

SITUATION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN ESTONIA: SOME ASPECTS OF COOPERATION

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The modern library has been defined as a medium which possesses, administrates and mediates information. Information is the main resource of social development. Transfer of power from traditional power structures to the owner of information is characteristic of information society. Therefore it is expected that the role of libraries in the society will be growing as they are the institutions which possess and govern movement of large masses of information. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that he who rules, bears the responsibility. The governmental system of libraries, including large research libraries, are in today's world responsible for the supply of information for national culture, education and science. Libraries have become institutions through which one of the basic human rights can be guaranteed — **the right to be informed.**

The question is:

How to back up this right that everyone is entitled to by using adequate information services?

What is favouring and what is hindering libraries in fulfilling their social role? Are they prepared to undertake even more social, educational and cultural responsibility?

Rapid development of information community brings about the necessity of awareness of certain global tendencies in local activities. Some of the most significant new trends facing the organisations which handle large quantities of information are the following:

1. Decentralisation of responsibility and attaching more authority to the lower levels of management is a characteristic feature of libraries worldwide as well as of other organisations handling large quantities of data. Responsibility and authority concern also economic and personnel related issues. This is one of the most important innovations enabling to better utilise the potential of the staff and to render management more flexible.
2. The innovative processes going on in libraries have been greatly influenced by the surrounding world of market economy. Up to recent time libraries focussed mainly on users. The psychological (behavioural) aspect of communicating with the user was emphasised. Today focus has shifted to the quality of services as goods. Quality management is the most important issue in all spheres of librarianship.
3. Contacts between the library and its users have changed. User demands vary on a very broad scale and it is becoming more and more difficult to meet them. A significant user group are informal groups and organisations. Electronic information carriers are gaining importance while the role of printed sources is decreasing though not disappearing. Inter-library exchange is there to remedy the short-comings of the library collection.

4. When guiding a user the librarian assumes the role of a teacher. In such a situation most of the resources are spent on production of services. As no increased funding is foreseen, problems will have to be solved by making a more economical use of the existing means. Measurement and assessment of effectiveness of the routine in an organisation forms a significant basis for the analysis of its activities. What cannot be measured, cannot be managed.

Society will have to solve a number of problems in connection with the information generated in Estonia. The triumph of dissemination of electronic information has raised a number of problems yet to be solved, which will be beyond the competence of libraries, data base systems or other owners or mediators of information.

The ongoing paradigmatic change in information technology has an enormous impact on the economic and cultural development of the mankind. The technology which enables people to gather, process and disseminate information in an almost boundless scope has been developed. In today's Estonia, actual dissemination of information is not influenced by censorship or any other restrictions imposed by authorities. Instead, it is economic and educational problems that matter. Future development of the problems of division of labour in the sphere of information dissemination should be discussed.

When speaking about the quality of information dissemination, meaning actual information services, it is often obvious that the biggest hindrance is the ambiguous attitude to some interdisciplinary issues which require co-ordination between different authorities or central (legislative) regulation. The following serve as the examples of this.

1. Legal aspects of information services in the sphere of processing and using governmental, institutional and other public information: division of labour, ownership and liability, legal protection.
2. Development of the (national) content industry.
3. Economic aspects of implementation of new technology at libraries.
4. Social and ethical issues.
5. Library and the teaching of librarianship.

The aforementioned points form part of the homework that has to be done by the information dissemination systems of small countries themselves in order to be able to connect themselves to world-wide information circulation without damaging their national interests. This can be achieved through better education and higher qualification of librarians — the prerequisites for smoother co-operation and co-ordination between authorities. Relying on the experience gained from everyday work one can say that librarians are able to contribute to the spreading of scientific ideas, including the information accumulated in the field of medicine, only when they place high demands on themselves.