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Cross-sectorial challenges for archives libraries and museums

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Abstract

Neither archives, libraries nor museums are established for their own sake. These institutions are established to serve society and our users. If we would like to evaluate the importance of our institutions we should have to measure our importance for the users and our influence on society.

There is a lot of overlapping of sources across sector borders. Both archives, libraries and museums collect photographs. A survey in Norway shows that museums like some libraries have large and important collections of private archives. In a local community the museum might have a better collection of literature about local history than the public library, but the literature in the museum is not available to the public and maybe not catalogued at all.

The use of information and communication technology is the main common challenge for archives, libraries and museums. An other important basis for further cooperation between ALMs, is common meeting-places.. Such meeting places could be seminars or conferences or

networks, and in many ways cooperation between ALMs seems to be of more interest on a regional and local level than on a national level,

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Paper

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There is lots of overlapping of sources across sector borders. Let me give some examples. ALMs all collect photographs. A survey shows that museums, like some libraries, have large and important collections of private archives. In a local community the museum might have a better collection of literature about local history than the public library, but the literature in the museum is not available to the public and maybe not catalogued at all.

Let me start by presenting a picture of Bjørn Frøysåk and his family. This is the oldest known portrait of a Norwegian farmer, was painted 1699. Bjørn Frøysåk is standing in the centre between his two wives. His first wife is standing to the left with her children. When she died he remarried, and his second wife is standing to the right with her children. There are some inscriptions on top of this picture, but if you want to get more knowledge about Bjørn Frøysåk, his family, their costumes or perhaps his farms, you will need to combine sources from ALMs.

When the Danish/Norwegian king sold the churches in Norway in the 1720s, to finance his wars, Bjørn Frøysåk bought Gol stave church in Hallingdal together with some other farmers in this area, and this picture hung in the church as a memorial. Bjørn Frøysåk looks like a strong and a wealthy man. If we go to the archives, we may find his background and his fortune, which includes the ownership of at least 15 farms or parts of farms. We can find the names and the background of his two wives. We can find his children and see how his fortune was divided between them when he died. Since he was a central person in the area where he lived we will find information about him in local history books, and a lot of people who are interested in family history can trace their ancestors back to one of his 15 children.

Take a look at his trousers. If you go to the library and get some books about costumes you will find that they are inspired by European Renaissance, and they look quite like trousers used in royal households two hundred years earlier. His jackets and cap however have even older roots back to costumes used in the Middle Ages. If we go to the museum collections we will find one of those trousers in The Norwegian Folkmuseum, as far as I know the only example kept, and if we had digitized older literature, we would have found these trousers described by an English tourist who visited Norway in the 1820s. In the archives we could

look through the official appraisals of the property of dead people, and here we can find how common these trousers were, and their value. In the same way we could look at his wife's jewellery. In the libraries we could find the connection with European fashion, in the archives how common such items were and their value, and in museums we may study the real objects, their materials, the construction and their function.

Let this picture of Bjørn Frøysåk an his family serve as a symbol of the challenges of using the sources of knowledge ALMs have in common and as an example of how important it is to have the possibility to combine these sources. Last but not least let us think how it could be if all these sources in ALMs were digitized. Then we would not need to go to all these institutions, but we could sit in our offices or in our homes with access to the different sources and the possibility to combine them and to make searches across institutional borders, and not least, to combine the different types of sources.

In 1999 the Norwegian Ministry of Culture presented a White Paper to the Parliament. When the Ministry of Culture started the work with this White Paper it was planned to be a White Paper about museums only. During the process however, they found it useful to present a common White Paper for the ALMs. This paper was called *"Sources of knowledge and experience Archives, libraries and museum in a society based on information technology"*, and as you understand from this title the common challenges in the use of information and communication technology were the main reason why the Ministry found it useful to present the plans for these three sectors together. In this White Paper the Ministry, inspired by the creation of Resource in England, wanted to make one national office for the development of archives, public libraries and museums

The new institution, ABM-utvikling, was based on a merger of the Norwegian Directorate for Public Libraries, the Norwegian Museum Authority, and the National Office for Research Documentation, Academic and Special Libraries. The Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority is a public institution under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs, but works across departmental and other administrative boundaries.

Both on the national level and not least from our international colleagues, ABM-utvikling is expected primarily to focus primarily on cross sectorial challenges and cooperation between ALMs. However, when the two ministries decided to establish ABM-utvikling, they gave a clear signal that archives, libraries and museums also in the future should be looked upon as three coherent sectors, and that ABM-utvikling was supposed to pay attention to the challenges within the tree different sectors and spend most resources on the sectorial challenges. But at the same time ABM-utvikling is supposed to stimulate cross-sectorial cooperation in the fields where such cooperation may result in better services to the users.

Why create a new governmental institution for ALMs? I have already mentioned the use of information and communication technology as the main common challenge for ALMs. We need programmes to build up competence in our institutions in the use of this technology. We should strive for better collaboration in:

- Developing programmes and standards that make it possible to use our sources across traditional borders.
- Developing competence on and centres for digitalization of older material
- Taking care of material that is created in digital form
- Developing competence in mediation of digital resources

I would specially point on the need for better pedagogical competence in the use of ICT as a challenge. In ALMs we have lot of competence in using hardware and in producing electronic catalogues. But our catalogues were originally meant for our own staff and skilled colleagues. It is a great challenge now to present our sources on the Internet in a way that is useful both for the specialists and for the general public.

ALMs are small sectors and it is not always easy for such small sectors to be heard in the media, or in the political and governmental institutions. Thus we could be stronger if we had a common voice. This spring our new Minister of Modernisation appointed a national committee for the coordination of the use of electronic technology in the Administration, and ABM-utvikling was appointed as the only representative from the cultural and educational sector. I don't think any of the former three offices separately would have got such a representation.

We edit an information paper called "ABM" twice a year. Here we present different projects and events from the three sectors. This is sent for free to politicians, bureaucrats, organisations and institutions on the national, regional and local level, and it is meant to be a means distributing knowledge of the importance of these three sectors in the society. So far we have received very positive reactions and it seems that this paper is read and appreciated.

For the staff in ALMs we publish "ABM-skrift" a publication with 8-12 issues per year. Here we present reports from projects that we have initiated or supported other interesting reports for the sectors and the statistics. Some of these reports like "Museum architecture" are just meant for one sector, others like "Digitization of photo collections" and "Competence development for a multicultural society" are meant for all three.

Among ALMs there are needs of leadership training. Earlier we had one programme in Norway for leaders in research and educational libraries, and one for museum leaders. Last autumn we stated a common programme for leaders in archives, libraries and museums. This first programme will be finished with the last of four gatherings in the end of May, and so far the participants have reported that they find it both inspiring and useful to discuss their challenges and exchange experiences with leaders from the other sectors.

An important basis for further cooperation between ALMs, is common meeting places. We stimulate the creation of meeting places on national, regional and local levels. Such meeting places could be seminars or conferences, for example about ALMs as institutions for learning, or it could be the building of networks.

In many ways the cooperation among ALMs seems to be of more interest on the regional and local level than on a national level, especially concerning a common use of resources and common presentations on the Internet. But when the users are in focus we also see that in several places they now plan to establish ALMs in the same localities and some places they even plan to merge two or three of these institutions. In the county of Vest-Agder the regional archive and the regional museum have merged into one institution. In Aust- Agder they are planning to make one regional institution for ALM. In Trondheim an ALM centre will be established in a submarine bunker from World War II. The State archive and the regional archive as well as the archive of the city of Trondheim, will be established there. So far the university library and a couple of museums will locate their storerooms there, but the idea of a conservation service and exhibitions for museums in the same building is also being

discussed. Finally, far up north in Finnmark, a new regional library was opened in Vadsø last year. A new museum building and a regional archive are now planned next to this library.

Culture Net Norway or "kulturnett.no" is the public gateway to Norwegian culture on the Internet. The culture net started with four different sector nets run by different institutions: A museum net, a library net, an archive net, and a net for arts. These four sector nets had some common services run by the National library. Now the whole project is run by ABM-utvikling. We have merged the four sector nets into one common portal to culture, and we strengthening the cooperation with the different regional culture nets. Several counties are now establishing their own regional nets in cooperation with kulturnett.no. Local history is a very popular subject in Norway, and the county of "Sogn og Fjordane" has got national project money for developing a regional culture net where sources from arrives, libraries and museums are presented and used in connection with other relevant information.

Our vision for ABM-utvikling says: "Archives, libraries and museums are places of new knowledge and experience for all." ALMs have different functions in society. Archives are not only cultural institutions but have basic functions in the documentation of privileges, both for individuals as well as institutions, organisations and groups of people. Neither do all research libraries define themselves as cultural institutions, as the public libraries would. In our vision we therefore focus on three words:
<u>Knowledge</u>, <u>experience</u> and <u>all</u>.

When we started to work on our plans we set out with the vision and our strategies, but inspired by MLA in England, we found it very useful to set down our basic values, and we found a set of values that we think is common for all the three sectors:

- *Tolerance, freedom of speech and democracy*
  Tolerance and freedom of speech are basic values in our democracy, and we want ALMs to be meeting places for an open dialogue

- *The inherent value of culture*
  Politicians and businessmen often focus on investments in culture as a means to get results in other fields, for example in the tourist industry. For us it is important that culture has a value of its own, and we believe that the possibility for people to take part in cultural activities gives them a better life and makes them more creative.

- *The right of access to information*
  The right to, and not least the possibility of access to information and knowledge are basic foundations in a democracy.

- *The diversity of culture*
  We live in a multicultural society. The Samí or Lapp population in Norway is officially declared indigenous, and this entails special obligations to provide for the development, preservation and dissemination of Samí culture.

  Five groups have been given the status of national minorities. These are Jews, Tater/Romani people, Gypsy/Rom, forest Finns and the Kvenes. And not least we have many different groups of newer immigrants.

  In our work we find it important to focus on this situation. ALMs face a two-sided challenge in this field. We are to give members of these different minority groups the

possibility to get knowledge and experience of their own culture as we do for the ethnic Norwegians, but we also want to focus on the challenge of giving the different groups the possibility to learn about each other and, not least to create meeting points where they not only get knowledge about each other but also learn to know each other and to communicate.

- *Social integration*
  In our work we will also work for social integration. This means that we have to tear down social barriers that exclude individuals from getting access to our institutions. You remember that our vision is that ALMs should be places of new knowledge and experience for <u>all people.</u>

- *Universal design*
  Universal design means that localities, exhibitions and not least the resources presented on the web will be designed to give access to people with different functional handicaps

- *The effective use of the resources of society*
  As a governmental institution our work is financed by taxes, and therefore we are responsible for offering effective use of the public resources.

Let me end as I started. *For the users it is not important whether the sources of knowledge and experience are kept by archives, libraries or museums, but to get access to the sources they want, and to be able to use these sources across types of sources and sectors of institutions.*