.e. Open Archives); the demands for life long learning; globalisation. These changes impact the role of libraries to be an active player in knowledge production. Libraries have to create interfaces to the global knowledge system, tailored to the individual educational institution - the task is to import and create knowledge, to make knowledge available and provide information sources for the individual.

How might the development of the hybrid library and the change of tasks and roles of libraries influence on performance planning of the entire staff?

This is a key question – not only to be addressed to library managers, but also to be considered by those institutions responsible for continuing education and professional development of library staff.

What kind of training programmes will we have to develop to support the challenges of the staff?

> " **What are the emerging roles of libraries and librarians and what education & training needs emerge from those new roles?"**

Core skills of librarians are still relevant – if not more relevant – in electronic information provision. These core skills include _information handling_, _training and facilitating, evaluation_ and _customer service_. Core skills as _cataloguing, classification (knowledge organisation), information retrieval, reference work_ and _user education_ are fully applicable in an electronic context and all have a place in facilitating the effective use of the Internet changing information environment.

It is expected that library staff are capable in offering high quality services to the users, who are visiting the physical library.

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[2] http://www.deflink.dk/eng/default.asp

Likewise, it is expected that they have the sufficient knowledge and skills needed for developing and maintaining electronic services and for making available relevant services and facilities demanded by the web-user. Collection development and maintenance is as important as previous, but in this context, new and revised strategies for e-resources acquisition have to be set up in the individual library, matching the user's needs and expectations.
Libraries have to join consortia and other "buying clubs" and skills in contract negations is emerging.

Emerging skills in the electronic information environment are *communication, negotiation and collaboration.* Collaboration on 'Ask a Librarian' virtual reference services, such as the Danish '*Biblioteksvagten*'[3] (a consortium with participation from 44 public libraries and 13 academic libraries working in turns) have demonstrated that ability to *co-operate virtually* across institutions and the ability of *accumulate experiences and knowledge sharing* are important personal skills.

*Marketing, branding and communication skills* are important additional competencies amongst library staff in the physical library. Serving remote library users calls, however, for additional competencies in using suitable techniques for meeting the user in the electronic environment, such as *direct marketing, chat, communication via SMS* and *weblogs, writing to the Web and Webdesign.*

In order to meet the needs and expectations from the remote library user, *knowledge of measuring and evaluation of the use of electronic services* (usability tests) is important.
Do we know who the users really are? – Do we know, what they expect and whether they are satisfied with the services provided from the library or not?

Buying access to electronic library materials is very expensive, but mandatory. Journals, directories, textbooks, newspapers, music, sheet music and other materials are being digitised and made available in e-formats. A key issue in collection management for libraries is therefore to monitor, if the budget for e-resources is spent cost-effectively. *Use statistics* and *performance management for electronic journals* are some of the highly relevant issues library staff is facing right now.

It is a challenge to the staff to match particular needs and demands of different user groups and to library management staff to ensure that the competencies and skills in the organisation are able to match the needs of the user – wherever he might be located.

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[3] http://www.biblioteksvagten.dk/english/index.asp

## Development of knowledge, skills and attitudes – 3 competencies of equal importance

Competencies are in this context defined as the combined theoretical knowledge and practical experience that makes the individual able and willing to take the right decisions in the daily working environment. This definition is important, because it emphasises, that competencies are not equal to professional formal qualifications only. The figure below shows a general model of the interrelation between human resources and behaviour – and explains why continuing professional development and training is important for the further development of organisations.
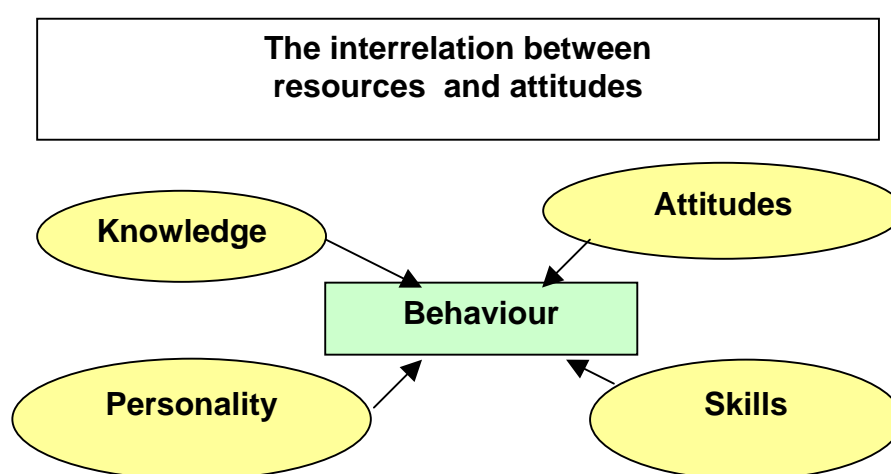
## Continuing Professional development in a Danish context

The Royal School of Library and Information Science (RLIS) states in its performance contract with the Ministry of Culture 2003-2006, that we aim to consolidate the school in its position as the most import institution for continuing education and training within LIS and related areas relevant for library development. Further the contract says that (a part of) our training courses should underpin the aim of strategic library development as expressed in the Danish Library Act from 2000, which has a paragraph on national strategies for development of new competencies in public libraries.

On annual basis, we offer a selection of app. 200 different training courses and seminars for all kind of library staff in addition to formal continuing education, such as our Master Programme in Library and Information Science. Each semester, some 30-40 new course titles are introduced - often developed on suggestions from libraries. Topics from training courses

published in our course catalogues are used as basis for tailoring courses, seminars, workshops or talks for individual libraries, organisations or interest groups.

The Department of Continuing Education and Consultancy invite all the academic staff from RLIS (app.70 full time staff) to participate in our activities. Further specialists from practice with special subject knowledge and freelance consultants are involved in the training.

In order to stimulate new skills and competencies, RLIS offer a selection of opportunities:

*New knowledge:* RLIS offer a Master of Library Science Programme as a postgraduate programme for those with a degree in LIS or an equivalent background. It leads to the award of the qualification of MLISc. This programme is taught in English. It comprises 4 modules and one special subject module. Each module is of one semester's duration, corresponding to 30 ECTS. The 4 modules are:

- Information seeking and information retrieval theories
- Knowledge organisation
- Knowledge management
- Dissertation, which can include cultural mediation, children's culture and library management.

RLIS offers in addition a part-time Master Programme for librarians, with at least 2 years of practical working experience.

Our Master programme has been very successful for librarians, who wants to have formal continuing education in LIS.
RLIS is, of course, not the only Danish provider of continuing education of relevance for library staff. Master Programmes offered by Danish universities such as Master of Public Management, Master of Public Administration and Master of Public Policy, have attracted quite a few librarians.

During the last couple of years, the majority of Danish public library directors have updated their formal qualifications in professional management. Since public administration is getting still more complicated, a large scale programme was set up to offer a Diploma Degree in library management with financial support from the state.

Training courses are in RLIS developed in order to cover the following needs:
1. New practical skills (qualifications and personal skills)
2. Updating practical skills (qualifications and personal skills)
3. New inspiration

4. "Hot topics" – orientation on ongoing policy and legal issues

5. Development of the organisation
   - the individual staff member
   - the team / the unit
   - the management level
   - the entire organisation

The current development needs of the hybrid library as mentioned above are supported by the 3 first categories of training courses.

Governmental policy issues often generate 'Hot topics' by changes in laws and regulations. For instance, when the Danish minister of Culture's proposes that all public libraries should install net filters to protect children from pornography. Or when the government decides a radical change of the local authority structure (a decline from some 270 municipalities to 98 from 2007). This kind of change in local governance means that libraries have to merge and set up new structures for IT, management and work processes. In RLIS we aim to pick up and influence that kind of library issues - typically in seminars and conferences. Library organisations such as the Danish Library Association and The Danish Research Library Association will of course offer conferences on 'hot topics' of relevance for their members - but with more emphasis on the political and practical perspective.

During the last couple of years an increasing number of training courses deals with organisational behaviour. RLIS organises practical training, seminars and workshops focusing on the organisation development have been one of the most demanded themes. Typical themes are: scenario planning, establishment of common values, cooperation issues, conflict handling, motivation, coaching, stress management, team building, and senior staff.
On the further development of the individual staff members, popular themes are: self, management, efficient work planning, how to get new ideas.

**New recruitments: Competencies: Knowledge – skills and attitudes**

On new recruitments, library directors want staff with a deep (and broad) theoretical educational background, combined with strong personal and social competencies.
What does these demands indicate and how will they influence on existing staff and recruiting policy?

A recent study amongst 53 US library directors of academic libraries provides us with an interesting profile for recruitment of new staff for the libraries at the entrance to the 21<sup>st</sup>. century (Bridges, 2003). When expressing wishes to educational background it is interesting to note that they are demanding a solid broad education – not a specific one. Personal skills

and attitudes as expressed in the figure below were considered more important than
professional qualifications.

| Knowledge | Skills | Attitudes |
|---|---|---|
| • A solid broad education<br>• Knowledge of technology<br>• "Ability to tell the difference between new technology and necessary technology" | • Customer service skills<br>• Teaching skills<br>• Creativity<br>• Ability to market library services<br>• Interpersonal ability<br>• Drive to learn<br>• Communication skills<br>• Ability to think<br>• Conceptually | • Intellectual curiosity<br>• Risk taking<br>• Sense of humour<br>• Optimism & enthusiasm<br>• Flexibility<br>• Confidence<br>• Empathy<br>• Patience<br>• Assertiveness<br>• Tolerance for change |

Similar recruitment profiles are demanded from the Danish library directors and the new
profile of their future staff will focus on personal skills, such as *ability to advice, to structure,
to communicate, to teach and to market library services.*

Since library managers are not in the position to replace all the existing staff with new staff,
we have to ensure training and development that underpin the profile of a librarian of today,
and focus on personal skills and attitudes in addition to updating professional skills and
competencies.

The distinction between *knowledge, skills and attitudes* could be illustrated by an example
from a workshop organised by the IFLA Section on Continuing Professional Development
and Workplace Learning (CPDWL) held in Buenos Aires august 2004 on skills for
*Information Literacy Instruction*. The participants in this workshops identified at least 35
different skills and techniques, which they considered relevant for the library staff involved in
information literacy training (no priority order). It might seem overwhelming for those
librarians, who are going to teach next week to meet all these suggested competencies.
In the following I have tried to use the 3 categories to classify all the suggestions from the
workshop – by this exercise it became obvious to me what needs formal continuing education
actions and what new skills and attitudes can be acquired by training courses and in-house
training.

The needs for knowledge as a backbone for information literacy training expressed in the
workshop show that librarians in this context are working on new ground and want
competencies in topics, which are traditionally a part of school teachers curricula.

*Knowledg*e included foundations in areas such as: Philosophy of teaching;

Information literacy concepts; Teaching styles and learning styles; Learner-centred teaching; Principles (Active Learning, Case study methods, Collaborative learning, Peer critique and feedback, Problem-based learning); Evaluation (formative and summative methods).
(*New competencies by participation in formal continuing education, such as Master Programmes in Learning and Teaching*)

*Skills* *included practical areas such as:* Planning the instruction (Goals and objectives - Lesson plan and outlines); Presentation skills; Asking and answering questions; Managing the time; Discussion management; Starting the session- Handling questions. Tools: Handouts – Presentation software – Web pages – Learning management systems, etc.) Evaluation: Evaluating your teaching, Assessing student learning, Evaluating a program.
(*New competencies by participation in courses*, *professional interest groups, learning-by-doing)*

*Personal Skills and Social Competencies* are a combination of skills, which can easily be obtained by training courses, and skills and attitudes that are more linked to individual personality. These include: Potential partners (getting in contact – agree on collaboration); Connecting with students; Voice and body language; Creating a learning environment; Resolving difficult situations.
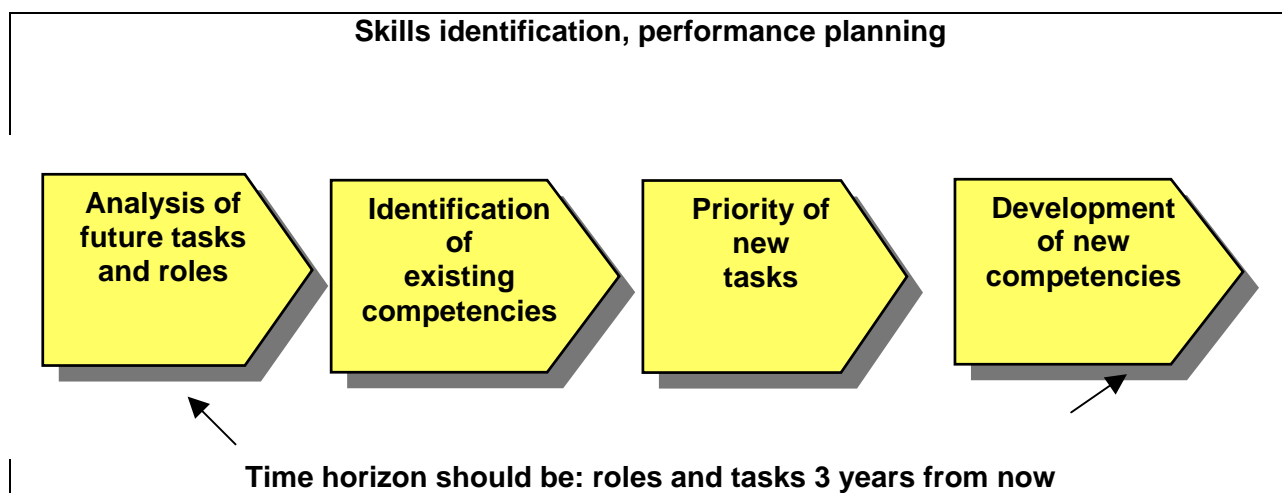(*New competencies by participation in courses*, *professional interest groups, learning-by doing)*:

In RLIS we have covered a good part of the above mentions themes. A semester in our MLIS programme deals with the theoretical foundation for teaching information literacy, which today is also included in the RLIS' B.Sc. curriculum assuming that teaching and instruction skills will be a natural parts of the librarian's job.
Training courses in themes mentioned under skills have been set up and taught with the assistance from external teachers with pedagogical background, actors, journalists, etc.

## Development of new skills and competencies in local institutions

There are still some important aspects to ponder. How to maintain competencies that have been acquired maybe long time ago?  In many Danish libraries, staff has been employed for more than 25 years and the average age is +50.  And how do we add new competencies at the speed demanded by the user's preferences and behaviour?

Library managers have to be forward looking and concentrate actively on competence development. It is not enough to dispatch the staff to yet another continuing education course or a conference.  In order to make a successful staff performance planning, it is necessary to start with an analysis of future tasks and roles of the research library and go through the four steps outlined in the figure below.

| Skills identification, performance planning | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Analysis of future tasks and roles** | **Identification of existing competencies** | **Priority of new tasks** | **Development of new competencies** |
| Time horizon should be: roles and tasks 3 years from now | | | |

In Danish libraries a varity of different methods are used for continuing professional development and training. We have no research looking into which methods provides the most efficient results for training library staff in the Nordic countries, so therefore my lists suggested methods below are not in priority order or exclusive.

The outcome of participation in formal continuing education is of course quite simple to measure – a new degree.

The outcome of training courses, conferences and seminars might be very high for the individual[4]. For the entire organisation, however, it depends on the procedures for follow up /knowledge sharing – and many library directors still have a job to do in this area. Training courses organised locally for the entire staff or a department, shows to have a measurable impact and stimulate new activities and change of attitudes.

## Suggested external activities for continuing professional development

- Participation in projects across institutions/ across sectors
- Participation in professional networks /interest groups
- Participation in formal continuing education programmes
- Participation in external training courses
- Participation in conferences and seminars
- Study visits
- Job exchange
- Establishment of new formal partnerships

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[4] Methods for measuring the effects (outcome) of training new skills and competences (including the 'personal and social skills') exist, but are not frequently used in Danish libraries

**Suggested in-house activities for continuing professional development**

- In-house training / instruction by colleagues
- Knowledge exchange with colleagues
- Action learning / learning by doing
- Job rotation
- Reading
- Testing new products / services
- Mentoring programmes
- Supervision
- Benchmarking
- Trial and errors
- Good management

**Resources needed**

When planning for new skills and competencies it is necessary to take into account that sufficient resources should be made available in the institution. Participation in formal continuing education programmes, training courses and professional conferences requires separate budget allocations. Participation in external networks for knowledge exchange and conducting projects with colleagues from other libraries and across sectors seems to be very valuable for developing new competencies. Well-known in-house initiatives as listed above will also be usual for achieving new skills.

In the IFLA Section 'Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning' (CPDWL) there is an ongoing work on developing a set of recommended guidelines for continuing education. In this context we have been discussing the difficult issue:

*"What is the minimum of resources needed for continuing education?"*

It is probably not possible to give an ultimate answer to this question. I have asked a sample of Danish research library directors on their average resource allocation for continuing education and training. On this basis, I recommend the following figures: 10% of staff's working hours as a minimum for training and professional development (external + internal activities).
In terms of budget, 25 -30 % of the total budget should as a minimum be allocated for the development of new services.
When considering the validity of this estimation, it is important to keep in mind, that the figures are reflecting the state of development of the Danish libraries – with decades of library automation experience, a well functioning national coordination strategy and strong state

support for library development  - and not least library staff in all kind of libraries with a professional LIS education and continuing education programmes of a very high standard.


## Suggestions for further reading

Ashcroft, Linda: Developing competencies, critical analysis and personal transferable skills in future information professionals. In: Library Review, 2004 (53) no.2, pp. 82-88

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Brine, Allan: Continuing professional development: a guide to information professionals. Chandos Publishing, 2005.

Farmer, Jane and Fiona Campbell: Identifying the transferable skills of information professionals through mentoring. In: Education for information. 1998 (16) pp. 95-106.

Haglund, Lotta: Mentoring as tool for staff development. In: Health Information and Libraries Journal. 2004 (21) pp.61-65.

Smith, Ian: Continuing professional development and workplace learning: human resource development – the return on the investment. In: Library Management. 2004, (25) no.4, pp. 232-34

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