

Building a county-wide hospital-library

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Introduction

This report describes the construction, development and introduction of a county-wide hospital medical library.

Background:

- *An R & D centre was established in 2006*
- *Hospital libraries were transferred to R & D centre*

In 2006, the Sörmland County Council in central Sweden made a strategic decision. The County of Sörmland with its 263 000 inhabitants borders to the country's largest County, Stockholm, with eight times as many inhabitants. Depopulation and people commuting to the capital is resulting in a region with educational attainment well below the national average. The Sörmland County Council, responsible for the region's health care, registered the impact this had on the residents. As part of creating a sustainable regional growth and stimulating the development of a high quality health care, a comprehensive resource centre for research and knowledge development, an R & D Centre, was established four years ago. The vision of the Centre was to stimulate the clinical, patient-oriented research relevant to health care and its development.

To this organization the County's four hospitals libraries were added, a total of 10 employees. Three of the four libraries had been run by a contractor of each municipality for years and, by this practice, were branches of Public libraries. The fourth library was run by the County Council and also had a specific mandate to serve as a management library. The physical distance between the libraries is about 100 km - except for two of them who are located in the same city.

All libraries were so-called combined libraries, i.e. they contain both a medical and a general section. Much like for other hospital-libraries the recent developments in health care has meant changes for the business. Book trollies stopped to roll in the hospitals in the 1990s and the medical e-resources entered. The number of patient care days in hospital declined and fewer patients used the libraries - it was thanks to the fact that the public and county staff used the libraries that the business could be maintained. Cooperation between the County's hospital-libraries was at that time mainly in terms of e-resources and licensing. The policies, procedures and rules were different at each hospital library. Hospital-libraries had no priority activity - they seemed to have been left to care for themselves and neither the County Council nor the municipality felt the responsibility to develop their business. The libraries were appreciated only by the limited number of people who used them.

New library organization: Hospital Libraries in Sörmland

- *New assignment for the new library organization: as an aid in training, skills development and research*
- *New library organization's target groups: county employees, patients and allied as well as some students*

The establishment of the R & D centre high-lighted the issue of the role of libraries in the

county. An internal investigation was set up. Would the County Council invest in libraries, reduce the service or even closed them down? The study showed that the libraries are enjoying a high degree of trust and appreciation of the county employees, but that the library service was unknown to most. A decision was made to withdraw the business from local libraries and develop them into a county-wide municipal council activity, Hospital Libraries in Sörmland. A new mission was formulated, which focused on the libraries' role to provide support for the county employees in training, skills development and research. The target population was clear. In addition to the 7500 county employees the new library organization would continue to provide library service to patients and related - but not to the public. Students were considered to be a special group. They had an intermediate position with limited service. Libraries would continue to be combined libraries, but the general part would fade over time and the medical part would be developed.

Business

- *What each library brings to a common organization*
- *Assistants were transformed into librarians*
- *Streamlined procedures, including purchase by profile*
- *Common library system*
- *Cataloguing in LIBRIS*

Efforts to merge and develop four distinct cultures into a common began. Many issues were discussed. What medical specialities did each hospital have that the libraries should reflect? What were the libraries strengths and weaknesses which contributed to the strength of one common organization? What kind of activities should be developed - and what kind of activities would be discontinued?

The first year was devoted to negotiations with the municipality concerning the decommissioning of existing operations. The majority of the librarians offered to go with the new organization. Library-assistants remained in the municipal service where they got new jobs. Assistant-services could thus be transformed into librarians with the aim of raising levels of skill within the new organization. It meant that what was previously assistants' work was reviewed. Nowadays books are supplied plastic and equipped. The few physical journals that arrive are no longer registered. The Books in the General section arrive automatically through so-called Profile orders. This means that a vendor for the specified profile is responsible for the selection and delivery of fiction and other non-medical literature. This allows librarians' time to be utilized differently: education, reference service, self-training, etc.

Furthermore, a project manager with IT skills was appointed. In the beginning of the process, it was found that the basis for a geographically dispersed operation like this was a functioning technological infrastructure. The project manager's task was to evaluate the three separate library systems that were current at the transition and suggest an alternative. It was natural that libraries were merged into a common system, which happened in April 2009. This change was preceded by intensive and for the business important discussions surrounding the acquisition, weeding, cataloguing, and customer-treatment (e.g. 45% of the total book-collection was weeded).

After the new library system's launch, time has been made to develop the catalogue contents. Some librarians have taken a course in cataloguing in the national library system, LIBRIS. The plan is that the Hospital Libraries in Sörmland shall catalogue and record all medical literature in LIBRIS, which is not the tradition for a hospital library. In principle, hospital

libraries happily borrow from other libraries, but tend to be more reluctant to lend from their own holdings to other libraries, based on the reasoning that their holdings is only available to staff within their own county. It is also common that the open access catalogue is only available on the internal website, which makes locating the media difficult for the others. The recently established network of hospital library managers, have now begun to discuss the value of being accessible in LIBRIS. Several hospital libraries have now begun to move up their collections.

Knowledge of cataloguing is also a prerequisite for the library's own catalogue to be developed. A special working group within our organization was made responsible for such matters. The task the group worked with in the spring is how e-resources, health care programs and other local reports will be made available in the best possible way.

Identity shift

- *Learning from others*
- *Learning together*
- *Consistent visual identity for print, communication and website*

It takes time to change the perspective and approach. The Public Librarian soul felt responsibility and commitment to fiction, and to the public who borrowed the fiction literature. Other difficulties encountered have been to monitor and build up a current medical professional library.

How can you develop medical librarian skills? We looked around and tried to learn from others. We made contact with other hospital libraries. We went on field trips and invited other libraries to visit us. We looked for networks and cooperation between the hospital libraries. Several of the library staff joined the working groups at national level concerning issues relevant to hospital libraries, e.g. national agreements and licenses. We invited talented hospital librarians to teach us, such as EndNote, the Reference management program that none of us mastered three years ago. We were committed to participate in training that was specifically targeted for medical librarians - and all of us would participate if possible. At our monthly gatherings, those who participated in a course, seminar or otherwise should convey his or her impressions to colleagues, either in writing or in oral form. Another point on the agenda at these meetings is business intelligence, when, for instance, two employees at a time, present a recent book, article or essay with relevance to the work. Other key areas that we are jointly trying to develop and define through discussion and group work, is budget, statistics, and other relevant indicators to measure, evaluate and develop a business. What we learned from this is the importance of shared understanding of what these concepts mean and how to use them. But we have also recognized that much still remains in this area.

Early in the process, we also presented a unified visual identity for print and communication. Four websites were changed to one common website. One shared phone number and e-mail address was created. An electronic newsletter is now published every month with information about courses and acquisitions. A Library Council has been established with a view to allow representatives from the health services to affect the activity design. The goal has been to offer a similar service to all county employees no matter where they are in the region.

Information campaign

- *"Skills development in the Workplace" – an outreach business*

- *Training and lunch information at libraries*

The Sörmland hospital libraries have always offered training for the county employees. Any county employee has been able to order courses tailored to their own profession. Depending on the hospital and library resources, the county employees have been given training to varying degrees.

After the common catalogue was launched, an active outreach business was on top of the agenda. One of the newly hired librarians had been given the role of training officer. At the time of recruitment, she had to implement several trial lectures before she was awarded the position. She joined forces with a colleague and their mission was to develop business-generating activities within an educational concept and which also included a business-generating campaign. This campaign should continue for two years before it would be evaluated. Again, we were inspired by other hospital libraries.

We understood that we must meet the employees where they are, that the information would be well suited to the audience and that the information should be brief and relevant. A menu of programs, 15 minutes long, was assembled, including such topics as "E-journals and databases", "Business intelligence with RSS", "Evidence-based Medicine". 250 managers received the first invitation to the "Skills development in the workplace" where they could book one or more program topics when it suited them best. Time and energy was spent to make attractive presentations in the form of ppt and easy access information readily available in printed form.

The interest turned out to be very large. The two librarians were booked up quickly on 25 occasions throughout the county and met in the autumn of 2009 400 employees in groups between 5-50. Criticism was constructive and positive. Before the spring of 2010, the menu was revised at request to include incorporated information about the new e-resource Best Practice. New invitations went out, and several groups that previously had been visited by our librarians booked us again for their spring staff-meetings.

Parallel to this campaign, the regular courses were developed. At all hospitals they were offered on a regular basis: "A database - one hour". The great interest shown at the workplace visits was in marked contrast to the number of participants on these courses. Only a few people showed up at the actual training, which was motivated by time constraints. However, the number of new library cards and the increasing number of people using a librarian on its own was a clear consequence of the information about the library organization and its resources given at the staff meetings. In addition the use of the computer-equipped study sites closed to the libraries has increased. The employees can now use the study sites around the clock, regardless of library opening hours.

In the spring, we have expanded our offer by adding information meetings at lunchtime in the respective libraries when we also offer sandwiches. It turned out to be a success. These meetings are often fully booked and we have had to put on additional meetings.

The campaign has been going on for a year. We have not had time to evaluate it, but we have noticed that it has been received very well. People in the health sector do not have time and opportunity to physically visit the library - and has no reason for it either. It is our job to give them the opportunity needed to be able to operate and develop a good health care. Apart from

good infrastructure and available e-resources, it is the information, promotion and training that we consider is the most important to pursue in our work.

Cooperation with others

- *Close collaboration with R & D centre*
- *Good cooperation with the region's county library, public libraries and university library*
- *Organizer of national conferences*

The development of the hospital libraries activities in Sörmland has been conducted in close cooperation with other actors. To be part of R & D centre means that librarians have a natural collaboration with the research supervisors and statisticians, which stimulates and facilitates the understanding of the research process. All librarians have undergone County Council's research course designed to prepare county employees on their own research projects. Last autumn, one of the librarians was granted resources for a research project concerning the evaluation of specific contributions to patient care by hospital libraries.

We have an ongoing dialogue with the region's university library, regarding the creation of good conditions for the region's students in health related topics.

The hospital-libraries have a past as municipal libraries, which has facilitated the cooperation with them. In 2009, in connection with the comprehensive work with weeding, the Hospital Libraries in Sörmland arranged, along with the County library and one of the Public libraries, a national conference with 100 participants in these matters.

In February 2010, on our own, we organized a conference for hospital libraries. Over 80 people attended, representing two-thirds of all those working in Swedish hospital libraries. The program consisted of lectures and parallel workshops, based on participants' own experiences and of course social gatherings. Networking is important, contacts are important - it gives perspective to our own operations.

Future

- *Library facilities*
- *Tools for evaluation*
- *Plan for implementation of evidence-based approach for County Council employees*

What happens now? Some milestones we have passed, but most lie ahead. I have only mentioned the development of relevant statistical tools and indicators to evaluate our business that just started. It takes place during the next few years. Maybe it's something for the Swedish Association of hospital library managers to collaborate on?

Furthermore we will review and equip our premises. Shelving, furniture and signage, will together with the University's architectural students be renewed and get a functional location. The number of rooms with self service will be expanded, particularly places where newspapers, periodicals and reference works are to be accessed outside the library's opening hours.

Hospital-libraries are also courting the County Council's management, concerning the importance of adopting a plan for implementation of evidence-based approach to all county employees. So far they have not taken a decision on the matter. Meanwhile, the hospital-libraries are looking for external funds in projects, to develop a strategy and capability to

implement the particular in the form of an education campaign. The idea is that our ongoing information-campaign next year could turn into a broad EBM venture.

Over the next years Hospital-libraries in Sörmland will develop and grow to become even more necessary and valuable medical libraries than what we are today – in order to be an important aid to good health.