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Liaison librarian : prospects in information specialist's tasks (case animal health)

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AIM

- The aim of this presentation is to describe the process of becoming a specialized campus library
- Structural changes in the academic environment demand reorganization in the library field, too
- Centralizing vs. local service – how to make the best without damaging the existing good practices

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INTRODUCTION

- **University** of Helsinki, Finland:

35,000 students, with another 45,000 engaging in extension studies or in studies at the open university.

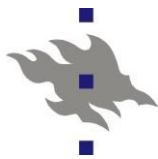
4,000 researchers and teachers of the university work on four separate campuses in Helsinki and in 19 other localities.

- Current situation in the Helsinki University **Libraries** in its entirety:

- Now in summer 2009: four campus libraries (relatively independent) and one centralized service unit

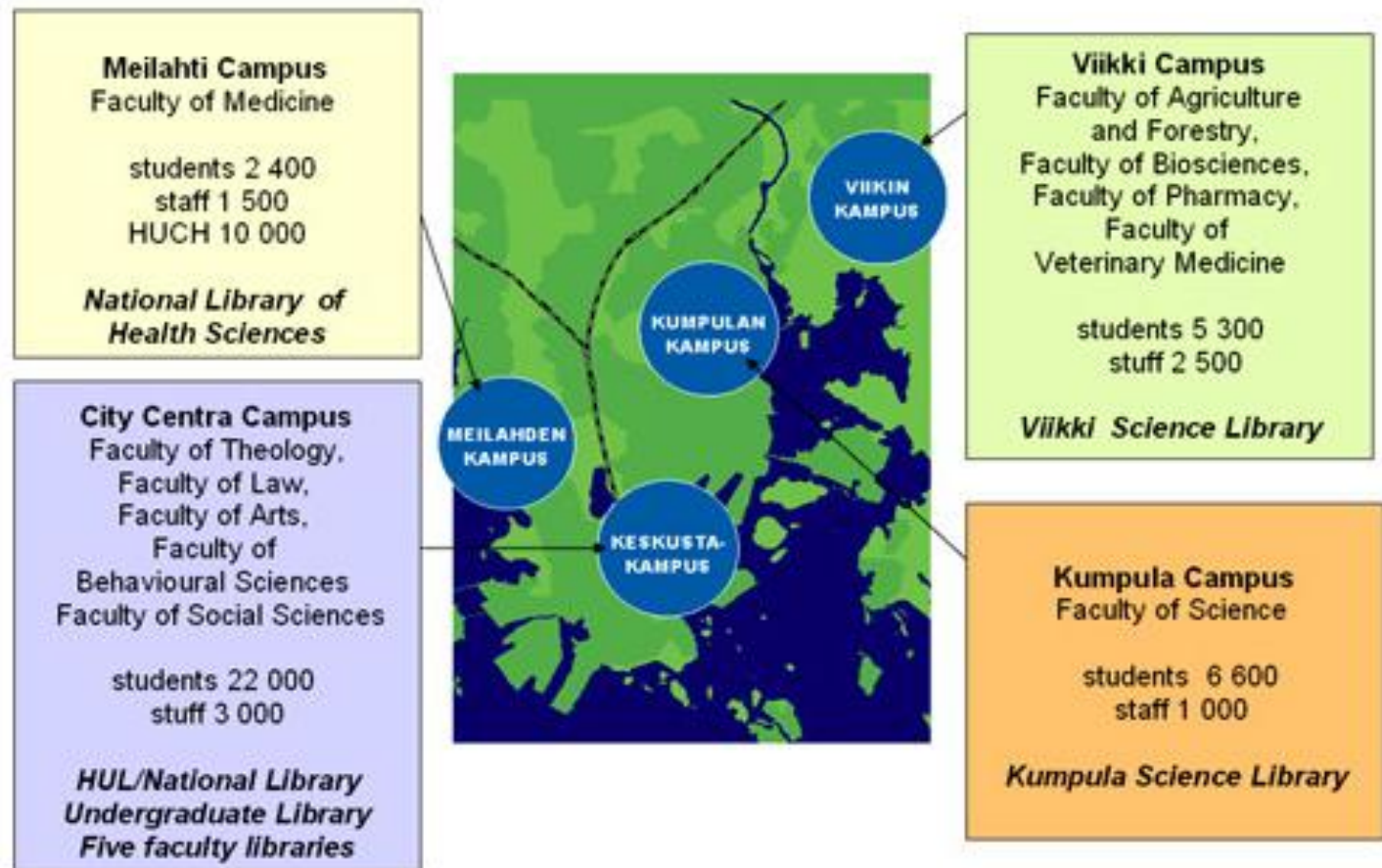
- From the beginning of 2010: one University Library with branch libraries on four campuses

- One director, one budget



Helsinki University Libraries 2009

Libraries on four campuses





INTRODUCTION

- What means "liaison"? See dictionary:

liaison *noun*

- **1 = communication**, connection, contact, go-between, hook-up, interchange, intermediary
- **2 = affair**, amour, entanglement, fling, illicit romance, intrigue, love affair, romance
- librarian who focuses on particular subject area and client base
- subject specialist, subject librarian, subject bibliographer



METHODS

- Comparative inquiry
- How are the other libraries managed?
- Current situation analysis
- Evaluation of the existing practices
- Case presentation: veterinary medicine
- Local environment: campus of biosciences, future development of the scientific activities



METHODS

- Comparative inquiry
- How are the other libraries managed?
- Examples from Dublin, Utrecht, Pennsylvania, Hannover
- Variety of an independent library in a specialized university to a branch library or totally integrated information service in a big centralized university library
- How are the special library features managed in a large organisation's work flow?
- What "benefits" come from independency?



METHODS

- Current situation analysis, year 2009:
- University of Helsinki has four campus libraries, centralized services, complicated financing
- Evaluation of the existing practices, Viikki Science Library
- 9 subject specialists
- 3 library advisory boards



METHODS

- Communication and documentation
- During the process there has been several meetings on all administrative levels of the library organization, including the senate of the University
- Official committees has been nominated, also ad hoc working groups etc
- Common intranet is in use, library e-newspaper, discussion lists
- In Viikki Science Library there is a weekly meeting every Wednesday, when the current situation is updated
- Intranet (alma) serves as the form of documentation



METHODS : case Veterinary Medicine

■ Historic overview

- The veterinary library in Finland was founded in 1892 when the Finnish Veterinary Association and the Finnish Veterinary journal were founded
- College of Veterinary Medicine and its Library 1945-1995
- University of Helsinki, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and its faculty library 1995-2003 with national responsibility

■ Description of the present situation

- Viikki Science Library 2004-2009

■ Future prospects

- Helsinki University Library, Viikki Campus Library 2010-



RESULTS

- Results by now
- A new model for the University Library is created
- All the employees get new positions
- A new law for the Universities, new rules for the library
- Some concerns from the Campus point of view: how to maintain the present services and how to ensure the future development
- Increasing need of specialization on campus level



DISCUSSION

- How will the Campus library satisfy the needs of a Campus which unites a multidisciplinary science community of more than 6,000 students and 1,500 teachers, a home to a wide range of life science researchers and students in such fields as environmental science, veterinary medicine, food research and economics
- Numerous international research groups also work at the Viikki Campus. The new situation will create a lot of challenges, focusing on the liaison librarian's work, presently done by subject specialists.



DISCUSSION

- Would the liaison librarian –system be a fruitful answer?
- "from the veterinary point of view" it sounds reasonable
- A liaison librarian (LL) is like glue between research, development, practitioners, pet owners, teachers and students
- Academic teaching in veterinary medicine is very close to working life
- LL is a link between profession and development based on scientific research
- LL must know the needs of practice and the means of scientific research
- Better science -> better life
- Science in the service of life



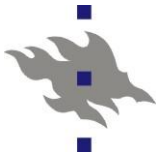
SUGGESTION: "KNOT"

- **Yrjö Engeström** will conduct a laboratorium of changes in Viikki Science Library in autumn 2009: development of subject services
- The methods follows his book "From teams to knots : studies of collaboration and learning at work (Cambrige 2008)
- A research group from the campus gets a library professional as a contact person for developing new parthership
- The research group will be tied with strog knots to the library
- The results of the model will be applied in the new library organization in 1.1.2010 in the whole University of Helsinki



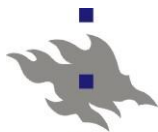
CONCLUSIONS

- Libraries must be proactive: connections to Faculties and Research Institutions are vital for the success of the basic work in information services
- Campus libraries must focus more on the subject areas, have lively contacts with the scientific community
- With the back office services from the central unit this will be possible, but it does not happen without conscious work and co-operation between libraries
- Now it is time to be active in planning to ensure that it all will work after 1.1.2010
- The key point is quality: library science in science library!



CONCLUSIONS

The Liaison librarian is situated between the scientific community, its information needs and the University libraries network, with all its possibilities to create services. Without the professional and social back up of the subject specialists – colleagues world wide - the task would be impossible



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