



Scandinavian University and College Libraries

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THE DANISH, FINNISH, Norwegian, and Swedish universities derive their traditions directly from the European universities of the Middle Ages, and two of them, Uppsala and Copenhagen, were even founded before 1500 A.D. In principle they are based upon the faculty system of the Middle Ages, even if one or two of the traditional faculties or departments may be left out in the younger universities.

The faculties have gone through a development which is rather common in European universities, and some changes have taken place. As a whole, however, they have been reluctant to accept new subjects, and only in the last decades has it been realized that the separation of pure and applied sciences in different institutions is somewhat artificial.

In all the Scandinavian countries, only institutions of this traditional character are officially called universities. Accordingly there are rather few of them: four in Sweden, three in Finland, two in Denmark, and two in Norway. Because of the tremendous scientific and educational development, however, there are plans for new universities of this kind in all the Scandinavian countries.

Applied science and new subject fields not belonging to the older academic tradition are cultivated in special institutions, the so-called "høyskoler" or colleges. These are in principle on a university level, and like the universities they offer essentially graduate work beginning at a stage corresponding to the junior or senior college year in the United States. There are state colleges of this kind for technology, for agriculture and forestry, for veterinary science, for odontology, for education, and for commerce. Like most specialized institutions, they have a tendency to include neighboring fields and thus to broaden

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their scope. During recent years there has been a tendency, especially in Norway, to incorporate some of the colleges into a larger unit, a university, and thus to break the old academic line of the universities. In the present situation, however, we have two different types of universities to deal with, and accordingly with two different kinds of university libraries. On the one hand we have the comprehensive university libraries, comprising both humanities and sciences; on the other, the more specialized college libraries.

Considering the first group, we have to take into account that all of these libraries are legal deposit libraries as well as university libraries. They have the privilege and responsibility of receiving regularly all kinds of printed material, books, pamphlets, periodicals, newspapers, reports, maps, music, etc., and to catalog, retain and make them available to readers. Some of the libraries receive legal deposit material directly from the printers, some from the publishers; some of them receive everything, some a selection only. The university libraries of Helsinki and Oslo have assumed the full responsibility of being the national library for their countries, and of producing the national bibliography, in addition to functioning as university libraries. The national libraries of Denmark and Sweden, that is the royal libraries of Copenhagen and Stockholm, are developing in the opposite manner, as they more and more take on university library functions for the University of Copenhagen and of Stockholm besides their national library functions. As a whole the functions of the Scandinavian national and university libraries are interwoven in a way which is not common in other countries.

As to inter-library loans, both the university and the college libraries have accepted responsibility for service to readers outside their respective institutions, for the purpose of serving research. Parcels of books go daily to other libraries and directly to scientists and scholars all over the country as a part of a comprehensive system of library cooperation. A few of the university libraries have taken over the specific function of serving as national central libraries in some subject field, such as medicine. The college libraries are definitely Janus-faced, with one face turned towards the institutions to which they are subordinate, the other towards the community or the country at large. The libraries of the colleges of technology are to a great extent the main documentation centers in their fields of interest for a particular region or for the whole country, and they have more patrons from industry than from the college which they serve.

It is rather important to be aware of this duality of the Scandinavian university and college libraries. It may be more or less pronounced in different libraries, but nevertheless this implies a general trend characteristic of the libraries concerned. This development began as a matter of necessity, as the relatively high level of education in the Scandinavian countries produced a demand for literature, for which a small population could not afford to pay. The available library resources, therefore, had to be made as effective as possible. From this situation there developed later an interest in all aspects of library cooperation, nationally, regionally, and internationally. In small nations there is a need for cooperation, and what starts as a necessity is soon turned into a virtue. Of course, it may cause some problems when a book needed by a professor in Oslo is actually in use at a hospital in so distant a place as Hammerfest, some 832 miles away. Fortunately problems of this kind are met with understanding by all concerned. A professor would seldom remind the librarian of the fact that the book was procured with university funds, but a question might arise as to whether it would be advisable to have a duplicate copy in one of the university institutes.

The Scandinavian university libraries play a leading part in the building-up of a national system of library services, the intention of which is to formulate a program and specify the tasks of every library, thus coordinating the variety of library resources of the country. This process, which never ends because the results always have to be reconsidered, has brought the university and college libraries into close cooperation with the special libraries, and even private industrial libraries participate in the system.

More complicated is the question of cooperation if we turn to the special libraries inside the universities, the institute libraries. The faculties of the Scandinavian universities are divided into several smaller and more specialized units, the university institutes. The main function of the institutes is not educational: they are first and foremost workshops for scholars, including graduate students working on their theses, etc. The ideal working condition for scholars is to sit in the midst of a good collection of library material relating to their specific subject fields, and no doubt the institute libraries are among the most intensively used of all libraries. They are in fact a daily working tool, and a great many scholars regard them as a *sine qua non* for their research.

To give an impression of their importance one should mention that

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there are altogether about eighty-five of them in the seven faculties of Oslo University, varying in size from 2,000 to 50,000 volumes. The situation is similar at a great many European universities. Since a university is in principle a unity, the dispersal of the library resources creates many serious problems of coordination; and, as long as these remain unsolved, there will always be some lack of sympathy between the two parts, the university library with its librarians, and the institute library with its scholars. At many older universities the relation between the two types of libraries is characterized by antagonism and competition rather than by cooperation. This serious problem has been taken up by several of the Scandinavian university and college libraries, and different kinds of cooperation have been established. A few newer universities have adopted a system of centralization known in many American universities which gives the university librarian full authority for the departmental libraries. At the older and larger universities, it is not possible to run a system like this, because the institute libraries have their independence stemming from the older academic tradition. On a more or less voluntary basis, it has been possible for some of the university and college libraries to establish permanent contacts with a few of the faculties in library matters, in the hope of developing closer cooperation in the future.

At Oslo University a special system has been built up over the last six years, the so-called "faculty service" of the University Library, the ambition of which is to develop a solution acceptable from the point of view of both the scholars and the librarians.

Within the several faculties there has been established a library and documentation center (not a faculty library) supplied with the relevant catalogs and bibliographical tools and led by a faculty librarian responsible to the director of the University Library. The responsibilities of the faculty librarian and his staff are rather complicated, because the center serves as an outpost of the University Library, while at the same time being a service station for the institute libraries. The faculty librarian assists the institute libraries in book selection, supervises all purchases, exchanges, cataloging and binding, and deals with inter-library loans, the provision of the University Library's deposit and long-term loans in the libraries of the faculty, etc. Last but not least, he is to undertake bibliographical research on behalf of the staffs of the institutes, in collaboration, where necessary, with the reference department of the University Library.

The advantages of the faculty library system are numerous. It brings

the librarians to the scholars' own workshops, the institutes, and thus establishes a close daily contact between the two groups. This means that all of the university specialists will always be at hand to help the librarians if the University Library needs assistance in solving difficult reference problems.

The faculty service involves a strong expansion of the activities and the responsibilities of a university library, and far-reaching decentralization is actually being carried out. At the same time an *administrative* centralization of staff, services, and collections is created. The administrative line always goes from the director of the main library to the faculty librarian, not to the institutes. The faculty librarian seeks the promotion of all kinds of cooperation between the various institute libraries, and through a union catalog all of the library resources within a faculty become very much of a unit, even though the material is dispersed among many institutes. In this way the main library is surrounded by seven special libraries, one for each faculty, all of them constantly demanding up-to-date service, and thus stimulating a more dynamic attitude than is common in the old, comprehensive libraries.

The quality of library service today is probably more dependent on an efficient staff than on the best selection of books, and, therefore, the recruitment of library personnel will always be of great importance. As the Scandinavian university and college libraries usually are state libraries, recruitment is influenced by factors outside the university world, because the salaries and working conditions are decided by the Ministry concerned.

Roughly speaking, the library staff can be divided into three categories. Firstly the academic staff, as far as possible selected from different subject fields, have their university degree and at the same time some library education, very much in the form of internship training. The responsibilities of the academic staff are book selection, classification, and bibliographical service in their fields of interest, as well as responsibility for special collections and departments. Many of them continue their studies with the eventual hope of a scholarly career, and a problem may be posed by their frequent leaves of absence for research purposes.

Secondly there are the library assistants, who have passed the State Library School examination (in Norway this takes three years after the matriculation degree). They do most of the cataloging and are

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very useful in the Circulation Department, and in Oslo also in the faculty library service.

Thirdly there are the office clerks and the technical staff (book-binders, photographers, printers, etc.).

The director is always someone with a university degree and a library background. In the university libraries he is independent, being entitled to make decisions on his own. In the college libraries there is usually a committee, giving the director advice on all matters of policy, the annual budget estimate, etc. Decisions about appointments, the current working plan, applications for leave of absence, and the like are in most cases made in consultation with the heads of the main departments of the library. In all of the university libraries of any size, the staff is kept informed about internal news through house journals and meetings of different kinds.

The Scandia Plan

The main problem of the Scandinavian university and college libraries is a rather simple one, one that is familiar to almost all libraries in the world today. It is to keep abreast of the ever-increasing flow of material and to cope with the growing numbers of requests which have a tendency to become more and more urgent. During recent years libraries have improved their budgets as far as both staff and the purchase of books are concerned, but library budgets will always fall behind current needs. The tremendous growth of education and research in all fields makes even the most liberal budgetary improvements far too modest. Like librarians in all countries, the Scandinavian university librarians have been looking for remedies to meet this situation. Technical devices may be of some help, and libraries are usually equipped with the various kinds of photoreproduction, from simple office machines to Xerox. Technical equipment has made it possible to improve service to readers, but unfortunately it offers no real solution to the serious problems we are facing. The electronic storage and retrieval computer does not seem to be around the corner, and even if it were possible to adapt machines to the needs of the comprehensive university libraries and use them for a broad subject approach to information, they would be too expensive for a Scandinavian library to justify the investment. While waiting for a bargain sale of electronic computers, the Scandinavian libraries are trying another method more familiar to them, namely library cooperation. Not an easy method, it is

nevertheless a tempting one, as it promotes mutual understanding even in cases where the actual results may be small. It is quite a long step from a national scheme of cooperative acquisition of library materials to a regional scheme that crosses the borders of a group of countries, and the idea grew up gradually in the Scandinavian countries before it was put into practice. In the end the tremendous increase of printed material made it quite natural to try a system of dividing the responsibilities for specific subject interests between libraries in the four countries. This plan for cooperative acquisition is called the "Scandia plan."

The background for the Scandia plan is the broad library cooperation which has a long tradition in Scandinavia. Since 1926 Scandinavian library conferences of a general nature have been arranged, usually every three years. Since 1947 the directors of the Scandinavian university libraries, thirteen altogether, have held annual meetings, and later on the heads of the different types of college libraries established a regular contact. In 1947 the Scandinavian Federation of Research Librarians (Nordisk Vitenskapelig Bibliotekarforbund, hereafter called NVBF) was founded, based upon national associations of similar character. NVBF has taken the initiative on the Scandia plan and the board of NVBF is still the highest administrative authority for the plan, although the different committees are free to make certain decisions. The Scandia plan is the first cooperative scheme of this kind covering a group of countries and has therefore attracted some attention, being both appreciated and misunderstood. Since the university libraries play a leading part in the plan, it might be of interest to single out a few of the plan's characteristics to see how it is organized and how it works.

- (1) The Scandia plan is based on voluntary cooperation between university, college, and special libraries in the Scandinavian countries, and no authority other than the librarians themselves has any decisive influence on the development of the project. The object is an allocation of fields of interest among libraries in the four countries with the object of enriching total library resources for the benefit of each country as well as for the cooperating group of countries as a whole.
- (2) The practical development of the project is promoted through a number of committees set up by NVBF, one main committee and several subcommittees representing the different college libraries (technology, medicine, agriculture, etc.).

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- (3) The expenses entailed by the numerous planning conferences are defrayed by the Nordic Cultural Commission (Nordisk Kulturkommissjon), an inter-Scandinavian governmental organization for cultural affairs. This implies that the project enjoys the moral support of the Cultural Commission and accordingly of the governments.
- (4) None of the libraries receives any extra financial support to fulfill special acquisition commitments. The advantages of being able to build the acquisition policy on special collections of other libraries more than counterbalance the expenses involved.
- (5) Each library decides independently, as before, on its own purchase and exchange policy.
- (6) As to the principles of allocation of responsibilities among the Scandinavian libraries, two different methods have been adopted: an allocation by subject fields, and a regional or linguistic basis of allocation. The allocation of obligations is made on the basis of a comparative evaluation of the existing collections and fields of interest in the several countries.
- (7) The obligations taken on by the participating libraries also involve supplying bibliographical information in the fields allocated to them.

Following are examples to illustrate how the system works. Through comparative evaluation it has been ascertained that Denmark has collections of outstanding importance in hymnology, history of missions, history of the Jews, African aboriginal languages, as well as in Burmese, Japanese, Javanese, Hebrew, Chinese, and Mongolian linguistics. Finland, on the other hand, possesses large Slavic, Baltic, Georgian, and Hungarian collections. Norway is extremely well supplied in the fields of marine law, copyright law, Celtic languages and history, Arctic and Antarctic geography, and papyrology; while Sweden has a large number of specialties, such as systematic theology, Arabic, Armenian and Turkish linguistics, Indology, Iranology, history of Africa and Australia, and ethnography.

As to allocation according to a region or a language, it is applicable in all subject fields—medicine, technology, and commerce, as well as the humanities. As an example we can take a field like medicine. It is an international science, and a medical periodical of some standard is of interest to European libraries wherever it has been published, in Australia or in Japan. Of the Japanese medical journals only one-fourth are available in Scandinavian libraries, and the rest are missing.

The present plan is to let one of the Scandinavian countries take on a special responsibility for Japanese medical literature, another country a responsibility for Australian, etc., so as to achieve better coverage. In the same way we are going to work in the field of technology. It is also our intention to reach an agreement on the allocation of the official and semi-official publications which arrive in the Scandinavian countries from all over the world in ever-increasing quantities, such as reports and recommendations of different kinds, parliamentary debates, etc. UNESCO's new exchange convention will undoubtedly stimulate interchange among the signatory states, especially with regard to such official publications, and this makes it all the more important for the Scandinavian countries to agree on a distribution of obligations to receive and collect such material.

If a particular library has taken over a special subject or language field, it assumes the obligation of systematically acquiring material and at the same time of functioning as a bibliographical information center on the subject in question. This does not imply that other libraries are to discontinue their acquisition in that special field. They buy what they need for current use, but they are in a position to base their acquisition policy to a much larger extent than before on the main Scandinavian collection in the field. In this connection it is of importance that inter-library loan between the Scandinavian countries is quite efficient. Usually it takes only a few days to obtain a book or a photo-copy from another Scandinavian country, while it might take some months to procure it from a non-Scandinavian country.

So far the Scandia plan has been carried into effect for more than 100 subject fields, and special literature from a great many regions has been allocated. For many subject fields the plan is still in preparation, and other fields are awaiting discussion. It is necessary to proceed with caution and patience, as the building-up of cooperative enterprises involving four countries will always be of a more delicate nature than work with national schemes. It is a pleasure to state that all the problems thus far have been dealt with in a spirit of friendship and cooperation, which in itself has been very stimulating and valuable for the improvement of library services in the Scandinavian countries.

NVBF has carried through many other projects of great importance to the university and college libraries. There are annual round-table conferences concentrating on one specific theme such as bibliographical information, book selection, periodicals, newspapers, official pub-

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lications, technical devices, and international loans. As only four specialists from each country participate, the conferences are kept on a rather high level. NVBF has also edited the three volumes of "Nordisk Handbok i Bibliotekskunnskap" ("Nordic Manual of Librarianship"), with Svend Dahl as editor in chief, and with contributions from specialists in university and college libraries all over Scandinavia.

A visitor to Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden will undoubtedly find that there is a great variety among the university and college libraries in the four countries, each of them having its own background, facing its particular situation, solving its own problems in the best possible way. The intention of this article has been to indicate the main characteristics that these libraries have in common, in relation to similar libraries in other countries, their present problems, and—last but not least—the cooperative enterprises undertaken to strengthen their ability to meet the increasing needs of science and research.

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