



Northern university library invests in library services for research

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Abstract

Today researchers have many administrative tasks in addition to the actual research work. Oulu University Library seeks to find ways to help researchers with these tasks and release most of their time for actual research, instead of administrative work.

Open science requires constant development of new services in the library. One example is the self-archiving service. The University of Oulu open access repository Jultika was established at the end of 2016. The library's information specialists contribute to the academic recruitment process by providing bibliometric analyses. Electronic thesis work requires monitoring and often guidance as well. Digitalization does not mean that all human help and contribution is redundant just yet.

The cornerstone of library services are naturally the library collections. In Oulu University Library, the majority of the information resources provided by the library – especially the new ones – are electronic. Providing excellent journal and book collections for the use of university research requires resources: acquisition and budgetary expertise.

Spreading knowledge about the various library services among busy researchers is often challenging and requires new skills and ways of working from the library staff.

This presentation describes the present state of Oulu University Library's services for researchers and gives a glimpse of what the future may entail.

University of Oulu

There are eight faculties in the University of Oulu: Faculty of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Technology and Oulu Business School. Oulu Mining School and Oulu School of Architecture were merged into the Faculty of Technology in 2018. There are circa 14 000 students at the University of Oulu (circa 10000 FTE students) in 2017. The number of research and teaching staff was 1600 person-years and other staff 836 person-years in 2017. The Library staff comprised 47 person-years in 2017.

The University of Oulu has five focus areas, which aim at solving global challenges: Creating sustainability through materials and systems; Molecular and environmental basis for lifelong health; Digital solutions in sensing and interactions; Earth and near-space system and environmental change; Understanding humans in change. Link: <http://www.oulu.fi/sites/default/files/content/University%20of%20Oulu%20Strategy%202016-2020.pdf>

The University of Oulu carries out research related to arctic matters in all its strategic focus areas, and our university connects strongly to international operations in the field, including the University of the Arctic. The University of Oulu has recently received large funding from the Academy of Finland to promote multidisciplinary research in this field.

The University of the Arctic (UArctic) is a cooperative, multidisciplinary network of 188 universities, colleges, research institutes and other organizations working together in education, research and knowledge sharing in and about the Arctic. The University of Oulu is one of the founding members of the UArctic network and has a vital role in both the leadership of the UArctic and in developing joint activities and networks.

Oulu University Library

Oulu University Library was established in 1959, soon after the founding of the University of Oulu. During its nearly sixty years of existence the library has seen many different organizational structures. Library staff grew up to 120 at the end of 1990'. The number of staff started to decrease towards the 2010's. In 2007, there were 114 employees in Oulu University Library. In 2017, there were 52 employees; less than half the number in 2007. Digitalization has changed the library's processes and services so that they require less work force. The retirement rate among library employees is also high, since the average age of employees is quite high. Fortunately, we have been able to recruit new employees lately.

Current library services comprise lending services (including interlibrary loans), information services, obligatory information skills (IL= information literacy) trainings for students, library/information resources acquisition and collection services (including indexing services), bibliometric and analytical services, publication services (e.g. submission of publication information) and self-archiving services. New services emerge especially into open access/science, which is a key development focus area of today in academic libraries.

There are six legal deposit libraries in Finland. Oulu University Library has been a legal deposit library since 1981. The legal deposit status and activity is based on the Act on Collecting and Preserving Cultural Materials (1433/2007). The purpose of the Act is to archive and preserve Finnish cultural heritage for information users. Legal deposit legislation covers both printed and electronic materials. The use of legal deposit collections is limited to research purposes. However, anyone can access the legal deposit

collections by coming to Oulu University Library – or any of the six legal deposit libraries in Finland - and requesting the material for reading room use. The legal deposit collection requires first and foremost space; they also require some workforce, but much less than earlier – today approximately 2,5 person-years.

Providing a broad range of library services with relatively limited human resources is possible with a smart and flat organization. However, this does not mean that Oulu University Library does not need new human resources to replace the retired employees or employees with new skills. We may be efficient but the efficient organization still has a deficiency; it does not leave very much room for beginners i.e. people who can learn and hone their skills while working. The constant change in both academic institutions, the society, and the world, guarantees that the library will need employees with new skills and competencies. Since 2010, our existing staff have faced constant changes and the need to absorb new skills.

Library space is under scrutiny at least in Oulu. Library space has diminished over the years as library services have been merged and centralized. Oulu University Library has at the moment only two campus libraries: Pegasus Library in the Linnanmaa Campus and Library of Medicine in the Kontinkangas Campus. Space is expensive from a budgetary perspective. Rent of library space is the highest cost, information resources come second, and salaries only third. In 2020, Oulu University of Applied Sciences will move to the Linnanmaa campus and the plan is that the Pegasus Library will serve the students and personnel of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences as well. In the near future, library will have more than 6000 potential new customers but not more space. The organizing of services requires creativity from the library staff.

A peek at the background of library services for research

The almost unnoticeable but nevertheless fundamental service for university research has been and still is the constant development of the library collections – the information resources portfolio of the university. The library staff does not draw enough attention to the importance of the collection development and maintenance work. This may have contributed to the current misconception that for example all research articles are not only open but also freely available. Many librarians consider Google (Scholar), ResearchGate etc. as unfair competitors. Should we instead regard them as new complimentary information resources and include them into our IL courses? Information resource providers have their limitations. Even Google cannot provide everything, at least not yet.

Academic libraries also compete for the time and attention of academic people. Libraries acquire expensive information resources, but too often librarians trust that the quality of the resources is enough to attract people to use them. The marketing of the library's expertise in information resources and re-marketing of them in the home organization (university) is sometimes challenging for library professionals. However, marketing and communication skills are one of the most important competency areas for library professionals both today and in future. Busy researchers are even more difficult to reach than students are. At Oulu University Library, we have used targeted means to communicate services for research, such as bulletins of specific topics (e.g. self-archiving) on the university intranet and visits to research group meetings. Multiple communication channels and repetition are important in getting your message across when you compete for the attention of researchers.

Bibliometric services started in 2011. One of the first big projects was RAE2013 for which the work begun in 2012. In 2014, the assignments varied from professor recruitment to preparations for budget

allocations to faculties. Almost all information specialists of Oulu University Library did bibliometric analyses along with their other tasks (teaching and information services); no one was concentrating solely on bibliometric analyses. Specialization into analyzing services came a little later.

The library staff were the Open Access pioneers at the University of Oulu, like in so many other universities, too. Some branches of research/science have adopted the open science approach earlier than other branches. Within the eight faculties of the University of Oulu, there are many different maturity levels with regard to open science and open access. Library needs to carefully follow the maturity development and act accordingly. Oulu University Library established a position for an open access information specialist in 2015. Open access awareness had already started in 2013 in the library. Some librarians and information specialists had actively participated in national working groups preparing Finland to establish national open access/science programs. One of our information specialists was a member of the Open Science Finland expert group that participated in the preparation of the Open Science and Research Roadmap of Finland. In 2015, the time was right to employ an expert to the library to develop open access services for the University of Oulu.

Current services for research at Oulu University Library

Oulu University Library offers today a variety of services for research. Like earlier pointed out, the information resource portfolio is the basis for library services along with the expertise of the library staff. The library's analytical services are strengthening and statistically growing exponentially. The Ministry of Education and Culture advises Finnish universities to specialize and differentiate. Therefore, university leaders need more and more analyses, bibliometric reports and benchmarking tools. The recruitment of top-notch researchers requires bibliometric analyses of the research output of the candidates as one important evaluation element.

Due to the rapid decrease in the number of staff due to retirement, Oulu University Library faced a need to modify the organization. In the organization modification process, both the management and the staff decided unanimously to create as flat an organization as possible. A small staff requires a flat organization and the management team cannot be anything but small: a director and two service managers. From December 2016 onwards, there have been two service units: Lending and Information Services; and Publication and Information Resources Services. Despite this structure, the processes of the library have to flow through both units. Backup plans are important when only one or two persons are responsible in the production of a service.

The management philosophy of the library management is built on trust. Library management has trust into the competence and expertise of employees. Oulu University Library employees have to be both very independent and co-operative at the same time. Due to brisk retirement rate, the remaining library professionals have to frequently adopt new skills and tasks, since recruiting new professionals is not a self-evident consequence any more. Additionally, the library has to find a balance between old and new services. The evolution of library services is evident, but it does not mean that services cease to exist at the same time as new services appear. Library users use both old and new services concurrently. In future, some services will cease to exist either due to digitalization or due to lack of customer demand. Fortunately, the library has been able to recruit some new professionals; information specialists to open access services and e-thesis services.

The new organization model included one brave manoeuvre. Even though constant IL training at the University of Oulu engages many information specialists, four information specialists out of fourteen were told to concentrate solely onto analyzing and bibliometric services. Now eight information specialists specialize in IL training, one in e-thesis services and one in open access publishing services, with backup from several parts of the library organization. So far, it looks like this bold move was beneficial. The demand for analytical services is growing exponentially; word of the positive customer experiences of the service spreads around. This is one example of how library management need to constantly scan, evaluate and boldly test different services.

Open access as phenomenon was discussed in the library from 2013 until 2015, when the OA information specialist was finally employed. Drawing up an open access publishing policy and creating a route for self-archiving articles in the Jultika publication repository were the first priorities. The University of Oulu has required, from the beginning of 2017, self-archiving of research articles within the framework of publishing agreements. In early spring this year, there were over one thousand self-archived articles in the Jultika repository. There is still a long way to go to reach comprehensive self-archiving, since University of Oulu researchers publish over 2000 articles per year.

Open data services are important to open research/science. Oulun University Library is also involved in a cross-organization project for creating services to help researchers to store their research data. Open data services may be an upcoming area of library services, but at the moment library favours co-operation with the university's IT administration services, research units and strategy unit.

Future services, what are they?

The ability to forecast the future is as difficult for library directors and professionals as it is to anyone. There are more questions than answers. So far, printed books have not disappeared, even though pure hatred towards printed books has increased. Get rid of the printed collections, is a phrase heard more and more often at least by academic librarians.

Reading skills are slowly deteriorating; alarmingly research shows that boys do not read and reading long texts is more and more difficult (or unimportant?) for people. To someone inside an academic bubble, this may sound marginal, but is it? This is something we need to pay close attention to. Public libraries in Finland are doing very good work at schools and kindergartens with young children. We should not give up with young students; academic libraries should encourage and stimulate students to read. Innovation and growth often occurs through interaction between disciplines. A multidisciplinary approach in university and higher education libraries is certainly becoming increasingly important.

Today's academic libraries struggle with the pay-walls of the big science publishers. The continuous rise of journal subscription costs is unbearable. Only time will tell whether open access accomplishes the shift from journal subscriptions to open access fees. Big science publishers will fight fiercely for getting the same amount of income from open access fees and author fees as from subscriptions. If the current system (journal subscriptions) collapses, libraries may find a new set of services to offer to their customers (e.g. role of publisher). Equally, the collapse may signal the end of libraries, as we know them.

The short-term future is easier but still difficult to predict. Open science and research plays a big role in it. Is scientific publishing going to change? Whatever happens, publishing scientific articles or writing scientific books will never be free of charge. Authors, copyright owners and publishers will not do it for free, and peer reviewers will not do it without the prestige it brings them, even though they mainly do it in the interest of scientific development.

What will the long-term future of the (university) library services be like? Will it be Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robots serving AI and robots? Do people have to learn in the future? Alternatively, will we have intelligent chipsets implanted in our brains? Is the future researcher AI? The essential questions for the library services of the future are these: will people study and learn? Will humans do research? We are not very actively pondering these questions in university and academic libraries yet. Nevertheless, in our gatherings and conferences we may tentatively discuss them. Dystopia is hardly something that we want.