Scandinavian information policy and financing models

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I have been asked to outline Scandinavian models for financing under the sub-theme State strategies and subsidisation as part of the topic Structure and financing of electronic information supply in the future .

I have suggested that the information policy dimension should be part of my presentation, because I take the liberty to assume that in an outline of Scandinavian financing models, you would expect to hear about a high level public service, financed by public money deriving from the toughest pressure of taxation in the world. At least my experience tells me that outside the Nordic countries the word Scandinavia is associated with welfare societies with a very open information policy and a democracy that has traditionally been strongly influenced by the grassroots level. Another important point is the fact that the Nordic countries have small populations and we actually have 8 different languages, Swedish being the biggest with 9 mil. speaking it, while Denmark is the second biggest with only 5 mil. inhabitants. My point here is that the market for items like books, electronic information and other intellectual products is very small. That leads to state subsidies as part of Scandinavian national cultural and information policies. However, there are also quite a number of significant differences between the Scandinavian countries, which it would not really be possible to go into within the limited frames of this paper. So what I propose to do, is to describe Denmark s policy, supplemented with sporadic references to other Nordic countries. The central questions are: What kind of information product do we get? How do we spend the money? And how do we structure and organise the information under such circumstances?

I should say I represent the Danish National Library Authority (DNLA), which is a government agency (and has very little to do with the Royal Library, our national library). DNLA is relevant in this context as we are responsible for our union catalogue, which in its public version is called bibliotek.dk and in which you can search and order material from every library in the country.
Likewise DNLA is responsible for Denmark s Electronic Research Library, which is defined as a project running for five years at the moment in its final year.

General principles for Information Policy

Denmark has no comprehensive formal, written and approved information policy. We have some basic political goals and a political practice based on these goals. The principles were originally formulated in 1993 by DNLA, inspired by the work initiated in UNESCO. In a number of reports prepared on the initiative of different governments, these principles have been further developed, for instance in *Info-society 2000* (1995) and *Information on time* (1997). These reports have formed the basis for various legislation, for example a library act in 2000, which makes internet services and equality of media obligatory in all public libraries. In terms of financing I should add that all use of library materials and basic help is free of charge for everybody. While at the same time libraries may offer special services at a charge. In an extremely short version the principles are:

1. It is up to the public authorities to make sure that every citizen can gain knowledge of and access to all major parts of published information.
2. The state must provide ensure an efficient public infrastructure for information mediation. The public libraries and the public research libraries form the backbone of the infrastructure.
3. The public authorities must ensure the registration etc. of publicly available information so that the users can find out which information is available, where it is and how one gains access to it.
4. The state must ensure the collection and preservation of the most important parts of any information published in Denmark.
5. Via their libraries the public authorities must guarantee the users access to internationally available, published information.
6. The state must ensure that information published in Denmark is accessible from abroad and must encourage international exchange of information.
7. Every citizen must in future be guaranteed sufficient training in how to exploit the information available. Such training should be part of everyone s education from primary school to postgraduate level.

These basic political statements are still valid and express reasonably well what we are aiming at. In one sentence: the state has a vital role - and the basic responsibility - in developing informed citizens.

But it has to be said that since they were formulated nearly ten years ago, we have witnessed the internet revolution and a shift of paradigm in the library- and information world. In practice that means that we do a lot of things that we did not do in 1993. So although the political principles are valid, their practical consequences, the means of information, have changed radically.

The Danish hybrid library model

The shift of paradigm indicates that the library concept today is that of the hybrid library. We define this as a physical place that gives access to a collection of printed and other physical materials, that also gives access to a growing number of e-resources and supports the users with advice and instruction.

A deal of thought has been devoted to the task a growing number of e-services . Our vision is the same as everywhere else: we will give e-access to information born in a digital way and we will gradually digitise more material and at the end of that very long tunnel will be the fast and ultimate access to the total human record from any computer or whatever tool you will at that time be working with. Interesting to discuss are the steps towards that particular light, the strategy and the ways of financing the tremendous outlay.

The backbone of the Danish hybrid library was established ten years ago, the DanBib database which contains all records in university, academic and public libraries - approximately 7 mil. records. That was due to a far-sighted decision made by my predecessor as national librarian. It was not too popular in the larger university libraries, but it works. The database was and still is created and hosted by The Danish Library Centre, ltd which also produces the national bibliography due to an agreement with the state (DNLA). The Danish Library Centre is run entirely as a private company. It is quite effective, the products are of high quality and consequently rather expensive. The shareholders are for 90% of the shares the Danish State and the Danish municipalities, for 10% Gyldendal, the biggest Danish publishing house who has decided that no dividends should be paid. So we are talking in terms of a kind of non-profit limited company. DanBib is financed by a licensing model (4,5 mil $) where all municipalities and the state pay an annual sum.

In 2000 a modified version of DanBib under the name bibliotek.dk (library.dk) and with a user friendly interface was introduced to the general public. It has a search and ordering facility and there are three search levels. You can search on subject, words, titles, authors, media, and year of publication. You can from your home PC order what you want to borrow and you can collect the item from whatever library suits you best. From some libraries it is possible to request a delivery of the ordered material - at a special charge. We try to improve the search facilities all the time and the strategy for development is to extend the services. Again the ultimate vision is access from the catalogue to a huge number of full texts. The latest service is a facility whereby you from bibliotek.dk can choose to buy the books you are looking for, instead of borrowing them. There are plenty of net-services on the bibliotek.dk site, such as an instant ask-a-librarian service, and a subject guide to the Internet, Danish Authors Net etc. They are all the result of librarians work and demonstrate a new professional role for them, that of information producer.

Three different kinds of access to e-resources

Four years ago we defined three levels of access to internet-based resources. You all know them: 1)free access for everybody, 2) licensed access for registered users, in practice researchers and students at universities, 3) pay per view access or other kinds of paid for access. What is the situation right now in relation to these models?

Material that you can access free of charge

Looking at the free access: there is access to a small number of texts. We aim at digitising our classical cultural heritage including the literary part step by step, but due to the copyright situation we are talking only of the parts that have been released. We have a number of more or less spectacular digitisation projects, a state policy that demands of all public institutions that all the publications they publish should be available online, so the mass of texts in Danish is growing, but it is still a drop in the ocean compared with the classical library.

We try to compensate for that situation by providing good guidance to quality web-resources. For instance we run a number of subject gateways, some of them are improving the resources also by digitising, one example is a Music-gateway where you will find the oldest Danish music journal fully digitised back to 1920.

Libraries should prepare for the 7x24 society and develop access and support of high quality and we work on that perspective. But to achieve it we need a more substantial critical mass of full text classified as public service. In my view it is a real problem that commercial players in the field at least in smaller countries don t want to invest in electronic access to commercial products. This means that the e-book trade is trailing behind what you might characterise as its technological potential.

Public service and the Internet

Like we do in practice have an information policy, we also have as part of it a public service policy in the broadcasting area, where the principles are quite parallel to many other European countries. It is based on three distinctive characteristics. First of all there is the particular cultural political and social role and obligation, which require independence, universality and diversity. Likewise there is a special obligation to devote time to the national culture and Danishness . Public service occupies a privileged position and must therefore cater for everyone in the choice of programmes. Finally there is public steering, financial framework control and special controlling agencies combined with political independence.

An ongoing discussion in Denmark is concerned with whether we should work more consciously for a public service on the Internet. It might be financed in the same way as the broadcasting service, by a general fee or license for all who bought a connection to the Internet . What we need is a more systematic approach to establish access to facilities like dictionaries, encyclopaedia and other general information tools, and a more offensive strategy for internet-based programmes and info from public institutions. This need for a public service attitude within the area is due to the fact that publishers are very reluctant to offer services on the net, particularly in view of the bad experiences in Norway and Sweden on charged access to the national encyclopaedia, where the loss amounts to several mil. $.

Licensed material

The second area: licensed material is organised more or less in the same way as everywhere else seen from the point of view of the end-user. Each university library - or any other research institution - buys access for a number of registered users to licenses covering a number of journals. In this context the interesting point is how we organise the handling of licenses, the negotiation, user statistics etc.

As far as the Nordic countries are concerned, we may talk in terms of a national strategy. Where in larger countries license-handling is mainly done by self-organised consortia, we tend to have a national strategy and a national institution which handles the licences. In Sweden and Finland a department in the national library has been entrusted with that role, while in Denmark DNLA is the licensee and secretariat for DEF. Norway the richest country in the world - is for some reasons lagging somewhat behind in this area.

In Denmark the government in 1997 decided to grant 27 mil. Euro towards a project called Denmark s Electronic Research Library. The general purpose of this project is to accelerate the paradigmatic change of libraries towards electronic services and networking. The project is based on four pillars:
General infrastructure, library infrastructure, content and users. Each of these action lines consists of a number of programmes. In the context of this paper, the content pillar is the most relevant part.

The politically supported goal in the basic vision was to establish a critical mass of e-resources, that would be sufficient to attract a constantly growing number of users. High priority was already in the first year of the project given to establishing a policy for licenses to full text databases and for retroconversion of catalogues. Next steps were the creation of subject gateways or portals which include e-published material such as dissertations and e-zines and a policy and practice for digitising printed material.

As far as the retroconversion is concerned the task will be completed this year, when 2.5 mil catalogue cards will have been converted. Following an invitation for tenders, the retroconversion has subsequently been carried out partly by some of the big libraries, partly by private companies.

For access to licensed full text databases, encyclopaedia and other relevant databases, the policy is quite pragmatic: any library can choose any license it wants on its own, but you can also try to get national support and suggest a license to the License Board, consisting of representatives from various types of libraries. This board meets ten times a year, it follows

the market and the use of the licenses and decides which licenses should be supported by central funding.

At the moment some 8,000 journals are supported centrally, often via a model where the DNLA pays a share of the price and invites libraries to join at a favourable price. The model works particularly in favour of small libraries that would not be able to establish a contract on their own.

Naturally we generally follow and also contribute to the ongoing development of international principles for the handling of these resources, such as ICOLC, LIBER, EBLIDA. The use is improving, but a lot still needs to be done in the marketing area. The final breakthrough is still to come.

In the way of the subject portals we have so far within the project Denmark s Electronic Research Library created seven. They are created with financial support from DNLA by networking subject-related libraries. A typical example is bizigate, a gateway to business information. It contains some 3,000 e-resources on about 15 topics such as statistical information, strategy, leadership, markets, products etc. It is created by librarians in four libraries and the estimated use of resources is 10,000 hours. The gate has been open almost a year, so the time has come to evaluate the service among for instance students at business schools. User statistics for the last six months show that there are approximately 1,000 daily hits, a little less than 300 page views per day, 70 daily visitors staying 7 minutes on the site. The question is whether they actually got the information they were looking for. However, for the time being I am convinced that subject portals not broad general ones - but specific target group-oriented portals lead to the most efficient use of research information. The other portals concern music, art, food, traffic, clinical information and energy.

As to digitisation of printed material, it has been quite easy to establish general overall criteria for this process. First priority has been given to the retroconversion of catalogues and important bibliographies. Second priority to journals, where we are hesitating a little, due to the fact that the much praised JSTOR-model is tremendously expensive for a small market like the Danish one. We have started digitising some journals in full, but I recommend that we find a digitising-on-demand -model for the majority of our national journals. We must also

try to establish business models with private companies and learned societies as well as the state in order to provide the access in the first place for researchers and other professional users.
Third priority is at the moment given to what will in the future be a critical issue as regards the use of digital libraries: digitisation of much used books and other texts and images.
In this last priority we focus on Danish material, or Danish/Nordic material in other languages, such as co-Nordic journals in English. We select material which we presume to be of broad interest, that is we give the highest priority to material that can be expected to be of interest to different target groups and suitable for various purposes.

We have approximately 1 mil. Euro in the project for digitising purposes (not including retroconversion of catalogues and bibliographies). Consequently we can only present examples of digitisation of printed material in this category. Let me give you a couple: We digitise the largest and latest encyclopaedia on Danish artists. Having been financed mainly by public money, the rightholders have been willing to share the rights with the public. An example of older material that is not protected by copyright is *Illustrated News*, a Danish weekly appearing from 1859 to 1924, rich on xylographic and later photographic illustrations mainly of locations, persons and events. This weekly is very much used by researchers, journalists, editors, teachers and the general public so a digitised version would self-evidently be twice as valuable, since by digitising we improve the access and the use, and we protect the few very worn copies that we hold in our libraries. Obviously we will select this kind of material before material with a more narrow scope and obviously what we digitise within these frames will be free accessible public domain material.

Pay per view-access

My general impression is that pay per view-access has not been a success anywhere in the information sector. In Denmark a few services have been introduced, for instance a service where you can access recently written articles and essays on a variety of topics. You will find these articles for instance by searching bibliotek.dk by subject and you pay by giving the number of your credit card. The price is 3 dollars per article which you can then access three times within 24 hours.

From a national information policy point of view, you should have the possibility to access by pay per view for instance the journals that you find in Denmark s Electronic Research Library, if you are not a registered user. In most cases the university libraries will offer you access as a walk-in user, but if you live in the countryside that is not an adequate offer. Some of the publishers do offer pay per view-service, but I think that with prices of up to 7 Euro per article it is no wonder that it is not very popular. It might be interesting to see if a kind of micropayment could work better.

Financing

Nearly all European countries have a general overall policy stating that the Internet should be exploited for value-adding and easier access to more information for more people. Likewise we want a policy for national content, as we take for granted that the Internet has and will continue to have a tremendous impact on our cultural behaviour, working habits and methods and our competitive skills in research, education and business. Of course, you also find this trend in Denmark and in the other Nordic countries. Our former Social Democratic prime minister last year stated that Denmark should be the leading ICT-country in the world. Naturally our new Liberal prime minister did not repeat that statement, but his policy in the field tends to be the same. It is a wise policy, too, as the market does not seem to be able to handle the task of providing the net with quality information, except for those publishers selling full text databases of university libraries and they are operating world-wide. Important aspects of the new government s ICT-policy are: high quality infrastructure, ICT competency development for the entire population, ICT-offensive public sector, the public sector as a dynamo for e-business!

In Denmark a number of publishers are offering e-services, but compared to the book market it is a drop in the ocean. One relatively successful provider of information in Danish, is the newspaper *Politiken* and their service *Polinfo*. Other papers and broadcasting companies are following suit, one publisher offers access to an encyclopaedia, but the recently completed, large, completely new Danish encyclopaedia is not yet available online. One of the reasons for that is that similar new national encyclopaedia in Sweden and Norway have been offered in relatively cheap personal web-subscription with very little success. Indeed the loss to the publishers runs into mil. of USD.

In that situation you must turn to publicly financed solutions, at least to begin with.
Hence we see some different public sources and models.

1. General information from the state and municipalities and their institutions are due to national policy and pressure from the users, an increasingly important cornerstone in the national provision of information.
The financing is part of the budgets in the institution. Providers of value-added information are a number of publicly funded institutions like libraries, museums and Culture Net Denmark. High priority will be given to digitising cultural heritage material, the national literature and important journals. One way of increasing free accessible quality information would be by introducing a public service license for all connections, at an annual charge,.

2. Licensed information is for the major part paid by public institutions. More and more companies will probably be interested in similar solutions. Seen from the point of view of for instance university libraries, the problem is that the prices are unbearably high. The model is good, but a better balance between costs and prices should be obtained.

3. Pay per view information will I guess despite the relatively bad experience so far be a source to be reckoned with, perhaps mainly as an additional source. The model will be interesting also for libraries that may wish to give access to all relevant sources, but only pay full license for the most frequently used ones.

To conclude: in small countries and in small markets the public service-thinking in e-information will be predominant, simply because market-oriented models will lack customers. This situation might lead to new types of networking and cooperation between publishers and public institutions and the state. This kind of cooperation will undoubtedly be necessary if we want to speed up a development where net resources become a more serious alternative to the physical library than is the case today.