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Abstract
Economic and organizational structures are important factors that affect how, and to what extent, prisoners receive satisfactory library services. In the Scandinavian countries, the services offered are largely dependent on existing national policy. In Norway, changes in the organization and financing of prison library services over the past thirty years have led to improved service. During these years, there have also been changes to public library services, largely as the result of new technology. Such changes pose challenges to government authorities at all levels, as well as to individual prison libraries, in regard to what services should encompass and how they are provided. The development in Norway in the area of prison libraries and the challenges these libraries face are presented and compared with the prison library situation in the neighboring countries of Sweden and Denmark. The main emphasis is placed on national policy and organization, with particular focus on the positive developments of recent years in Norway.

Background
The prison library is often referred to as a “normal zone” for prisoners, and the services and resources offered are very important for their rehabilitation, education, and socialization. For many prisoners, the library functions as a window to the world in an otherwise monotonous existence behind the walls. The library and the librarian bring mental stimulation from the outside into the prisons in the form of literature, culture, current events, and knowledge, which provide opportunities and gateways to a richer life. However, for the library to function as the “normal” room
in the prison, fundamental economic and organizational structures must be in place. National policy, economy support, and service structure are important factors that affect how, and to what extent, prisoners receive satisfactory library services.

The Scandinavian countries share many similarities as neighboring countries with small populations, situated in Northern Europe. Sweden is the largest country with 9.3 million inhabitants, followed by Denmark with 5.5 million, and Norway with 4.8 million. These countries have a long common history during which, at various times, they have been unified with each other, the last union being between Norway and Sweden, which ended in 1905. The languages are so alike that people understand each other’s spoken and written words, and there are many similarities in the respective political systems. Close cross-border cooperation also exists in many public and private sectors. Even though the Scandinavian countries may appear very similar from an international perspective, differences still exist. Population density, for example, is more than six times higher in Denmark than in the two other countries, with 128 inhabitants per square kilometer: Norway having a population density of fifteen and Sweden twenty inhabitants per square kilometer.

There were approximately 14,000 prisoners in Scandinavian prisons on an average day in 2008. Just under 3,500 of these were in Norwegian prisons. These figures show a relatively low number of prisoners in the three countries compared to the incarceration rates in the rest of the world: Sweden has seventy-four prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants, Norway sixty-nine, and Denmark sixty-three. In comparison, England and Wales have 153 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants, Germany 89, and France 96 (Walmsley, 2010). Inmates in Scandinavian prisons serve their sentences in a total of 219 facilities, including transitional housing units in Norway, with a total of 14,731 inmate places. The facilities vary greatly in size and incarceration conditions—from small entities with less than 10 places to the largest unit with 545 places, situated in Denmark. In Sweden and Norway, the largest facilities have 301 and 251 places respectively (Oslo prison is listed as a single facility with 392 places in the official statistics but consists of two separate departments, each with its own library. Halden Prison, which opened in April 2010, is now Norway’s largest prison) (Kristoffersen, 2010). One unique feature of the Norwegian prison service is that it consists of relatively small prison units, some of which have fewer than twenty-five inmates. This factor, to a large extent, determines how prison library services can be organized. The staff rate is 107 employees per 100 prisoners in Denmark, 89 per 100 prisoners in Norway, and 99 per 100 prisoners in Sweden (Kristoffersen, 2010). Differences do exist as to whether certain services are staffed by the prison’s own employees or are provided by nonprison employees. The Council of Europe publishes
comparative statistics in this field for their member nations, and the 2008 statistics show that the Scandinavian countries have 1.4 to 1.6 prisoners per custodial staff member, with the average of the other nations being 3.1 (Aebi & Delgrande, 2010). The main features of the Scandinavian prisons are that they are relatively small and well-staffed, and that the rate of incarceration is low compared to other countries.

The provision of library services for prison inmates has long traditions in Scandinavia. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the single-cell system was introduced; in Norway this occurred in 1851 with the opening of a new penitentiary in the nation’s capital. Inmates were now isolated from each other, and a system was developed to provide them with reading materials in order to counteract the negative effects of isolation. In Denmark in the 1860s, a library was established in the prison in Vridløse, with a teacher assigned to operate it (M. Dyrbye, personal communication, March 16, 2010). In Denmark, however, the first prison libraries consisted of small collections of pietistic religious publications from the middle of the eighteenth century. Prisoners were limited mainly to these religious and edifying works until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when a wider range of both fiction and nonfiction was made available to them. At that time, library services were still considered as a reward for good behavior, and limitations were imposed on what was made available to different groups of prisoners (Källqvist, 1970).

In Håndbok over norske biblioteker (Handbook of Norwegian Libraries), published in 1924 by the Norwegian Library Association, four prison libraries are mentioned, all located in the capital city. In 1948, the number of books in Norwegian prisons totaled approximately 50,000. These collections were randomly put together and consisted partly of old books that were not of current interest. But gradually more selections from the local public library began to be provided during regular on-site visits from a librarian or through deposit collections. In Sweden in 1949, public library experts proclaimed that prison libraries belonged to the most neglected areas of modern library services (“Historik: Fängelsebibliotek” [History: Prison Libraries], 2002). In Norway, it was usually members of the clergy who were responsible for building and running the library services, while inmate workers were mainly assigned to operate lending activities and provide reader guidance (Frøsvold, 1977). After the Second World War, prison libraries were gradually integrated into the service structure of the Danish public library system as part of library outreach work (M. Dyrbye, personal communication, March 16, 2010). In Norway, section 58.2 of prison regulations from 1961 state that all institutions are to have a collection of books, preferably to be administrated by a senior civil servant (Biblioteket—Det normale rommet i fengselet [The Library—A Normal Room in Prison], 2005).
Organization of Prison Libraries in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark

Norway

In 1976, the Prison Board and the Norwegian Directorate for Public Libraries commissioned a national survey on library services in Norwegian prisons, which was to serve as the basis for new proposals to reorganize these services. The survey showed that 77,000 Norwegian kroner were allocated for the purchase of books for the libraries. At the largest institutions, however, the funds were also used to pay inmate library workers, which left no money to update the collections. Even though many of the libraries had relatively large collections, these materials consisted mainly of outdated titles, since few books were ever thrown away. At some institutions, it would be necessary to discard as much as 80 percent of the stock.

In addition to titles available in the prison library, it was possible for the inmates to order additional materials from public libraries, but in reality, this option was often limited due to a very restrictive attitude on the part of the prison administration. Some institutions had fairly comprehensive cooperative arrangements with local public libraries that included visits by librarians. The public libraries did not receive compensation for these services, and the costs therefore had to be absorbed by the local government authority (Frisvold, 1979).

At that time, both Sweden and Denmark had progressed beyond Norway in regard to cooperation between prisons and public libraries, making state funding available to public libraries for extending their services. At the same time there was, however, a movement to assign responsibility for a variety of services in Norwegian prisons with the public agencies that administered these services in the outside community. This change had already been implemented for the prison education program, with the Ministry of Church Affairs and Education being the service provider. One of the main recommendations of the 1976 report was that prison library services be financed by the state agency that was responsible for public library services. That agency would purchase services from the municipality in which the prison was located in the form of books and reader services from the local public library. Neither the Ministry of Church Affairs and Education nor the Prison Board raised any objections to these recommendations, and a proposal was drawn up for pilot projects that would establish permanent library departments in the prisons. In 1980, the Norwegian Parliament allocated 300,000 Norwegian kroner to the pilot project, which was to run for three years.

The pilot project started in 1980 and included four prisons, which were selected according to prison type and geographical location. Each site received a designated library space. The pilot project was very successful: the circulation rate was high, and prisoner feedback was positive. An
average of forty-seven loans per inmate per year was recorded, which was ten times higher than the average public library rate. The situation of the prison library was also discussed in the 1982 “white paper” on culture to the Norwegian Parliament (St.meld.nr. 23, 1981–82), where it was pointed out that prison libraries were still not operating at acceptable service levels, in spite of their long history and strong traditions. The libraries had, for example, few or no resources for low-level readers. Also noted was a deep discrepancy between prison sites, and it was recommended that, in order to ensure equality for all prisoners, the state guarantee sufficient funds for the library services.

In 1983, the Norwegian Parliament considered the pilot project a success and ordered the new service structure to become permanent and to incorporate an additional prison library the following year. Since then, prison library services have been funded as a separate line item in the national budget. Today, administrative responsibility is divided between the Ministry of Justice and the National Library, after responsibility for library matters was transferred from the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority (ABM-utvikling) July 1, 2010. The prisons are responsible for the physical facility and equipment on site, while the National Library funds the service operation—mainly salary and library materials. Library activities and services are governed by standardized contracts between the participating partners. The contracts state that the prison library is to be operated as a branch of the local public library and that prisoners will use the prison library as access point to public library services. Collections that are built and located permanently in each prison library will be administrated by the public library, but when/if a contract is terminated, the library materials will become the property of the prison. The agreement between the National Library and local authorities does not contain a standardized funding formula. The local authority submits a budget application each year, and the National Library distributes the funds allocated in the annual national budget to the prison library.

The legal basis for the prison library service model is found in the Norwegian Public Library Act of 1985 and the Act of 2001 relating to the implementation of penalties. Section 2 of the Norwegian Public Library Act states that “The activities of public libraries also include services for patients in hospitals and health institutions, and others who have particular difficulty in using a public library,” and Section 14 states that “Special central government grants may be given for specific library purposes which do not naturally fall within the sphere of responsibility of individual municipalities. . . .”

A prisoner’s right to receive library services is stated in Section 1 of the Norwegian Public Library Act, which reads that “Public libraries shall be responsible for promoting knowledge, education and other cultural activities by providing access to information and by making available books and
other suitable material, free of charge, to everyone residing in Norway.” Further, Section 4 of the act relating to the implementation of penalties states that through cooperation with other public bodies, the Norwegian Correctional Services must ensure that convicted persons and prisoners in custody receive the services to which they are entitled by law. In addition to these provisions, the Education Act of 1998 (the act relating to primary and secondary education) mandates that students in Norwegian schools have access to school libraries, which also applies to students enrolled in prison education programs.

Sweden

Prison library services have taken a different route in Sweden. In 1958, as the first of the Scandinavian countries, Sweden implemented a service structure that gave the municipal public libraries responsibility for library services to prisons in their community. The public libraries received state compensation for this service in the form of a fixed amount per year per prison inmate place (Källqvist, 1970). This amount, however, remained unchanged for more than ten years, and the municipalities consequently did not receive full compensation for actual expenses. The compensation amount was intended to cover only access to reading materials, while staffing of the library was to be the responsibility of the prison. In the latter half of the 1960s, more attention was focused on the need for prisoners to have access to a professional librarian. This led some public libraries to create outreach-type services to the prison. These services received better funding through development grants. The fixed-rate compensation model had over the years led to the level of prison library services being dependent on the fluctuating economic situation of municipalities. This situation had the effect of creating significant inequality of service among the prison facilities, and in 1971, a five-year plan was developed to upgrade libraries in institutions and incarceration facilities. A position as library consultant was also established by the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, but it was then abolished in 1989. While Norway centralized the responsibility for prison library services, the Prison and Probation Service in Sweden decided in 1993/94 to decentralize this responsibility and turn it over to regional or local authorities. This meant that each prison managed its own budget and that prison libraries had to compete with other institution leisure programs for funding. No standard service agreements were promulgated, and each prison was to negotiate its own service agreement with the public library. There were cases of prisons choosing to run the library themselves rather than contracting for services.

The Swedish Library Act contains no mandates for municipalities to provide library services in prison and probation facilities. Public libraries that do provide services are entitled to charge for the costs of visits and any work in the institutions. The prison and probation service is regulated
by a series of policies from the Ministry of Justice. These policies state that a prisoner must be able to borrow books, which can be accomplished through cooperation between the municipal library and the prison and probation service. The 1974 Act relating to correctional services in institutions also states that prisoners must be given the opportunity for appropriate occupation, including work assignments or enrollment in education. The specific rights of the inmates are also listed, including access to books, newspapers, and other reading materials. In 2001, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service makes references to the IFLA guidelines for library services to prisoners, the guidelines by the Council of Europe, and to the United Nations standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners. All these documents recommend cooperation between prison authorities and public libraries and that interlibrary loan be provided to prisoners with special needs. The policies of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service give general direction for cooperation with public libraries with the aim of facilitating greater equity, as well as enhancement of prison library services.

**Denmark**

In 1968, the Ministry of Justice appointed a committee to study the prison library situation in Denmark (Frisvold, 1979). The committee recommended that prison libraries be structured as branches of local public libraries and that existing collections of books be gradually replaced by deposit collections provided by the public libraries. Some materials, however, were to remain as a permanent site collection, including handbooks, magazines, reference works, and hobby books. Lending services were supposed to be managed by a qualified librarian from the public library. The public libraries were to be compensated for these services. After a trial period, this service structure was adopted throughout the country. In 2001, the law relating to enforcement of penalties went into effect, and Section 58 includes a statement about prisoners’ right to utilize public library services and access their collections. In this context, the law also states that inmates must be given the opportunity to keep informed through newspapers, radio, and television. Foreign prisoners are also to be provided with newspapers, magazines, and books in their own language.

In 2006, a new agreement went into effect between local government authorities and the Danish Prison and Probation Service on library services in the country’s detention facilities (E. Isen, personal communication, January 16, 2010). This agreement also included a financing formula, specifying annual allocation amounts that were subject to periodic adjustments, according to general price indexes, the cost of books, and salary increases. The new agreement meant that all detention (i.e., pre-conviction) facilities would have guaranteed access to public library services with funding coming from the state. The prisons (i.e., postconviction
facilities), however, would have to draw up their own service agreements with the local government authority (municipality or county). The Danish Agency for Libraries and Media (national directorate) is not administratively responsible for services to detention facilities and prisons, unlike the structure in Norway, where the National Library carries this responsibility.

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In spite of the different roads taken to ensure a modern and comprehensive prison library service, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark were all guided along the way by progressive principles and adherence to the philosophy of human dignity and equality, as expressed in both the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (1977) and the European Prison Rules (1987). The latter document also specifically addresses the provision of library services: “Every institution shall have a library for the use of all categories of prisoners, adequately stocked with a wide range of both recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to make full use of it. Wherever possible the prison library should be organised in cooperation with community library services” (28.5).

**Recent Developments in Norway**

In 1992, the Norwegian Directorate for Public and School Libraries drew up a plan to update prison library services. The goal was to achieve full coverage of all the prisons, and in 1996 the Norwegian Parliament allocated the sum of 500,000 Norwegian kroner for the establishment of one new prison library. This was to be the first step of a five-year upgrading plan. The Parliament justified this expenditure by emphasizing the importance of prison libraries not only for recreational pursuits, but also for education, literacy improvement, socialization, and improvement of the general prison environment. The Parliament, however, did not allocate any more money until 2001, when one more prison library was established.

In 2003, the ABM-utvikling undertook another survey of library services in all prison facilities. The survey results revealed that the existing service structure was inadequate and covered only 55 percent of the prison population at the sites where a need had been identified. This excluded sites where inmates were allowed to visit the public library in person on a weekly basis, since state financing was not considered necessary in these cases. Approximately half of the remaining 45 percent received some form of library service. Inmates in the remaining prisons had no library service at all. The level of services at the sites that did not receive state-level funding was uneven and generally quite poor. In many cases,
one could not even describe the collections and services as a “library” \( (\textit{Biblioteket—Det normale rommet i fengselet}, 2005) \). An urgent need therefore existed to include all the prison sites in state-level funding.

Over the years after the establishment of the prison library services in the 1980s, it had gradually become clear that budget allocations had not kept pace with increasing book prices and salaries—even for those sites that received state funding. As a result, differences in service levels had gradually developed, leaving the first established prison libraries behind. This difficult situation formed the background for a conference in November 2003, attended by both members of Parliament and the undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs. The remarks on behalf of the cabinet minister and from the members of Parliament reflected a wide agreement on the need to increase funding.

The first budget increase for prison libraries was included in the 2005 national budget. It was for one million Norwegian kroner—to fund the establishment of two new prison libraries. Since then, each year has brought new increases, which has made it possible to enhance existing services and establish services in new prisons. In 2007, the ABM-utvikling published \textit{Bibliotektjenester i fengsel—En plan for 2007–2009} (Library Services in Prisons—A Plan for 2007–2009). The plan described existing needs and listed the costs of achieving equity of services to all incarcerated persons within the designated time period. The plan also contained guidelines for staffing, size of collections, and other expenses, in order to more accurately calculate budget allocations for each service site. In line with IFLA’s 1995 \textit{Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners}, the plan states that prisons with more than twenty-five inmates are to have their own prison library and their own collections as well as a librarian. These recommendations were to be considered as minimally acceptable service levels, which might need to be increased, if local conditions warranted. At locations where the prison facility was too small to have its own library, the public library was to provide “alternative” services. In 2007, there were twenty-two prison library service sites. The services covered 2,346 inmate places in prisons with populations of 44 to 220 individuals. The 2006/7 survey had shown that there was still a need to extend library services to 850 inmate places in twenty-three institutions.

As mentioned earlier, the Norwegian prison library landscape consists of many relatively small units. The guidelines recommend that for the smaller prison libraries there should be sufficient funds to employ at least one 0.5 FTE librarian. There should also be funds to maintain a collection of 2,500 items (various formats) and to replace 10 percent of a collection each year. The numbers for the largest prisons were 1.5 FTE positions for librarians and funds to maintain a collection of 5,500 items. In line with IFLA’s guidelines, start-up funds were also to be provided to purchase half
the minimum stock and employ the required professional staff. Inmate workers could form part of the library staff, although their pay is not included in the state grants to the prisons. And the inmate workers are not to be employed instead of librarians. The libraries have some discretion in how they utilize the state grants, allowing them to meet local priorities.

The ABM-utvikling and the Norwegian Correctional Services Administration have jointly decided which prisons should be given priority for the establishment of new libraries. In 2010, there are sufficient funds to purchase library services for all prisoners who are not able to visit the local public library. So thirty years after the first attempts to structure and finance prison library services, full coverage of all sites has been achieved. Since 2005, substantial upgrading of existing prison libraries has also occurred, and state allocations have almost quadrupled.

The ups and downs of funding and support for prison libraries since 1980 have, as in other areas of the public sector, depended heavily on the prevalent political climate. Of major importance is the role played by the national prison and correctional services authority, and their policies affect the actual library situation in the country. The parliamentary report, Straff som hjelper [Penalties That Help], (St.meld.nr.37) is very supportive of prison libraries and their role as a cultural agent. The importance of culture in prison is highlighted, as expressed in the following statement (author’s translation):

Culture must form part of the daily activities in prison in the same way it does in society as a whole. It gives individuals the opportunity to experience new and positive aspects of life and of themselves. Through culture, self-understanding and self-reflection change. Culture is a relational and interactive process that entails creating meaning, communicating with each other, and organizing social life. Cultural activities can generate aspects of general humaneness and general education that increase the ability to cope with life. Good cultural provisions are thus important in the work of rehabilitating persons convicted of a crime, both for the individual’s personal development and as a gateway to positive social environments. Culture in the correctional services therefore aims at preparing prison inmates for life after their release.

The last ten years have seen rapid developments in public library services, and the following section will examine how these changes also influence the type and level of services a prison library is able to offer.

What Is a Good Prison Library Service? The Example of Norway

The Norwegian Public Library Act entitles all who live in Norway to use public library facilities. Prison libraries constitute an adaptation of this provision for individuals who are unable to use the public library. In principle, prisoners should therefore be able to access library services comparable to those provided in the “free” community. It is the framework
around the service provision that is different. Prison security rules and physical limitations pose unique challenges for those who try to operate a “normal” library. And the prevailing national policy on libraries impacts not only public libraries, but also prison libraries.

**Library Policy in Norway**

In 2006, the report *Bibliotekreform 2014* (Library Reform 2014) was issued by the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority (ABM-utvikling), commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs. The starting point for the report was the “white paper” on culture, *Kulturpolitikk fram mot 2014* (Culture Policy up to 2014) (St.meld.nr.48, 2002–2003), mentioned earlier. A major objective of *Library Reform 2014* was to identify the role and future challenges to the library sector in a modern information and knowledge society. The report was to assess the functions of the library in its role as a cultural institution and, specifically, in the management of knowledge and information. A sub-issue was to assess the library’s role as a social space for different groups of people. Analyses were conducted of the library landscape in a functional and societal context. This included identifying any “special” library services—including prison library services—and the best methods for their delivery. *Library Reform 2014* proposed strategies and specific measures for future improvement of the library sector as a whole. These included recommendations for the strengthening of prison libraries. Special reference was also made to the challenges presented by prison policies that restrict access for inmates to the Internet.

Report no. 23 to the Storting was issued in April 2009: *Libraries—Knowledge Commons, Meeting Place and Cultural Arena in a Digital Age*. The main purpose of the report is to develop robust and adaptable libraries that are responsive to the demands of the public. The report states that the overriding objective of cultural policy is to ensure that everyone has access to art and culture, regardless of their geographic location or economic and social situation. The government promises that its investment in culture will reach 1 percent of the national budget by 2014. It will also be supportive of multicultural initiatives in all areas of cultural life and will help create better social meeting spaces. It is emphasized that Norway is an inclusive society where everyone has equal rights as well as the responsibility to participate in society and the labor force.

Libraries are to be considered meeting places and important arenas to further the government’s culture and knowledge policy. They actively strengthen democracy and freedom of expression by guaranteeing access to information for all, by mediating and managing Norwegian literature and literary heritage, by contributing to literacy and the love of reading, and by providing access to technology. These roles present several challenges: first and foremost, responding to the needs of users, including those with special needs. Incarcerated people represent one such user
group. In 2003, the FaFo Institute for Labour and Social Research (a trade union center for research and documentation) examined the living conditions of inmates in Norwegian prisons and published the findings in the report *Levekår blant innsatte* (Living Conditions of Prison Inmates) (Fristad & Hansen, 2004).

The data showed that two-thirds of the inmates had serious problems related to family background and that three out of ten had family members who had served time in prison. Their educational level was generally low, and they had no significant work experience. A third of them had no permanent home, many struggled with poor health, and a disproportionately high percentage had mental health problems. Six out of ten were abusers of drugs or alcohol. In addition to these problems, many had reading disabilities or reading difficulties. A much smaller percentage of prison inmates had a higher education than was the case in the general population. In the Scandinavian countries, approximately a quarter of all prisoners are foreigners: Denmark 22.9 percent, Norway 24.8 percent, and Sweden 21.7 percent (Aebi & Delgrande, 2010). The foreign prisoners represent a large number of different language groups, which creates a challenge to the libraries in terms of providing adequate foreign language collections.

It is obvious that the needs of prison library users are extensive and very complex. In the following section, we will see how the libraries meet these needs within the restrictive prison environment. We will examine the functions of the prison library and highlight some successful programs and projects.

**Access to Materials and Information**

Prison library staff must be capable of identifying the reading and information needs and interests of their users. Many inmates are avid readers and demand a wide variety of materials at fairly high reading levels, while others are weak readers, have little education, or are not familiar with books and reading. Audio books can be a good gateway to reading for these individuals. Non-print materials and materials in alternative formats (e.g., easy-to-read) are as important in the prison library—if not more so—as they are in libraries outside. The organization called Books for Everyone, with support from ABM-utvikling, developed a project that provides books for prison inmates. This project was an extension of an existing program directed at public libraries. Books for Everyone sends packages of easy-to-read titles and also works with the Red Cross visitor service, helping inmates with reading activities during visits.

The need for foreign language materials has already been mentioned. All the Scandinavian countries emphasize cooperation between prison and public libraries, especially for interlibrary loan services and network access to the widest range of resources. This cooperation is especially important for access to resources in other languages. Deposit collections of
such materials are often available through services at the national level. Having nationwide access to information resources is especially important for inmates who are involved in advanced studies.

Half of the inmates have children, so it is important that children’s books are available when the children visit. In Denmark, all prisons are receiving free children’s books in 2010 through the Bogstart project, so that prisoners can read with their children. This project was launched by the Danish Agency for Libraries and Media and was originally aimed at designated geographical areas, where families were invited to the public library to receive free books for their children. It is an example of how projects outside prison can easily be duplicated in a prison setting. Another literary project is Lyden av lesing (The Sound of Reading), run by the Norwegian Correctional Services. Here the prisoners record bedtime stories for their children, which can then be played at home. This project is the Norwegian variation of the English Big Book Share program from 2004. Such parent-child programs help the inmates maintain their parental role, and the joint reading activities help normalize the relationship between parent and child.

Prisoners are largely denied access to the Internet—an important information resource in modern life for other people. Public libraries provide electronic catalogs and computers for searching the Internet as part of their core services. So in this area, prison libraries remain far behind. At the sites where the prison librarians do have Internet access, it is not always feasible for the librarians to conduct Internet searches on behalf of the inmates, primarily due to time restraints but also—in the case of foreign inmates—due to the lack of the necessary language skills.

It is also difficult for the libraries to support informal learning without offering Internet access. In the years ahead, when a growing number of library services and information resources will be available online only, this problem will become increasingly more serious. The formal education programs in prison are more advanced in this area and have been able to offer limited Internet access through secure networks. It will be a great step forward for the libraries if similar solutions can be found for them without jeopardizing prison security.

Reader Guidance and Reading Promotion
The library does not provide access to knowledge, culture, and literature by simply making information resources available. These resources must be promoted, which requires active facilitation by library staff. Libraries should encourage not only the love of reading, but also provide the tools to enhance reading skills. This can be accomplished by actively “marketing” books and other resources to library users, whether they reside inside or outside prison. Prison librarians must also promote library resources and services to prison staff, some of whom may be unfamiliar with what
libraries have to offer. Promotional activities may take the form of literature evenings or other cultural events where authors, actors, or other speakers are invited to discuss new books or other relevant topics. Such events need be no different than those organized in libraries outside. Since prisoners have limited opportunities to participate in other cultural events, these library activities are even more important. In Norway, the project *Fengselsbiblioteket—En kilde til økt livskvalitet?* (The Prison Library—A Source for Greater Quality of Life?) has been introduced at Oslo Prison with support from ABM-utvikling. The goal is to improve the quality of life of prisoners while they serve their sentences. The project includes many library activities, like author visits, lectures, a film seminar, a book café, poetry readings and competitions, group readings, writing workshops, cartoon classes, literary quizzes, book presentations, a philosophy café led by a philosopher, art exhibits, and a seminar on how to use public libraries. One notable omission is a workshop on the Internet. All these activities illustrate the role of the library as a suitable and welcoming space for leisure and self-directed activities.

**Access to the Library**

Space requirements in prison libraries are very similar to those for other types of libraries. The premises must be inviting and designed for library functions, with hours and location convenient for the user. These requirements can, however, pose some unique challenges in a prison setting. In Norway, suitable library space has at times not been available when a new prison was established, later requiring alterations to existing premises or the building of new premises. In some cases, the location of the library did not allow for easy access from education or leisure activity areas. And the need to have staff accompany an inmate to the library places extra strain on the prison operation and discourages use of the library.

It is of great importance that library professionals are consulted when new prisons are being planned, so that they can provide input and expertise on the appropriate design for optimal functionality. Fortunately, library professionals were involved in the planning of Norway’s newest prison that opened this year (2010). The library’s role as a meeting area and social space is particularly important in the prison environment, where this space functions almost like a sanctuary—a place where one can find solace and peace in an otherwise stressful environment. It is also one of the few places within the prison where an inmate is free to exercise his own choice. Not all prisoners have the opportunity to visit the library in person, so library staff must devise various forms of outreach services, including cell visits. The practical arrangements for inmate visits to the library, as well as outreach activities, depend to a great extent on a good working relationship between the library and the prison administration and security staff.
Qualifications of Library Staff
Proper qualifications of the professional staff are vital to a successful prison library operation. The Scandinavian model of employing librarians with public library qualifications and experience is a good way of guaranteeing a high level of professionalism in a wide range of library functions and services. But close contact with a diverse group of inmate users requires not only professional skills, but also good communication skills, good judgment, patience, and a willingness to help. Experience in the fields of education, psychology, and social work can be most helpful for prison librarians. Many prisons employ inmate workers in the library, and such jobs are very desirable. The librarian must be able to train and supervise these workers, which can be time consuming. And last, but not least, the librarian must be actively cooperating with all prison departments and programs in order to receive the necessary administrative support and encouragement.

The Way Ahead for Norwegian Prison Libraries
The authors of this article are employed by the agency that supervises the administration of the Norwegian public library system and the prison library services. Their work at the national level gives them a particular perspective, which is focused primarily on Norwegian library issues.

Prison libraries in Norway function within clearly defined statutory parameters. Their services, collections, and staff are funded at the national level. The Norwegian Correctional Services finance the prison library premises. The National Library administers the prison library services on behalf of the Ministry of Culture. Over the thirty-year life of this service structure, the quality of the library provisions for inmates has varied greatly. The adoption of this service model did not automatically release the resources to provide the mandated services. Recent years, however, have seen a considerable increase in financial support, which has resulted in much more equity of service. The current prison library situation can therefore be described as quite good, although certain challenges remain.

The fact that fiscal responsibility is shared between the cultural and the judicial sectors creates problems of coordination and priorities. At times, a library service at a new facility had to begin operations before the premises were ready. There are also cases where library premises in new prisons have remained empty or have been allocated to other purposes while waiting for funding to materialize. At the same time, the current service model ensures that competent staff at all levels make the necessary management decisions and that library services are monitored and evaluated regularly.

In recent years, efforts at the national level have been directed primarily toward expansion of services and ensuring that existing services meet
minimum standards. Future efforts will no doubt focus more on enhancing the content of library programs and cultural activities, including reading promotion and other provisions that improve the quality of life for incarcerated persons and prepare them for release to society.

Are Norwegian prison library services adequate? The present situation still faces us with challenges, and as society changes, so does the answer to what constitutes adequate services. New challenges will develop that determine how we define adequacy and success. It is safe to say, however, that a good foundation has been established from which to meet the needs of today, as well as those of tomorrow.

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