Just Collaboration or Really Something Else?
On Joint Use Libraries and Normative Institutional Change with Two Examples from Sweden

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ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to discuss the establishment of joint use libraries as something more than just administrative collaboration. It focuses on joint use solutions between public libraries and university college libraries. Normative institutionalism is used as a theoretical framework for the discussion, which draws from studies on and experiences of the establishment of two joint use libraries in Sweden: Sambiblioteket in Härnösand and Almedalsbiblioteket in Visby. Conclusions are drawn that show that the establishment of joint use libraries is a very complex process of change. Norms and values of the collaborating units are challenged, and the institutional identities of participating libraries as well as the professional identities of the librarians are subject to change. This is due to a shift in normative institutional identity, which makes it possible to claim that joint use libraries may actually be regarded as a new form of library with a unique identity. In claiming this, a need for further library and information science research on joint use libraries is called for.

INTRODUCTION

> The library as a medium of communication is going to have its impact upon the communication of society too. It is our objective, our role in society, our dedicated purpose, to make this communication as complete as possible. (Shera, 1970, p. 76)

A major activity in political institutions is educating individuals into knowledgeable citizens. A knowledgeable citizen is one who is familiar with the rules of appropriate behavior and with the moral and intellectual virtues of the polity, and who thus knows the institutional reasons

> for behaviors, and can justify them by reference to the requirements
> of a larger order. (March & Olsen, 1989, p. 161)

These two quotes say something essential about the point of departure for any analysis of library change and development. The first is stated within the context of librarianship, the second within the normative institutionalism that has reshaped political science during the last two decades (Peters, 1999). When considering joint use libraries, they point directly to various aspects that are at the center of interest. The discussion in this article will emanate from the experiences of establishing joint use libraries in Sweden. As such, joint use libraries are nothing new in Sweden. In 1842 a national school bill was passed by King Carl XIV Johan and the Swedish Parliament that encouraged elementary schools all over the country to establish library activities. In many cases this requirement was solved practically by placing the local parish library within the school building as a combined school and community library for the benefit of the working classes or, in most places, country folk. These kinds of libraries have been with us ever since, although they have changed and developed over time. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, a new form of joint use library emerged. Almost simultaneously in the two towns of Härnösand and Visby, new libraries were established combining the services of the local public library with those of the local university college library. These two libraries have been put forward, in the Swedish discussion, as something new, and, although the form of integration differs between the collaborating library units, the phenomenon as such has been heralded as something that meets the requirements of the knowledge society.

I will make a brief presentation of these two libraries, Sambiblioteket[1] in Härnösand and Almedalsbiblioteket in Visby. However, the emphasis will not be on the actual description but rather on the question of what is actually "new" in these libraries from an institutional point of view. Is it possible to speak of these joint use libraries as a whole new form of library, or are they merely an administrative collaboration aiming to, in the words of Ranganathan (1931), "save the time of the user"? My initial claim, to which I will return, is that the creation of a joint use library from one public library and one academic library is problematic due to differences in institutional logic and affiliations. Public libraries are best viewed as political institutions, while academic libraries relate more to the world of "science" or "education." Reading the international literature on joint use libraries, it is clear that it is time to move beyond the production of yet another set of guidelines for the implementation or evaluation of singular library initiatives. This article is an attempt in such a direction.

What Is a Library?

The fundamental question "What is a library?" is rarely asked. It is relevant, however, in relation to the establishment of joint use libraries. At

least since Lowell Martin published his influential essay "The American Public Library as a Social Institution" in *Library Quarterly* in 1937, libraries have been seen as institutions influenced by social and political changes, driven by an idea of being in some way beneficial for contemporary society. In the late 1960s Jesse Shera modified this view by suggesting that libraries should be seen rather as agencies that implement the underlying idea of the institution, which he somewhat vaguely labels "knowledge," equivalent to, for example, marriage, law, and religion. He motivates the distinction between institution and agency as follows: "I prefer to think of the library as a social agency—as an agency rather than as an institution—because, I think there is a real distinction between the great concepts like family, religion, law, and so on, and the agencies that are responsible for implementing the basic underlying bodies of belief" (Shera, 1970, p. 60). With this distinction, he makes way for the idea that libraries can exert an influence on society as a whole, something that is a core issue in social epistemology, the theoretical foundation of librarianship first formulated by Margaret Egan and Jesse Shera in 1952. It is important to mention this perspective, proposed by Shera, as most library and information science (LIS) research devoted to library issues today assumes that the library as an institution is more or less instrumentally influenced by society, but seldom the other way around. Where the library is seen to have an influence is in the sphere of general political thoughts such as the development of democracy in fostering citizens to become active participants in democratic processes. Seen as merely an institution, libraries can be defined as rather passive and at best responsive to social change. Defining them as agencies in Shera's sense, they might be understood as active in propagating and accomplishing social development. This view is further compatible with the so-called new institutionalism that has grown within political science over the last two decades. This refutes the traditional theory of institutions as reductionstic, instrumental, and functionalistic. New institutionalism has the following characteristics in analyzing political action and institutions: "Rather than collective action being the major conundrum that it is for the economists, collective action should become . . . the dominant approach to understanding political life. Further, the relationship between political collectivities and their socio-economic environment should be reciprocal, with politics having the option of shaping society as much as society does of shaping politics" (Peters, 1999, p. 17).

New institutionalism shows itself in many guises, but one that is particularly suitable for the analysis of libraries and issues related to their institutional characteristics is normative institutionalism as presented by James G. March and Johan P. Olsen (1989) in direct opposition to rational choice theory or rational choice institutionalism. I will use their theory, which combines the reciprocity of social environments and institutional development with the importance of shared values and meaning between

members (or agents) of an institution, to create an understanding of the problems that make joint use libraries something more than just issues of administration.

The definition of the conceptual foundation of a library is not so un-ambiguous that it is possible to define all types of libraries in the same way. In Sweden the division between public libraries and academic libraries into two separate communities has traditionally been very distinct. This alone is enough to claim that a library is not to be defined by what it does in a tech-nical or administrative sense but rather by what aims it sets out to fulfil. In the literature on joint use libraries, some effort has been put into definition. One of the more authoritative is provided by Alan Bundy. In his words, a joint use library is "a library in which two or more distinct library services providers, usually a school and a public library, serve their client groups in the same building, based on an agreement that specifies the relation-ship between the providers" (2003, p. 129). Focusing on joint use libraries combining public libraries and university libraries, Kathleen Imhoff gives a somewhat similar definition: "A joint use library involves two or more libraries of different types coming together to provide services in a single building operating cooperatively to provide resources, such as curriculum support, bibliographic instruction, and information literacy to the general public and/or students, faculty and administrators" (2001, p. 18–19). Both of these definitions are administrative rather than conceptual, and neither of them touches upon the problematic issue of what institutional "idea" the joint use library, seen as an institutional agency, is set to implement. In order to do so we must direct ourselves away from the administrative aspects of the library and instead focus on conceptual and situational aspects.

The conceptual aspect of a definition of any kind of library can take its departure in various uses of the term *library* itself and metaphors used to denote the use of libraries in society. Arja Mäntykangas (1999) claims that we really only can agree upon a basic conceptual definition of a library that is fundamentally linked to the existence of a limited, organized collection of documents. As soon as we include other aspects, we start to disagree, due mostly to the variety of situational aspects such as social and educational settings, which influence, and are influenced by, the institutional identity of the singular library. Romulo Enmark sees further reasons for the conceptual confusion surrounding our understanding of the library: "There is a risk that the terminology has not in all respects been created on the premises of the world of the library. For example, it is possible that the frequent use of the concept of information is primarily associated with visions that have arisen outside the world of the library, that is industrial and technological dreams of a future information society" (1990, pp. 57–58).

Today, fifteen years on, we see that the information society is no longer in the future, but we still experience a prevalent discomfort in a concept of information that governs much of the contemporary library discourse.

The problem of a deflated meaning of information as a concept due to frequent, unreflective overexposure and use in both LIS research and practical librarianship has lately been acknowledged by several scholars, such as Jonathan Furner (2004) and Bernd Frohmann (2004).

The situational aspects of libraries and librarianship do, in many ways, contradict the very thought of a general conceptual foundation of "the library" as advocated by Shera. Instead they indicate a need to look for individual cultural and social settings in order to define the relations between different types of libraries aiming at the implementation of different institutional "ideas." This is sometimes described as an institutional perspective, or even paradigm, within LIS (Hansson, 2004), and the use of examples from different local community settings in descriptions of joint use library activities are ubiquitous in the literature. Two good examples of this are L. J. Amey's anthology *Combining Libraries: The Canadian and Australian Experience* (1987) and Jens Thorhauge's compilation *Nordic Public Libraries: The Nordic Cultural Sphere and Its Public Libraries* (2002). It is more unusual, however, to use local community conditions and initiatives as a means of grasping essential features of certain types of libraries in a manner that goes beyond the strictly administrative definitions such as the ones by Bundy and Imhoff. In order to reach a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that trigger the establishment of joint use libraries by combining university college libraries and public libraries in Sweden, I will now turn to a primarily situational analysis of the libraries in Härnösand and Visby. A brief description of the libraries will be followed by a conceptual discussion based on the social, political, and cultural aspects of Swedish library development.

Two Kinds of Joint Use Libraries

In a *Resource Sharing and Information Networks* special issue on joint use libraries, William Miller states that "the fastest growing trend now is for academic libraries (community college and university) or academic and public libraries to come together in a variety of ways" (Miller, 2001, p. 2). The collaboration between libraries can take on different forms. Karen Dornseif identifies three levels of integration: minimal, selective, and full (2001, pp. 107–108). *Minimal integration* basically consists of a simple colocation of two libraries with preserved individual identities and services. This form is mainly chosen by large, well-established libraries anxious to keep their reputation or traditional identity. *Selective integration* can take different forms. The most common is, perhaps, where the different libraries bring their specific strengths to the collaboration. The academic library might, for example, take on the responsibility for reference services, while the public library develops circulation, popular materials, and activities that go beyond document bound services, such as exhibitions, performances, storytelling, and counselling (Matarasso, 1989; Black & Muddiman, 1997).

Another form is to vary the staff over the day in order to meet the requirements of different user groups that come to the library at different times of the day; students meet academic librarians during the day, and the public meets public librarians during evenings and weekends. *Full integration* is, perhaps, the most innovative way of working in a joint use library. It means that the libraries unite behind one mission that equally reformulates the former mission of the public library as well as that of the academic library. This kind of joint use library is, however, relatively rare.

The libraries in Härnösand and Visby represent different levels of integration and are of two different kinds. They have earlier been briefly presented in the international literature by Bundy (2003) and Kratz (2003). Sambiblioteket in Härnösand has developed a form of selective integration, while Almedalsbiblioteket has more the character of a fully integrated library. In both cases all services from the former separate libraries have been kept intact in, at least, a superficial sense. There are, however, significant differences in the ways problems and tasks are addressed.

Like most joint use libraries, Sambiblioteket and Almedalsbiblioteket are situated in small towns rather distant from cultural and economic centers, which in Sweden are restricted to three regions: the Stockholm area, the Gothenburg region in the west, and the Malmö/Lund region in the south. Both Visby and Härnösand have, however, rather distinct roles in Swedish history. Härnösand has been labelled "the Athens of Northern Sweden," and one of the first senior high schools in Sweden was established there in 1649. Today, the town has about 25,000 inhabitants in a part of Sweden that is dominated by traditional heavy forest industry and plagued by depopulation. Visby is one of the oldest towns in Sweden and is situated on the large island Gotland in the middle of the Baltic Sea. Its importance during the medieval Hansa trade union was crucial, and the town is still dominated by its internationally famous town wall and several other medieval buildings and sites. Today, Gotland, with Visby as its center, forms a region primarily directed toward tourism and culture, with about 57,000 inhabitants living on the whole island.

PREPARATORY PROCESS

The thought of a joint use library in Visby emerged alongside the development of the local university college, which was fully established in 1998. Many students preferred the public library to the university college library as their primary resource for information. An organized cooperation between the two libraries, it seemed, would suit this user group well. The main argument for the public library to engage in the issue was a badly felt need for more space. The thought of co-locating the two libraries was not received well among all user groups. While most students welcomed the merging of the two libraries, a loud and afflicted debate arose among the public library's traditional user groups. This discussion was played out in

the local media. The new library was to be bigger and more modern than the old public library, but it was to be placed outside the town center, close to the university college. There was a widespread fear that the university college library would "eat" the public library and that the joint use library would become a library more suited for students than for the general public. Widmark (2000) identifies a strong ideological movement within the public library debate emphasizing the different traditions and fundamental values attributed to each of the libraries: "Vi mot dem, folket mot eliten, arbetare mot studenter, hög, mot lågutbildade, hög- mot lågavlönade och ungdomar mot barn/gamla. Folkbiblioteket med dess ideologiska bas har setts som en institution för nå ett jämlikare samhälle . . . Att folkbiblioteken slås samman med en institution som endast varit förunnat ett fåtal kan kännas skrämmande" (2000, p. 32).[2] Several of the participants in the discussion saw the public library as a counterpoint to formal education, a space where free *bildung* could be obtained. That public libraries are generally regarded as ideological institutions is not surprising. It is interesting, however, to see the amount of repressive ideology that is placed on the formal education sector, and thus the libraries affiliated with it, by the general public, especially since the democratization and decentralization of higher education in Sweden has been going on for well over thirty years.

Some of the public library staff shared the fears of the public at the beginning of the project, but most could see the benefits of better facilities, even though the library was to move from the very advantageous location, where it had for a long time been an integral part of people's local identity and community life. Josefsson (2000) shows in an interview study concerning the motivations for different forms of collaborations between university college libraries and public libraries that many worried that the moving of the library in Visby would mean a change of the local identity in a way that would be beneficial for, primarily, the local university college.

In a public investigation made prior to the establishment of Almedalsbiblioteket, it was clear that the new joint use solution was, in fact, developed primarily to meet the needs of the university college as a way of increasing support to, for example, the Gotland Centre for Baltic Studies, the Centre for the Viking Heritage, and the Hanseatic Network—all networks and centers of excellence with highly qualified academics needing information provision (Olausson, 1997). The investigation states the following as the most important points of departure for the joint use library project:

- Society heads toward a knowledge society
- Lifelong learning and research is what takes us from the industrial era to a post-industrial era,
- Small and medium sized, knowledge intense enterprises need to be established in order to decrease unemployment not only in the large cities but in the remote regions as well

- The borders between formal, postgraduate education and informal, lifelong learning are diminishing
- The prerequisites for learning and research are good teachers, adequate pedagogical methods, and rich information resources, stimulating study environments, curiosity, and high motivation among students (Olausson, 1997, p. 89)

In the face of this, some of the public librarians and much of the public with no links to the university college or the student community became anxious and were angered. These kinds of conflicts, however, do not seem to be unique to the situation in Visby but instead are rather common. Sometimes it can be reversed, meaning that students and academic librarians fear that public access, or perhaps rather an increased public use of the university library collections, will mean that material will be unavailable for students when they need it. This was, for example, the case with the largest joint use library in the world, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library in San Jose, California (Kauppila & Russell, 2003).

The phase initiating the establishment of Sambiblioteket in Härnösand looks slightly different from the one in Visby. The main motive for the development into a joint use library was not so much the lack of resources and space in the former libraries, although this was important. Instead, a sense of shared community responsibility is visible through the whole planning process of the project. The public library and the university college decided to join forces with a holistic view of community library service in mind, one that did not differentiate between students and academics on the one hand, and the so-called general public on the other. The new library was seen as a way for a small town to provide an optimal library and information service to its citizens. Administratively separate, but united in the face of the users, the new library was seen by most as a way of establishing Härnösand in the knowledge society with the university college as one of its epicenters. The stages of development are described from a number of economic, practical, and emotional aspects in *Sambiblioteket: från idé till verklighet* (Gillgren, 2000). In an article in the *Nordic Journal of Documentation,* the directors of the three libraries involved—the local public library, the university college library, and the regional library—stated a vision of what was to come:

> Sambiblioteket skall vara en kunskapscentral för yrkesutövare, studerande på alla nivåer, företagare och gemene man. Men sambiblioteket skall också erbjuda miljöer för stillhet och eftertanke, förströelse och samtal. Där skall också finnas en väl utvecklad verksamhet för barn och unga där man tillämpar ny rön om inlärning och där fantasi och skapande stimuleras. Det skall naturligtvis också uppfylla de krav på fysisk miljö, teknisk utrustning och medier som funktionshindrade ställer på biblioteket. (Gómez, Hultén & Drehmer, 1998a, p. 121)[3]

The idea of a joint use library was conceived in Härnösand in the mid–1980s, but for many reasons it could not be initiated until the late 1990s. The project was dominated by an integrated view of library services where the traditional ideological differences between the academic library sector and the public libraries were overlooked in favor of the recognition of each other's strengths. This is apparent in Josefsson (2000), who shows that the kind of conflict visible in Visby is much less emphasized in Härnösand, even if it is possible to sense concern for a development that is disadvantageous to some of the traditional public library user groups. When analyzing the process prior to the establishment of the new library, Sundin (1999) notes that there were very few people who had any actual insight to the project and its rather complex organization. The staffs of the different units were set to focus on the contribution of their own organization without any connection to the "large picture." There was an apparent gap between a discursive level upheld by an initiated few and a practical level handled by the many. Not until rather late in the process, as architectural issues were raised, was there a common ground between the libraries from which the work could be concluded.

The Problem of Organization

The organization of the library in Härnösand is not as fully integrated as in Visby. Even though the joint vision cited above was shared by all participating units, there are still three distinct library units working side by side in the library, even if it is in such a way that the user cannot tell one from the other. The units are tied together by an agreement that regulates issues like rents, inventories, and information and communication technology (ICT) development. A library council with representatives from each unit is responsible for the overall planning and management of the library, while the staffs concentrate on their various fields of expertise. In as many fields as possible, staff from the different units develop practical work and user relations together.

In Visby the two former libraries have joined, and there is now hardly any difference between public and academic librarians. With regard to the mission statements of the library, it is quite clear that the merge has been undertaken on the terms of the university college library. The Web site of Almedalsbiblioteket reveals the public library in a more subjugated position than in Sambiblioteket.[4] It would seem that the clear-cut borders between the units in Härnösand make it possible for them to keep their distinct characters and preserve their different traditional roles in relation to the very diverse user groups of the library.

However different the construction of the collaboration may be, there is one thing that unites both libraries. It is no longer possible to speak of them as either public or academic libraries. This is a more profound change

than might be understood by just examining their various administrative solutions or, more or less implicit, structures of power between different units within the organizational structure itself. Is it possible, therefore, to claim that the joint use library as a phenomenon disrupts the traditional division between different types of libraries and, if so, are we faced with a manifestation of a new library institution, or agent in Shera's sense, better equipped than previous institutions to meet the requirements of the late modern knowledge society? We might have reached a stage in social development where the sense of a scattered reality and changed relations between various forms of knowledge not only make way for new ways of doing research on and describing libraries but for new ways of performing practical librarianship as well (Hansson, 2005a). The two libraries at the center of this study raise these questions in a very direct manner.

Change and Institutional Identity

As was shown above, when Jesse Shera (1970) discusses librarianship as an institution, he claims that librarianship and libraries cannot be seen as institutions per se but rather as agents working as tools for the fulfilment of the idea, or ideology, behind a greater institution, somewhat vaguely defined as "knowledge." In the mid-1960s it was important for Shera to be specific about the view of libraries as institutions. Today, most will easily recognize this distinction as, if not trivial, at least reasonable and uncontroversial. Accepting this, we must return to the question of what institution, or institutions, libraries and librarianship are to formulate as agents and, in doing so, we need to move beyond Shera.

It is reasonable to distinguish between different institutional affiliations for different types of libraries, as well as different forms of librarianship. This is reasonable not only in an analytical sense; such distinctions are made in practice in most countries. Several scholars have argued that public libraries perhaps should not, primarily, be seen as agents within the institution of knowledge or science but rather within politics (Audunson, 1999; Hansson, 1998; McCabe, 2001; Johansson, 2004). Unlike academic librarianship's instrumental purpose in supporting the process of scientific work and development, public librarianship has a role in society that is considerably more complex, in such a way that it cannot only be defined in an instrumental relation to science, or even more broadly, knowledge production. The basic aim for public libraries, since their establishment in Sweden in the beginning of the twentieth century, has been to function as complementary to education and in such a way that they might be seen as a part of the institution of knowledge. However, their activities have always gone beyond this, and the action taken by local public libraries as creators of local community identity and providers of cultural activity and a free public space for information seeking and leisure reading outside the confinements of the educational system, places them within the realm

of politics. As agents of politics they are legitimized as a part of the institutional structure that is created by certain societies in order to secure their continuity and prevalence. In a democracy, public libraries are among the key agents that construct basic social structure, as well as reflect the fundamental values and norms necessary for democratic development. Kerslake and Kinell (1998) argue that a fundamental justification of public libraries is their connection to concepts of citizenship. If we look back over the last century, democratic development in Sweden has been strong, but it has moved forward in small steps, one at a time. Verna Pungitore notes the same when characterizing the way in which public libraries usually meet change and innovation: "Many of the transformations in public library services and programs since the turn of the century reflect non-controversial and incremental change, with perhaps a slight improvement in performance. Upon close inspection, the changes often turn out to be extensions of traditional programs that may or may not include an innovative feature" (Pungitore, 1995, p. 6). Zetterlund and Hansson (1997), Zetterlund (2004), and Hansson (2005b) confirm that this is the case, looking specifically at public library development in Sweden. While Pungitore (1995) sees this as a problematic point of departure in an analysis of how public libraries may be developed into something more innovative and dynamic, it is possible to create an understanding of why development is characterized by incremental change and not rapid innovation. It is not even necessary to regard this as a problem; rather it can be accepted that it, perhaps, could not be in any other way. The interesting question, then, becomes why there is this sudden need for a change of institutional affiliation of library and information services in a way that redefines the role of libraries in society and reformulates their overall mission statements into something we have not seen before—a redefinition and reformulation that I claim occurs in the establishment of joint use libraries. There are, of course, no clear-cut answers to this, but one key to understanding the present development might be sought within the theory of normative institutionalism (March & Olsen, 1989; Peters, 1999).

Normative institutionalism has proven interesting and fruitful in analyses of library development on several occasions (Audunson, 1999; Zetterlund, 2004). The reason for this is that, in addition to a view on institutions that is fairly common in political science and more compatible with the distinction between institutions and agents as seen in Shera, it emphasizes institutional identity, made visible through certain values, norms, and regulative rules. The boundaries between institutions and agents are not clearly defined in the writings of March and Olsen, but the distinction is there whether, for example, we view the organization as an agent or an institution or whether we see the individual in relation to an institution defined at an organizational level or more sociologically (marriage, law, education, etc.). Agents, whether individuals or organizations, develop and function within

the given institution in accordance with these norms and values, which are seen as governing the manifestations of the institution. The way in which agents adapt is called a "logic of appropriateness." This is contrasted against a logic of consequentiality that we find in systems theory and traditional institutional theory. March and Olsen maintain that

> In a logic of appropriateness . . . behaviors (beliefs as well as actions) are intentional but not willful. They involve fulfilling the obligations of a role in a situation, and so trying to determine the imperatives of holding a position. Action stems from a conception of necessity rather than preference. Within a logic of appropriateness, a sane person is one who is "in touch with identity" in the sense of maintaining consistency between behavior and a conception of self in a social role. Ambiguity or conflict in rules is typically resolved not by shifting to a logic of consequentiality and rational calculation, but by trying to clarify the rules, make distinctions, determine what the situation is and what definition "fits." (March & Olsen, 1989, pp. 160–161)

Guy Peters views another angle of the "logic of appropriateness" concept:

> The operation of the logic of appropriateness can be seen as a version of role theory. The institution defines a set of behavioral expectations for individuals in positions within the institution and then reinforces behavior that is appropriate for the role and sanctions behavior that is inappropriate. Some aspects of the role may apply to all members of the institution, while other expectations may be specific to the position held by an individual. Further, like organizational culture there may be several versions of the role among which a role occupant can pick and choose. . . . Despite the somewhat amorphous nature of a role, the concept does provide a means of linking individual behavior and the institution. (Peters, 1999, p. 30)

From these two quotes we may deduce several features pertaining to the change of institutional identity that is enacted through the establishment of joint use libraries. In doing so, of course, it must be emphasized that by "individual" I mean the individual library organization and not individuals in the sense of physical persons. The most important aspects relevant for the present analysis are the following:

• Fulfilling the obligations of an expected role
• Maintaining consistency between behavior and self in a social role
• Resolving ambiguity and conflict by situational analysis

These are complementary and distinctive enough to provide a basis for developing the argument raised by the initial question of this investigation, namely, is it possible (or at least reasonable) to view joint use libraries as a new form of institution, or should they be considered solely as a timely kind of collaboration?

OBLIGATIONS OF EXPECTED ROLES

The publicly funded libraries in Sweden have, for decades, been rather fixed in relation to the expectations placed upon them by society at large. Further, there has been little conflict and the boundaries between the different parts of the library sector have been clear both socially and professionally. The institutional roles ascribed to different libraries are largely dependent on their affiliations in the political field. Since the beginning of the 1970s, Swedish public libraries have belonged to the Department of Cultural Policy, and public library development has always been a key issue in Swedish cultural policy. The mission and expected role of public libraries has been governed largely by the general goals of cultural policy, which were determined by the government in 1974 (*Kungl. Maj:ts proposition,* 1974; Nilsson, 2003, pp. 241–255).[5] These goals envisioned the public libraries as guardians of good taste, and the most debated clause stated that the public libraries should be an active alternative to commercial forces present within culture and entertainment; besides merely presenting alternative options, they should actively work against commercialism. This was an important part of the logic of appropriateness in the 1970s in Sweden and well in line with the very left-wing social democracy, under the leadership of Olof Palme, that was in government during this period.

Academic libraries were never associated with the goals of cultural policy even if they have tasks of considerable cultural significance, primarily as memory institutions. Instead, they have been defined in relation to overall educational goals in society, with a mission more instrumentally linked to the information provision for the institutions of higher education.

The social expectations placed on the academic libraries never really interfered with those of the public libraries, at least not until the late 1990s. Then, the view on adult education and higher academic education became more important than before. The Swedish government presented a number of decisions that aimed at raising the general level of education among the population throughout the country. The most dramatic of these, perhaps, was the decision to increase the percentage of the adult population in academic studies to fifty percent. This increased political emphasis on adult education showed itself immediately within the different parts of the library sector. Primarily, the public libraries saw the usage of their services change, with numerous students obviously totally indifferent to the institutional affiliations of the library they chose to visit as long as they got what they wanted. Public libraries were expected to supply academic information in a manner that earlier had not been a prioritized service. As vast amounts of money were directed to the educational sector and library services were continually hailed as crucial in this new emerging educational superstructure that impacted the whole of society, the public librarians started to fear for the future of traditional services that were not

directed toward students, such as services for children and the elderly. We have also seen that this fear was present in the public debate concerning the establishment of the joint use library in Visby.

What has basically happened on the level of the social expectations of roles for library services are two things:

1. The part of the democratic fundament where public libraries have been central through their identity as cultural institutions has changed as education has been defined politically as the single most important factor to enhance democratic development. This is of course not anything specific for Sweden but has been crucial within the European Union since at least the mid-1990s (Thorhauge et al., 1997).

2. The boundaries between the different parts of the library sector have diminished. It has become more common, both within the library community and outside it, to talk of library and information services in a more holistic way than before. This is where the establishment of joint use libraries comes in as a manifestation of a new way of defining library and information services politically. This redefinition became politically manifest during autumn 2004, when Prime Minister Göran Persson reformed his government and created a "joint-department" for education and cultural policy. No sector was so immediately influenced by this as the library sector, having its affiliations in both these political domains. One of the most interesting manifestations of this redirection is the new joint use library.

CONSISTENCY BETWEEN BEHAVIOR AND SELF

If we focus on the consistency between the self-identity of libraries and the behavior that has characterized them in the face of new political ways of formulating expectations of the roles that they are set to fulfil, it may be of interest to resume the discussion on the "sane" behavior indicated by March and Olsen, who state that a sane person is one who is "in touch with identity" (March & Olsen 1989, p. 161). This is something that might be difficult enough for any of us, but in the political development sketched above it is clear that the identity, the self, of the academic libraries has seldom been scrutinized. Rather, it is a confirmation of the benefit of their services as instrumental information providers to students of all kinds, which is now seen as the politically correct core of library and information services in Swedish society. Instead, it is the public libraries that have to regard themselves in the mirror one more time to see if their face fits within this new ideal of beauty. The direction in which the public libraries have chosen to look, interestingly enough, is not toward the academic libraries but instead toward the users. The increasing number of students that frequent public libraries in the wake of these major political initiatives has been described, for a long time, as a major problem hindering the realization of cultural policy goals determined in 1974. In a cultural

policy revision in 1995 (*Kulturpolitikens inriktning*, 1995)[6], the goals were kept intact, and although aggressive countercultural identity was somewhat held back, many public librarians still identify with them. Thus, they regard the joining of the separate domains of cultural and educational policy as a threat to the self-identity of the libraries, not just as cultural agents, but as part of the institutional superstructure of the democratic welfare state. In today's libraries, as in many other aspects of society, the latter must be regarded as a historical state of affairs rather than a contemporary condition. A strong identity within this superstructure is well grounded in the historical development of public librarianship as one of the cornerstones in the public identity of the social democratic welfare state, something also noted by Audunson (1999). In this respect it is important to note that Swedish public libraries have their roots in a completely different soil than those of, for example, the American public libraries. The Swedish public libraries emerged from individual initiatives taken by industrial and rural workers organizing themselves in good templar movements and trade unions with the explicit goal of allowing their members to prepare to be a part of a democratic political development (Torstensson, 1995). Thus, the popular "anchorage" of public libraries in Sweden is very strong, and librarians generally tend to speak of their professional identity in relation to politically or economically disadvantaged groups in society. Students of higher education are not among those groups.

This makes it possible to understand the reactions of both the public and public librarians in the process of establishing the joint use libraries in Härnösand and Visby. We are faced with a major shift in identity that shows itself not only in the organizational and administrative collaboration with an academic library, but in more momentous and overreaching ways in the redirection of prioritized user groups and affiliations to fit emerging new political initiatives and directions. Joint use libraries, even though they may work on an organizational level, challenge the identity, the self, of the public libraries on a very real "street level" where the actual meeting between the librarian and the library user is taking place. In the face of this, one's way of keeping one's "sanity" is to discuss and debate a form of understanding of the fundamental premises for collaboration. The public debate that has been seen, at its most explicit in Visby, must therefore not be regarded as general moaning but rather as something that well meets the requirement for "sane" behavior in the face of change, as formulated by March and Olsen.

Resolving Ambiguity and Conflict

When we assume that joint use libraries actually are new kinds of libraries, differing from the ones that constitute their basis, we certainly face a situation of ambiguity and potential conflict. Both of the examples described in this article have shown this. It is clear that, in the merging of

a public library and an academic library, it is the norms and values of the public library that are challenged. This should come as no surprise if we look at the general history of libraries, where the emergence of new types of libraries has usually been defined in relation to the structure of higher education at that point in time (Harris, 1995). Public libraries are defined in the Scandinavian countries in relation to popular movements, or, in the UK and the United States, as different forms of philanthropy. The differences in social norms and values that underlie different types of libraries in this respect should not be underestimated. As was seen in the given, traditional definitions of joint use libraries, ambiguity is generally met by agreements that are worked out in such a way that the necessary distinctions are made in ways that clarify the rules for the organization. The rules and regulations are necessary either to establish new, or maintain traditional, norms and values attached to the libraries taking part in the collaboration. In the two Swedish examples, we see different ways of doing this. In Härnösand the establishment of distinctions and rules is effectively encapsulated in the process of formulating a new mission for Sambiblioteket, a mission (partly quoted above) that takes norms and values of all three collaborating libraries into consideration. What is obviously accomplished by this is the creation of a sense of unity between the staff of the different units. Situational definition is made much of in relation to the world outside, the general public, and the variety of user groups expected to visit the new library. The library is presented as something genuinely new that is for the benefit of the local society. From a relatively early stage, the establishment of the library has been directed toward the creation of a positive "aura" with the explicit aim of finding a fitting definition of not only the library but also of Härnösand; it provides a more democratic and locally dynamic character for the town by bringing academics into the democratic public sphere that is traditionally ascribed to the public library.

In Visby the problem of ambiguity is solved in a slightly different way, even though most of the factors mentioned concerning Härnösand are present. The situation in Visby is different primarily in that the distinctions are not as clearly analyzed or described as they are in Härnösand. Together with the fact that the public library was physically moved to a less advantageous place, this gives the impression that the situational analysis was made more explicitly from the perspective of the university college library. It also seems as if the major motive for the new joint use library is not primarily defined in relation to the general public and the various expected user groups but rather in relation to internal needs of the libraries and librarians.

The result, however, from a normative institutional point of view, is somewhat paradoxical when we look at these examples. Almedalsbiblioteket in Visby has a high degree of integration between the different collaborating units, but the result is the creation of an academic library

with enhanced public access. Sambiblioteket in Härnösand has a slightly less formal integration, but it establishes an identity for the new library that goes beyond the three collaborating units in a way that well meets the analysis of institutional change and development in March and Olsen. The character of an eventual new identity for the joint use library is thus dependent on the balance and visibility of the norms and values that underlie the collaborating library units.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this article I made the claim that joint use libraries are more complex in terms of institutional identity than is apparent from most definitions, which more or less exclusively focus on administrative aspects of the collaboration between different library units. I hope to have shown that this is the case, both by reference to normative institutional theory and by reference to two Swedish examples of recently established joint use libraries. I have not been able to provide a "yes" or "no" answer to the question whether joint use libraries actually may be regarded as a completely new form of library in the sense that we have seen earlier in history, for example, in monastery libraries, university libraries, and public libraries. Nor was this the point. Jesse Shera's notion of libraries as agents defined to fit into and fulfill the ideological basis of an institution of "knowledge" gives rise to the question of how to handle a situation when two agents, an academic library and a public library, combine two rather different ideological and normative roles in this process of fulfilment. It is possible to conclude that the affiliation to an institution such as "knowledge" tends to be strongest when a public library, seen by many as more closely affiliated to the institution of politics, adapts to the norms and values of the academic library, which is more in line with the general definition of libraries and librarianship as can be seen in the writings of Shera. It further seems as if, in order to uphold a logic of appropriateness of joint use libraries in relation to contemporary society, it is necessary to make clear distinctions and define the traditional activities of the public library. This is because many aspects of its institutional identity lie side by side with the instrumentality of academic information provision, which it is now politically correct for new libraries in Sweden to identify with under the flag of the "knowledge society." However, none of the processes and conflicts that are described in this article is given by nature. Instead they are the result of conscious choices by professional participants in the creation of joint use libraries. The normative foundation and the establishment of a logic of appropriateness of joint use libraries are complex issues, and they must be carefully considered and studied within librarianship as well as within future LIS research.

Notes

1. The Swedish term *sambibliotek* can be translated as "joint use library." The term has, however, a history with a slightly different meaning. In Björkbom (1953) the term is used to denote collaboration between academic libraries by means of national and international document delivery services; it is colored by a vision of a "world library," where all human knowledge is accessible through your local university library. Björkbom's thoughts on these issues are analyzed by Bäckström (2001). In Härnösand the term *sambibliotek* is used as the name of the actual library. Because of this, I choose to keep the Swedish term when writing about it.
2. "Us versus them, the people versus the elite, workers versus students, the well educated versus the uneducated, the well paid versus the underpaid, and adolescents versus children/elderly. The public library, with its ideological base, has been seen as an institution promoting a more equal society . . . To merge the public library with an institution that only has been granted to a few can feel frightening" (translation by the author).
3. "Sambiblioteket shall be a knowledge center for professionals, students on all levels, entrepreneurs, and the general public. But Sambiblioteket shall also provide environments for quiet and reflection, recreation and talk. There shall be well-developed activities for children and the young, where new experiences in learning are adopted, and where fantasy and creativity are stimulated. It shall of course also fill the requirements on physical environment, technical equipment, and media that are demanded by the physically disabled" (translation by the author). An English presentation of the project was simultaneously published in *Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly* (Gómez, Hultén, & Drehmer 1998b).
4. For more information on Almedalsbiblioteket, Visby, see *http://bibliotek.gotland.se/ Bibliotek/almedalen.nsf/dokument?OpenView&RestrictToCategory=1*. For more information on Sambiblioteket, Härnösand, see *http://www.sambiblioteket.bib.mh.se/*.
5. The Swedish cultural policy of 1974 was a manifestation of a will to establish culture as a policy field in its own right. The definition is administratively well defined as consisting of written art, pictorial art, and performing art as well as mass media, voluntary cultural work within clubs, and "free" organizations. Lastly, it also comprises the cultural heritage. The new policy meant that the criticism of commercial culture was emphasized, the cultural environment and activities of children and young adults was focussed, and the inequalities between different regions of Sweden were dealt with.
6. The 1995 revision of the cultural policy from 1974 is more or less an adjustment to a rapidly evolving new society. The high culture that still held supremacy in the 1970s is now a subculture among others, and the attitude toward commercial culture has changed in society as a whole. The diversity of cultural consumption has increased, and demand for quality has been replaced by demand for identity. In the face of this one can still note that the revision of the cultural policy that took place in 1995 is not very large.

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