LIBRARIES AS A SUPPORT OF INFORMED CITIZENS – THE BALANCING ACT BETWEEN LIBRARY'S GOOD QUALITY AND AUSTERITY MEASURES

Petra Düren

Ane Landoy

Jarmo Saarti

UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND

HAW HAMBURG

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NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT (NPM) AND LIBRARIES – SOME PREVIOUS RESEARCH

- despite national variation in the scope and depth of changes, NPM reforms are placing economic efficiency and budgetary control as priorities for government
- not a lot research has been done on implementing the NPM practices in libraries
- NPM in the library environment:
  - ✓ the need to develop strategies, plan budgets based on the strategies, and control that the goals are met
  - ✓ customer satisfaction as the most important goal
  - ✓ implementing accounting of cost and activities, and performance-measurement with an emphasis on output and outcome instead of input
  - ✓ benchmarking to compare the library's processes, cost and activities with those of other libraries

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NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT (NPM) AND LIBRARIES – SOME PREVIOUS RESEARCH

- ✓ an attempt to change from bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations to more modern flexible and lean forms of management
- ✓ to transform their organizational identity from a public service organization into a more business-like identity

- NPM at times may also lead to an overemphasis on the financial instead of the societal added value, leaving less possibilities for potentially financial risky creative or innovative activities

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent are library leaders equipped to provide the library sector with a new leadership and management style?

2. How can the libraries, in a squeeze between the demands for better service and less money, find a way to train citizens in information literacy?

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METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

- pilot study in Germany, Finland and Norway, interviewing academic and public library leaders
  - 6 qualitative expert interviews
  - 2 questions
  - content analysis of the interviews

- to find out how NPM and the resulting austerity measures impact the citizens' training in information literacy and what can be done to ensure a good support of informed citizens
- to see what is expected from libraries in different European countries and how they are supported through resources for this new task

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RESEARCH RESULTS

Type of libary / country	Full time equivalent (FTE) 2017	Leader of this library since
public library / Germany	5.25	1997
academic libarary / Germany	20.5	2006
public library / Finland	197.5	2014
academic library / Finland	50	2015
public library / Norway	106	2011
academic library / Norway	110	2015

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RESEARCH RESULTS – GERMANY

- **Public Library:**
  - since 2000 the then reduced amount of staff has been the same
  - at the moment this library tries to modernize its guaranteed offers for schools through the relatively easy application for state funds to buy a carrying case with iPads
  - to have the chance to plan and execute activities such as gaming actions or information about topics such as child-proof locks of smartphones and child protection in the internet, the library needs and has found cooperation partners
  - often the library is not the protagonist of these activities, but only offers the environment in which it can take place
  - they try to unleash more personnel hours through more digitalization, e. g. in the methods of payment in the library, through constant reviewing the library's processes, through outsourcing tasks and through optimizing the library's catalogue to reduce questions of users

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- **Academic Library:**
  - nobody asked this library formally or informally to be a guardian of confirmed information literacy as a tool for citizens
  - maybe the university's decision makers are not aware of this possibility; for most people libraries are still only places to storage books
  - for the students this library tries to fulfil its role as guardian of confirmed information and of information literacy and for this they have established a part-time position that helps professors in all of the university's departments through teaching "Information competence", which some of the departments demand regularly

- **Public Library:**
    - new evolving services are a very important part of the new tasks the libraries must include in their services
    - a long working history seems to help in focusing to the new and emerging service changes
    - resource allocation to the strategically important tasks and the teaching and empowering of users in information literacy issues is one of the strategic choices
    - automation in removing routines from the library staff to the computers has also been used

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- **Academic Library:**
  - a long working history seems also here to help in focusing to the new and emerging service changes
  - the active updating of one's knowledge from the professional field is also important
  - information literacy tuition was seen as one of the main function in the library
  - strategic choices: "Although the staff has been reduced radically we have not cut back the tuition in the same proportion; we have been reorganizing so that the level of the teaching could be maintained and even enhanced/developed."
  - if more staff cutbacks are going to happen this will also effect the teaching provided by the library

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RESEARCH RESULTS – NORWAY

- ## Public Library:
    - funding for development has to be found through external funding – project applications
    - changes in the employee skillset is possible; requires time and patience
    - focus on training immigrants, children and the elderly in computer literacy rather than information literacy
    - collaboration with other (kinds of) library as a way forward

RESEARCH RESULTS – NORWAY

- **Academic Library:**
    - staff more actively trying to embed themselves in the academic departments, anticipating the needs and being proactive
    - information literacy as integrated part student services
    - help the departments fulfill their obligation to deliver transferable skills to the students as part of the learning goals
    - call for plans and budgets seen as possibility to develop
    - freedom in "framework budgeting"

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CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

- as this pilot study only shows the opinions and experience of six library leaders one must be careful when drawing conclusions
- following this pilot study more qualitative interviews must be conducted, to be able to develop concrete hypotheses which then can be tested through a representative quantitative research

➢ but one can state based on findings here that the NPM has definitely has had an effect to the management of the libraries:
  ▪ the directors are more aware of the policies and economic pressures that are affecting the public sector and the need of economic efficiency
  ▪ it also seems that if the library director is active in strategic work and can influence the decision makers, the library can also gain when being able to present its value for the community
  ▪ there also seems to be a limit in budget cutbacks after which the service production is not anymore possible in an agreeable level

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