



## **Copenhagen City Library – Virtual Library Services**

*By Børge Sørensen, Copenhagen City Library*

Copenhagen – the gateway to the Baltic Sea, as the tourist office calls us – is the central city in the Oresund Region. The central municipality with its 0.5 million population is the center of a region counting around 3.0 million in all. It includes even the southern part of Sweden, with the city of Malmo – the city with the most beautiful central library in the whole of Scandinavia.

The region became connected by a bridge a couple of years ago, and the integration of the region moves slowly but inevitably forward. Administrative rules and taxes are being adapted, traffic patterns changed, mass media combined and people are beginning to talk to each other. The unbroken built-up areas between Elsinore at the Danish coast and Helsingborg at the Swedish, forms a great U with Copenhagen at the bending.

The city library consists of the central library, 19 branches, 1 bookmobile and a number (around 100) of service points in hospitals, elderly people's homes, jails, and so on. It is a multicultural city, with a fair amount of immigrants, in some parts of the city reaching around 30-35%. It is not considered a rich city – there are several social and cultural underprivileged people in parts of the city. Although, during the last 5-6 years it has got better, families are staying, fat taxpayers are staying and the city's income has grown, while the expenses has decreased. And there are the students – university, college and a lot of other educational institutions are flowering – it leads to a busy library.

Up till 50% of our regular users are students, as a matter of fact. We are the most busy and productive university library in town, although we are in fact a public library.

On the screen here are a number of different figures. It is not for boring purposes, but to underline the fact that we, and I guess all of us, are in the middle of a changing process of enormous consequences. We are so to speak forced to run two different service lines at the same time, and normally with the same amount of resources, or fewer. The figures illustrate that. You see a traditional circulation (which has not decreased), a number of de facto visitors (which has grown), and you see the whole range of traditional social library services from the '60s and '70es. And at the same time you see a growing number of online visitors, a business library, an EU information centre and computer workshops and user education. I think it is a fantastic and inspiring trend, but on the other hand it stretches the resources to bursting point.

In my little speech here I will introduce some new virtual services, and do that shortly before I will finish with a brand new service called net-music.

Bibliotek.dk is a national netservice, developed from a national catalogue covering all Danish academic and public libraries holdings, into a service giving all Danish citizens access to search and to order books/materials from all libraries in Denmark. It means that a person from own computer can order any book from the holdings in all libraries to be picked up at a library by own choice – a terrific service seen from the users' point-of view, but with consequences for logistics! A few major public libraries, including Copenhagen, became very popular pick-up points. In the two years that the service has been running, it has become the way of making a reservation. Right now we have a number of requests per month for the country totaling around 45.000. It's an enormous increase in interlibrary loans.

If you make reservations via the Internet, you don't know of course if the materials are on circulation or actually are on the shelf. And a surprising number of books are on the shelves. So where the patron before found her own material, and took it down for checking out – it is now the staff who make that for her and bring it down to the counter to be picked up. And we send her a SMS or an e-mail, and the circulation is done. Our message is: a modern, electronically updated system for searching and ordering – but not so modern when it comes to the fact that the patron actually has to get the book, the CD or the video. But a terrific service, and people love it.

### **FNG**

is a netservice which guides the user through all the corners of the internet. It is a collaboration between 20 libraries, which sort of catalogue the net to enable the user to find adequate and useful material. The libraries joining are given specific topics, and are supposed to refer to quality net references.

### **Net librarian**

is an online information, or reference, service, likewise made as a collaboration between approximately 30 public and academic libraries. Covering every kind of question put from people all over the country, and with generous opening hours: ordinary weekdays from 8 am to 10 pm, and Saturdays and Sundays from 9 am to 10 pm. The number of questions asked has been growing, but are now stabilized around 400 a week. We guarantee an adequate answer, if we can find one, immediately or, at least, inside 24 hours.

### **Dotbot**

is a reference tool for kids.

### **Skrivopgave**

Means, literally translated, "how to do your assignment/essay", and is an online service for youngsters 16-20 years. The service gives inspiration and advice to pupils on primary, secondary (lower and higher) on choice of subject, formulation, how to find supplementary

information etc. Stress our primary aim to give service to the educational society.

All these net services – and there are a couple more – are extensions of our traditional services. It qualifies them, makes them better and more easily accessible for the public. There are also, together with direct Internet access, education of users and computer workshops for our virtual services, which are run parallel to traditional services. In my library we reckon that around 30-35% of the total library work is virtual. We have some difficulties to document this 30-35% properly. So a major part of our service lines are "in cyberspace" so to speak. You can of course see them, if you are looking, and they require resources! But they are not so obvious as the traditional circulation of books, CD's and video's.

But of course there are a lot of advantages to the virtual services. First we have developed new and inspiring collaboration-patterns between different kinds of libraries. Those patterns are criss-crossing around the country, and not as before tied to a certain region. Secondly it gives the staff a tremendous good experience in project working, a new flexibility and flair of the profession. And I am not talking only about the technical knowledge here, but more about the whole working culture in the library.

Meanwhile the "blackprints" are with us to stay, for as long as we can see into the future. The solid materials will continue to be one of our major services which, together with the virtual services, slowly but inevitably will count for more and more of the library services.

The ultimate development in the virtual field is to be able to deliver directly to a user's computer the text, the music, the pictures. We can easily do that electronically, the technique is there, and the computers are among people in a massive amount. We lend out electronic books, but there are very few titles; we provide people with electronic access to periodicals, and there are a lot of titles. And we are working on technical system, called downlaan, enabling us to lend out e-

text/books to people, texts which cannot be copied and cannot be kept more than a normal lending period. A prototype will be ready at the end of this year. Meanwhile you can find all about the project on [www.downlaan.dk](http://www.downlaan.dk).

With **netmusic** we are a little bit further. Since January this year we have operated a service that gives our patrons online access to music files on a loan basis. Meaning that if you are a registered patron by us you can borrow MP3 files for a certain period, normally one month. The digital rights management system guarantees the publishers that the patron can't copy the music, and that any trace of the file vanishes after the loan period has expired. The tough part of this is not the technique, which is pretty simple, but to convince scared publishers that their files can't be copied and can't be exploited. So far we have succeeded with some publishers, but not the major ones! But this fall will see a major breakthrough at least where Danish music is concerned and the system will go nationwide – so we will not be a pilot-project anymore.

Up till now we have 2100 users signed on (and the potential for a tremendous number more); our holdings are 1700 files, and the circulation has been 7800. Not fantastic numbers, but easily enough for us to continue. And the real perspective here, besides the good service to patrons, is massive.

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