

THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NORWAY

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Keywords: Academic libraries, Norway, education, research

The library at Telemark University College is at present engaged in a project with the libraries of 4 institutions in Kyrgyzstan: BAFE, Manas University, KEU and Issyk-Kul State University. This is our 2nd visit to Kyrgyzstan and we are looking forward to our meeting with the library directors tomorrow.

A little about Telemark University College (TUC), Norway.

- 6500 students
- 4 Faculties
- 4 campuses
- 650 staff – 60% academic faculty
- State funded – no tuition
- 5th largest of 23 university colleges
- 31 bachelor degree programmes
- 10 master degree programmes
- 3 PhD programmes
- Negotiations on fusion with the University of Agder

The role of the library

The topic for this conference “Interaction and development” could quite easily be used to describe the relationship between the academic library and its parent institution. The academic library plays an important role in supporting the aims and goals of its parent institution in teaching, research and the dissemination of knowledge.

In fact, in Norway, a good library is one of the criteria for the accreditation of bachelor, master and PhD studies by NOKUT, the controlling authority for educational activity at all Norwegian higher education institutions.

Studies in economics and business administration can be found at many universities and colleges in Norway, including TUC. The main institutions dedicated to these studies are the Norwegian School of Economics, Bergen and BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo. The Norwegian Business School has a particularly fine library.

Education

The quality reform in higher education in Norway in 2001 has led to the implementation of the Bologna process, with a new grade system and a strong focus on the quality of the learning environment. The focus has been moved from teaching to learning. New teaching methods are used including group work and problem-based learning. These methods activate the students.

According to the Norwegian Qualifications Framework [1], one of the skills of bachelor students is that they “can find, evaluate and refer to information and scholarly subject matter and present it in a manner that sheds light on the problem.”

The library as a learning arena:

- Provides relevant book and journal collections for its users
- The electronic library – access to e-books and e-journals 24/7 both on and off campus
- Flexible library facilities with attractive study areas for both quiet work and for group activities, group rooms, modern equipment, easy access to print and electronic resources both within the physical library and off campus
- Information literacy – teaching and guiding students in how to find information: search strategies, searching techniques and the evaluation of sources
- Academic honesty – correct citing and referencing, avoiding plagiarism, and the use of the reference management program EndNote.

Cooperation with the teaching and academic staff is essential if the library is to play its full role in improving student performance. Here I quote Lykke Friis, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Copenhagen, Denmark:

There are walls around the library but they are about to disappear, and they must too, because what the library can deliver is in the heart of our studies. Libraries don't function if there are too many walls around.

The library can contribute to improving the quality of student assignments. Searching techniques and reference management are areas where libraries have great expertise. Students who have these competences have a greater chance of completing their studies. [Translated from Danish] [2].

Research

The library also plays an important role in supporting the academic staff and researchers.

- Providing access to relevant scientific journal databases on their desktops and off campus
- Guidance on the use of databases and the reference management systems, e.g. EndNote
- Guidance on where to publish (approved journals and publishers)
- Creating and maintaining institutional repositories, e.g. TEORA: Telemark Open Research Archive – a repository of the scientific publications the staff of TUC
- Registering the scientific publications of the institutions in the Scientific Index of CRISTin: Documentation of scientific publishing in Norway

Future roles and challenges

- Open access publishing
- Supporting and financing publishing in open access journals
- Managing in-house open access journals
- Storage and retrieval of research data
- Example: The Norwegian Business School Library has initiated a pilot project BIRD: BI Repository of Research Data

Library cooperation

National and international library networks are essential for document delivery and the development of services. In Norway we have a joint library system for all universities, colleges and research institutions called BIBSYS.

One of the functions of CRISTin – (Current Research Information System In Norway) is to negotiate licensing and consortium agreements for access to electronic resources on behalf of all scientific libraries in Norway.

At a political level, the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions has its own library committee.

The National Library is responsible for planning and development of all library activities. It is also a national depository and lending library. It is in the process of digitalizing the entire Norwegian collection.

Conclusion

Academic libraries play an important part in education and research in Norway both as a physical room for work and study and as a virtual space with access to vast amounts of information. They also play an active role in student learning and in research support. They are flexible and willing to take on new roles and activities in order to further the goals of their parent institutions.

Thank you for your attention.

Literature:

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