

Summaries

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Richard Madsen: Med røtter i framtiden (With Roots in Future)

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The main focus in the article, written by the Norwegian librarian Richard Madsen, are the majority of public libraries, characterized by having very little, if any, specialization and requiring the librarians to cope with all aspects and parts of the library-activities.

The Library system as a whole, but especially the small all-round library units, have a vital problem in being nearly invisible in the general strategy of the state shaping the development of a postindustrial society of information.

In order to make the local public library unit more visible in the development of society, Richard Madsen discusses a number of problems and possibilities.

Firstly, he problematizes the hitherto used concept of users. It is rooted in the popular enlightenment tradition perceiving all people as having the same needs and demands. Today it is necessary to have a more differentiated concept of users and user-needs.

Secondly, the library/the librarian have to educate people to acknowledge the value of having information and knowledge at their disposal, when it is needed and to use it in a more active way. As an example of how to do it, R. Madsen describes a project in Northern Norway, where three municipalities worked together in a common information system serving the administration in the municipalities. In this way the competence of the librarian became visible, not least for the local administrators and politicians.

If such a strategy is to be successful, it is important to have a very developed regional library-network and cooperation, and to carry out a research to evaluate the effects of the efforts.

Geir Vestheim: Folkebiblioteket - en kulturinstitusjon i skjæringspunktet (The Public Library, a Cultural Institution in the Crossroad between purposive Rationality and Humanism)

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The Norwegian Library researcher Geir Vestheim outlines in this article the theoretical framework for his ongoing doctoral project on the Norwegian Public Library in the period of the late modern Welfare State from 1935 until today.

The European tradition of enlightenment has a specific Scandinavian version, characterized by a very broad popular basis and closely related to the development of a political democracy. One of the results of this process of political democratization is the bureaucratic state, dominated and determined by the bureaucratic rationality. That means that within the public institutions, such as the public library, a contradiction arises between the bureaucratic rationality and the humanistic rationality of values.

The main features in this historical development in Europe, Modernity and Rationality, are described. Modernity means the birth of the free, autonomous and enlightened human individual and the creation or differentiation of spheres with specific logics and form of rationality in each sphere, art, science, morality and religion. It also means the loss of the unifying and reconciling image of God, the loss of the ultimate meaning. This leads to a permanent crisis of values and the development of alienation. Contradictions and struggles arise between forms of rationality trying to be the dominating sphere. Thus one has a number of contradictions inherited in the great enlightenment project: the free and enlightened human individual.

The different spheres become more and more rationalized in this historical process. This gives room for a dialogue between/among different spheres and a critical capacity to the enlightened, tolerant and reasonable human individual, the goal of the great enlightenment project. The most outstanding theorists of the modern European world are Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas. Max Weber has made a historical and sociological analysis of rationalization and formulated the distinction between instrumental rationality and normative rationality. He had shown how the instrumental process of rationalizing goes on colonizing more and more of human life and had outlined a rather pessimistic view on the development of mankind.

The postmodern philosophers like J.F. Lyotard are mentioned as having a similar pessimistic view on the enlightenment project by giving up the project and saying: "anything goes".

The philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, has a more optimistic point of view and seeks to explore the unused forms of rationality. He wants to find alternative forms of rationality compared to instrumental rationality and focus on language, intersubjectivity and not least communicative action. Habermas formulates a communicative rationality orientated towards understanding and acknowledging the manifold world of human life and sees this as an alternative to the hitherto dominating rationalities. He means that the communicative rationality will favour the lifeworld compared to the systemworld, determined by instrumental rationality and hinder a fullout colonization of the lifeworld.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is shortly mentioned because his concepts of field, doxa and habitus can be useful in a casestudy like this, studying a cultural institution like the public library.

Within this theoretical framework, mainly based on the theories of Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas, the Norwegian Public Library will be analysed as an example of a cultural institution illustrating the

late modern cultural policy in Scandinavia. The project has a historical hermeneutic point of departure and tries to place the public library in a more general development in the history of ideas and cultural sociology. The project will have its empirical basis in the late-modern period of the history of Norway, with the development of the Norwegian Welfare State beginning in 1935 with the great political agreement and the first public library bill in Norway.

Niels Windfeld Lund: Folkebiblioteket mellem kundskaber og hverdagsliv (The Local Public Library in between Knowledge and Everyday Life)

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The main aim of the article is to analyze and discuss the position and role of the local public library in relation to the on-going discussion of the conceptions of knowledge and the modern knowledge-society as well as to the everyday life in the local communities, in which the libraries are placed. A conceptual framework is outlined conceiving the local public library as a local knowledge workshop and some possible consequences for the development of public libraries are pointed out.

The concept of knowledge is analyzed and discussed. A distinction is made between two principal definitions of the concept of knowledge. Firstly, knowledge is defined as ideas, theories and information. Secondly, knowledge can be conceived as reflected practical experience in people's everyday life. That leads to a discussion of the complex phenomenon of everyday life. The concept of everyday culture is defined as a combination of a specific field of activities, a daily rhythm of actions and a corresponding and dominating conception of oneself and the environment. It is described how the relationship between the different everyday cultures can be in the local communities.

The position and role of the public library in the local community is described and discussed. It is argued that the local library might be one of the best places for a so-called "dialogue on equal terms" due to some important qualities attached to the public: its very high degree of decentralization, its individual and all-round orientation towards its users and its obligation for serving all people across political and religious beliefs and interests.

It is suggested that the local public library tries to develop itself to be used and understood as a local everyday life workshop. Finally, it is discussed how the role of the librarian may be changed if she goes more into the local everyday life.

Berit Gjørtz reviews **"Information Retrieval Interaction"**.

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The Ph.D. thesis written by Peter Ingwersen on Intermediary Functions in Information Retrieval Interaction is reviewed by his colleague Berit Gjørtz from The Norwegian School of Library and Information Studies in Oslo.

The author of the book, P. Ingwersen, is primarily concerned in making a synthesis of the hitherto done research on Information retrieval systems in order to develop different kinds of models of mediator mediating the relationship between IR-systems and the users.

P. Ingwersen distinguishes in a critical analysis between two tendencies/traditions within the IR-research, the cognitivism and the cognitive perspective, based on different interpretations of the relationship between human beings and computers and different theories of how humans produce knowledge and information compared to how computer systems function.

In order to stress the importance of the context in which IR is made by different people, P. Ingwersen draws upon the philosophy of hermeneutics

in developing the model of mediator including the human user, the IR-system and the automatic mediator by using the hermeneutic statement, that man always acknowledges the world in a specific context and that categories and concepts are produced out of this context, out of this situation and cannot be abstracted from this situation.

The way in which P. Ingwersen uses the philosophy of hermeneutics is criticized by the reviewer pointing out that by characterizing the relationship between the user, the automatic mediator and the IR-system as interaction and talking about context in all three parts of the model, P. Ingwersen ascribes the same capacities to the automatic mediator and IR-system as the human user, in short doing the same mistake as the cognitivist version of IR-research, which he wants to be an alternative to.

In general, Berit Gjørtz criticizes the book for having too much name-dropping without having a more reflected discussion of the different points of view.

Svanhild Aabø reviews **"Understanding Information"**.

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Svanhild Aabø from the Norwegian School of Library and Information Studies, reviews the publication of her colleague Irene Wormell at the Royal School of Librarianship in Copenhagen, entitled "Understanding Information".

It is a collection of three former publications by I. Wormell. Firstly (part 1-2) is selected parts of I. Wormell's doctoral dissertation from 1985 on "Subject access project - SAP". The rest of the book contains a new version of a reader on Information Resource Management, IRM and an article on Strategic Information Management.

The SAP-project deals with the problems raised by the fact, that the existing indexing and classifica-

tion systems and practice favour articles and formal characteristics compared to monographs and substantial characteristics. On the basis of an analysis of different concepts of classification and indexing, especially in relation to automatic retrieval systems, the multi-level subject analysis is developed. The principal idea of the system is to combine methods of classification and indexing in order to take more advantage of terms and phrases from lists of contents, indexes, graphs etc. from the monographs themselves.

Svanhild Aabø regrets that I. Wormell has very few discussions of reasons and causes in relation to the problematic treatment of monographs in existing retrieval systems; whether it is caused by professional conservatism, lack of research in the field or problems on the level of library-management and policy.

The main topic dealt with in the rest of "Understanding Information" is Information Resource Management IRM and Strategic Information Management. It is mainly concerned with information in private business. It is emphasised that IRM is a task for the managers and they must be responsible for the information system in their firm. They must understand the information system as the nerve-system of the firm and their main duty is to be able to transform information into profit. If the perception of information inherited in the managers of private firms is transformed in the above-mentioned way, it will have radical consequences for the relationship between the librarian and the users and the role of the library/librarians. Svanhild Aabø appreciates the provocative statements, but she also found that a discussion of the statements is missing in the book.

Svanhild Aabø concludes that "Understanding Information" deals with essential and important problems in the library and information studies. She hopes, in spite of its compound character and its sometimes heavy scientific language, that it will be read and discussed by people in the Nordic li-

brary and information environments in a broad sense.

Anders Ørom reviews: "**Virkelighed og virkelighedsbilleder i norsk biblioteksforskning**" (**Reality and Images of Reality in Norwegian Library Research**)

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The book under review "Bibliotek og samfunn : Forskning om bibliotek" (The library and the society : Library research) is the first book extensively evaluating and discussing Norwegian library research. The 15 contributors to the anthology are mainly Norwegian teachers of LIS and librarians engaged in library research. In the first part however scholars from outside the library and information sector discuss the nature of library research. These scholars' common view is that the theories of information science are too narrow in the way that they are not (alone) able to explain the complex cultural aspects of the library in a social context. In consequence they argue for a culture orientated and interdisciplinary point of view. In the second part, research in various subfields and selected research projects are presented. The general impression is that Norwegian library research is many-sided though in a rather early but promising stage. The third part, sketching out future developments unfortunately narrows the view focusing on information technology and standardization.

Leif Emerek reviews "**Folkebibliotek i forvandling**" (**Public Libraries in Change**)

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Public Libraries in Change is written by a Norwegian scholar Geir Vestheim. The topic of the book is a historical and theoretical analysis of Norwegian public libraries finding themselves in an age with rapidly changing values. In the transition from modern to postmodern the public libraries should recreate a new internal and external identi-

ty. Vestheim offers some solutions to the problems, that are discussed on a historical, theoretical level by the reviewer. Especially the concept of enlightenment is disputed: is the classic tradition still valid - this is Vestheim's point of view - or should the concept of enlightenment be totally redefined.