The Library Barometer

Library services and knowledge development

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Abstract

The role of the Lund University Libraries (LUB) is rapidly changing, as are also the ways in which young students and old professors seek information in the computer age. It was therefore decided to conduct a University-wide survey of library use. In this report we want to share our experiences of planning, conducting and making use of the Library Barometer 2000 at Lund University. The aim of the report is to highlight some of the challenges of the working process and give an account of the main findings and conclusions of the study. The aim of the barometer was to explore what paths of information searching different groups of users employ and how satisfied they are with the library services. The questionnaire, answered by more than 2000 users, shows a great diversity, both with regard to the kind of information paths utilised by each group (students narrow/formal, researchers broad/informal) and to their use of the library (students library-dependent, researchers often library-independent). The students' growing dependence on the library in flexible learning is not connected to a growing interest on the part of researchers for contributing to the choice of literature for the library. For LUB to become an integrating link between the research and teaching processes is thus a somewhat paradoxical enterprise. It is suggested that the process of conducting the study and implementing the findings, rather than giving detailed answers on which services to improve, is playing an important part in working out and making apparent a new organisational identity in the network of Lund University Libraries.
What is the use of user studies?

Background and aim of the report

Conducting user studies is today part of the routines in quality assurance and appears as something natural to most service organisations. How else could quality be enhanced? University libraries are no exceptions. Library professionals also find it self-evident that the visitors should be satisfied with the service the library offers. But here the simple parts come to an end. As different analyses show (Seldén 1999, Wilson 1990, 1997) planning and carrying out a survey of library utilisation and user satisfaction that is good enough to provide a rich starting point for development work, and that - most important of all - is later really exploited for that latter purpose, is no simple task. We live, as Power (1997) critically suggests, in the “Audit Society” where to be credible organisations are required to have their business publicly followed up in various ways, when demanded by their internal and external relations. But neither well-defined needs nor strong demands make the task any simpler to fulfil.

Several factors also contribute to the fact that conducting user studies in big, old university library systems is perhaps even harder. The rapid changes of information services in the network society create new prerequisites for communication and knowledge development both in higher education and research. As Nowotny et al (2001) points out the relation between research and society also changes. This in turn fundamentally changes the conditions of library services. The core activities of the traditional research library are transformed when scientific communication, besides taking place on paper, is based on more rapid, multiple and global media. Moreover library rooms today are crowded with young people trying to earn their academic qualifications and in this endeavour constantly surveying where to find rewarding study environments inside the “massificated” university. Libraries often fulfil these criteria. And even if we disregard the obvious changes in behaviour among the dominant groups of library-users, there are considerable technical and procedural problems in defining and delimiting the multi-faceted services offered by a big university library or even, as in our case, offered by a big network of university libraries. What can patterns of library utilisation and user satisfaction in one moment of time tell us that can be of help in a process of organisational transformation of core activities? What frame of reference can offer a context for creating a meaningful picture of library utilisation and user satisfaction?
Through sharing our experiences of planning and conducting the Library Barometer 2000 at Lund University and putting it to use, we want to highlight some of the challenges of the working process and give an account of the main findings and conclusions of the study.

The results are divided into three parts that shows the findings from the study at three different levels of analysis. The discussion consists of reflections concerning the process of using the study for deciding on measures to adopt in the library network. Moreover discussion underlines the big difference between, on the one hand, scientific investigations that aim at finding precise and finite answers to questions put forward from the beginning and, on the other hand, user studies that aim at producing fruitful starting points for creating new questions from different categories of users and library professionals at different levels in the organisation concerning how to develop their practice. If that is what user studies are for?

Organisational aspects of quality assurance and the development of university libraries

The organisational emphasis on systems for quality assurance in higher education can be seen as an adjustment both to the influence of market mechanisms and to the difficulties in finding sufficiently good external information for guiding the direction of development in times of change. This in turn can be interpreted as signs of the breakdown of the modern project and of the belief in the possibilities of planning for a predictable future (Bauman 1991). Post-modernity, as Bauman suggests, is not so much a choice of alternative theoretical views as struggling with the inescapable insecurity and ambivalence in the situation. The control needed by management thus has to be created in different ways than before. Results from evaluations and from reflective models for self-evaluations contribute to the legitimisation of management when the actual outcomes of the enterprise— for different reasons - are hard to verify (Power 1997). The process of making the experience of different groups of users visible inside the organisation can be both instrumental (creating a data base that can be exploited for improving service) and/or part of the development of an organisational identity (Dahler-Larsen 1999).

The conditions for research, teaching and learning in the network society are undergoing major changes (Gibbons et al 1995, Harvey & Knight 1996). The main task of the old university library was to guarantee researchers access to the scientific sources. The university library itself was the collected scientific memory and could also claim monopoly for this function.
in specific domains. First the copying-machine and later the printer, in close connection with electronically multiplied sources, have rapidly undermined this primary position. The power over the users - be they researchers or students - in having the only available copy of a piece of information, has almost disappeared. The bonds between researchers and the local university library are not the same as before. But at the same time as this power has lessened, the possibility for library professionals to be really of great help in literature retrieval and knowledge development has grown considerably. The question is, though, if - or to what extent - both parties have noticed this development of a new possible relationship. The demands for students to develop capacity to navigate in the vast sea of information are already formulated in a suggestion of new goals in the Higher Education Act in Sweden (SOU 2001:13, Proposition 2001/02:15). Undergraduate students are to develop the ability not only to solve given problems, but also to discern and formulate them, as well as to follow and be able to critically evaluate scientific communication in their field. Thirty years ago these would have been demands not expected to be fulfilled well until the postgraduate level. The question now is, to what extent the undergraduate studies are organised to meet these expectations and what role library services might play in this process.
Library Barometer 2000 - point of departure

Within Lund University there are about 40,000 students, teachers and researchers working together. The common focus of their endeavours can be described as knowledge development, either their own or that of others. In addition in Lund, the University is responsible for educational programs in three other cities - Malmö, Helsingborg and Landskrona. The university has a large, multifaceted library system, which has a decentralised organisation. Altogether the Lund University Libraries the year 2000 consisted of about sixty different individual libraries that shared a common library catalogue. The rapid development of various electronic media, taking place at the same time as both new and old activities were experiencing funding problems, entailed great challenges for the ongoing development of the Library Network. In February 2000 the University Board decided upon a new structure for the library network. The big changes were placing the responsibility for the library services on the faculty level, thus degrading the old University Library at the top of the old library hierarchy to become one among other library units in the library network “Lund University Libraries – LUB”. It was decided that the implementation should take place over a three-year period.

In 1999 it was also decided that a comprehensive library-user survey covering the whole of the University - the Library Barometer 2000 – should be carried out. It had previously been pointed out that there was no available collected survey showing how satisfied the users were with the service offered by the University’s libraries. Accordingly, plans were initiated to carry out such a study as an aid to the continued development work. A reference group was appointed to work on designing the Barometer. This group consisted of representatives from the Student Unions (LUS), the Doctoral Students’ Union, professionals involved in library work and from the Office of Evaluation. The work was led and co-ordinated by the Office of Evaluation.

The main standpoints of the reference group

The first problem was to delimit what is meant by library service and library activity. It was decided to include all types of service needed for information-gathering aiming at knowledge development, irrespective of medium or channel used. This meant that all electronic sources were regarded as part of library services. In this study, a student or a researcher can be regarded as a very active library user without putting his/her foot inside the “real” library.
Many user surveys in the library world ask the actual visitors to the library about their opinion of the service they receive. The reference group decided on a different approach. Those investigated here were to be a representative selection of the most important groups of people who ought to use the library, regardless of whether they are actually doing so or not. By adopting this approach we would be able also to say something about the non-users of library services in each group.

Three main user groups were delimited - undergraduate students, postgraduate students and researchers-teachers at the university. It was also decided to give equal value to each of these groups as users of library service. This was also in line with the University’s policy regarding a student-centred and active-learning approach. Administrative staff and external users of Lund University Libraries were not included in the Barometer.

At a time when one can expect the information channels exploited by the different groups of users to undergo quite rapid changes, it cannot be taken for granted what role the library services are playing to establish the choice of information sources utilised in knowledge development of each group. Therefore we found it valuable to ask questions to clarify which channels of information were most frequently used besides visits (real or virtual) to the library system. We also asked the respondents to value their own skills in information retrieval, to track down educational needs.

The reference group also had thorough discussions on how to gather and compile a material that could be optimally useful for development work at different levels and by different groups (student organisations, faculties, library-units, library administration, University Board). The decision was to present the results in as much detail as possible but also to include an overall framework for the interpretation of the findings.

**The aim of the Barometer**

Using the whole library network at Lund University as its point of departure - the aim of the Library Barometer was to investigate:

- which information channels undergraduates, postgraduate students, teachers and researchers at Lund University use to develop their knowledge;
- how satisfied the different categories of users are with the service offered by the network, and
- how satisfied the different categories of users are with their own skills in information retrieval.
Method of procedure

The Library Barometer was based on the same principles as the previous barometers at Lund University, which were geared to undergraduates, teachers and doctoral students. The basic idea in the method of procedure is that the users' experiences are to form the point of departure for the questions asked and that the answers shall be able to provide a direct basis for assessing areas where work on improvement is necessary. The Library Barometer, however, has a broader aim than the earlier barometers in that it also includes a mapping of the provision of information and the use of the libraries. The design of the questionnaire and the preparation of the questions made by the reference-group were based on three different qualitative interview-studies with a small sample from the three groups in the study.

The Barometer was distributed to a representative sample of undergraduates, doctoral students and teachers/researchers. From each of these groups a random selection was made of ca. 1000 people from every faculty/section within the University. This meant that 5% of the undergraduates, 40% of the doctoral students and 40% of the teachers/researchers received the Barometer. The questionnaire was distributed only in a paper version and was sent by post in the middle of April 2000 to the respondents' home addresses with a reply-paid envelope. Two lots of reminder letters were also sent. The response rate was 65%.

The response rate was sufficiently high and fairly evenly distributed between the faculties, which mean that the views of those responding to the questionnaire should provide a relatively good reflection of the experiences of the three groups. However, we should be able to assume that the group who did not answer the questionnaire do not have a greater active interest in matters concerning the libraries than those who did respond.
Results

The results are divided into three parts. The first shows the overall picture of the way in which information channels and library services are utilised by students, postgraduate students and researchers-teachers in their knowledge development as a framework for further interpretation. Some general differences between faculty/section areas are pointed out. The second part gives an account of the satisfaction with and importance of library services. In the third part the framework for interpretation is used as a starting point for delimiting and making visible a row of structural and educational paradoxes and problems for the development of library services and the quality of educational programs.

Level 1 - A framework for interpretation: Information channels and library relations in knowledge development

Students, postgraduate students and researchers-teachers have different ways of making use of information channels and library services in their knowledge development. But it is also important to keep in mind that the purpose of their activity is directed towards quite differing goals. Students are aiming at using the competence they develop principally in their coming professional functions. Researchers' and teachers' knowledge development is mainly contributing to the scientific knowledge in their field. Postgraduate students strive for goals in both directions, but the primary one is the scientific contribution.

An important part of the professional competence continuously developing in all three groups is information-retrieving skills. With the rapid development of the Internet and electronic databases the possible access to valuable information is huge, both for studying and research activities. Today students are supposed to master qualified information retrieval towards the end of their undergraduate studies. To what extent electronic sources are utilised by students and their teachers can thus give a picture of how well undergraduate education today is able to fulfil these expectations.

The overall picture shows that students' ways of using different information channels and library services in their studies are strictly directed and quite narrow. They have of course no informal networks or prolonged experience from the subject field to rely on. But they are not compensating for this by using electronic media or Internet searches in their studies (and the questionnaire did not ask about information channels used in leisure, sport,
hobbies or other social activities), in spite of the fact that most of them have easy access to a computer. The majority of the sources the use in their study work are discovered and prescribed by others. The acquisition of those requires no skills in information retrieval on the parts of the students. They can as well buy them in the bookshop as look for them in the library. In this part of their work the students are independent of library services. If they are requested to broaden and deepen the choice of literature the students tend to turn to the library closest to them. And there they are often dependent on immediate access to relevant sources to work with. In the parts of their studies that can be described as flexible and that require self-governed searches the students are very library-dependent.

The utilisation of information channels is developing rapidly among postgraduate students. They have longer experience from the field to rely on and they exploit the formal and electronic systems for information retrieval as well as they are building informal contacts and networks in their speciality. Yet they are still dependent on the formal systems. The postgraduates are well up-dated on the latest channels and techniques for formal searches and they are also the most frequent users of the broadest range of library services, both traditional and newly developed.

Researchers-teachers have continuously built up and expanded their information channels over a long period of time. They utilise a broad range of different channels, where networking and informal professional contacts play a dominant part. This corresponds with the study by Seldén (1999). Through the large amount of information they get as an informal and everyday part of research activities and teaching they become quite independent of the library for their knowledge development. Yet, depending on what kind of subject they are active in, the need for library services varies a great deal. For instance in law, music and the humanities there are many researchers dependent on big collections of special documents. In technical subjects researchers mostly use electronic library services. The relations of researchers and teachers to the library can be described as varying from active to independent. Since the many-sided and informal channels of information that experienced researchers and teachers employ takes considerable time to develop, the information competence in this group had in many cases found its form long before the Internet library services evolved. Researchers and teachers, depending on the character of their subject and previous experience, can now be described either as “electronically liberated” from traditional library services or in some cases suffering from “electronic helplessness” when it comes to skills in using the formal systems recently developed in their field.
Postgraduate students are the group with the greatest experience of the whole range of library services, both traditional and electronically born ones. Both students and researchers-teachers have a more varied pattern of library utilisation. Yet, what the framework for interpretation shows is that both the reasons for and the consequences of not using the traditional or the new library services differ between each group. The framework indicates that it is the development of students' knowledge that is subject to the greatest risks if library services (traditional and electronic) are not utilised, since both researchers-teachers and postgraduates can rely on other information channels.

The figure shows a survey of the user-groups' information channels and relations to the library system as they emerge as a result of the survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group:</th>
<th>Aim of knowledge development:</th>
<th>Type of information channels:</th>
<th>Type of information searches: (DOMINANT/subordinated)</th>
<th>Relations to Library:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>for studying &amp; working-life</td>
<td>New (1-3y*)</td>
<td>CONTROLLED SPECIFIC</td>
<td>INDEPENDENT OF LIBRARY - only acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>- prescribed reading - assigned by teacher</td>
<td>DEPENDENT ON LIBRARY - for discoveries - flexible learning - place to study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Independent systematic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- deepening - specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduates</td>
<td>for researching &amp; working-life</td>
<td>Advanced (6-10 y)</td>
<td>INDEPENDENT SYSTEMATIC SPECIFIC</td>
<td>ACTIVE IN LIBRARY USING LIBRARY - on an electronic basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>- prescribed reading - assigned by teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Growing</td>
<td>- Independent systematic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- deepening - specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers - Teachers</td>
<td>for research &amp; teaching</td>
<td>Prolonged (10-30 y)</td>
<td>INFORMAL SPECIFIC Networking</td>
<td>From ACTIVE IN to INDEPENDENT OF LIBRARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multifarious</td>
<td>- only acquisition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>- for discoveries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>- flexible learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- place to study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The "years" indicate how long the respondents have been active at the university in their various capacities.

Figure 1. Framework for interpretation: Information channels and relations to library.
Level 2 - Quality indication: Importance of and satisfaction with library services

Students, postgraduates and researchers-teachers are very satisfied with the service they use. Of all the aspects of library service that were included in the questionnaire the students are satisfied or very satisfied with 80%, postgraduates and researchers-teachers with 88%. There is no united major dissatisfaction in any area. Most aspects are also regarded as important. Yet here there are distinct differences between students and the other groups pin-pointing the different expectations on library services.

![Figure 2. Importance of library services (1=Unimportant, 5=Very important)](image)

Figure 2. Importance of library services (1=Unimportant, 5=Very important)

The quality of the libraries’ collections and the help the users get from the librarians are given the highest marks, irrespective of which library unit has been visited. This is a very good result. In spite of great structural and financial problems and at a time when information technology is rapidly changing the conditions for the work of the libraries, all active groups of users have very great confidence in the Lund University Libraries.

There are some specific areas with a lower degree of satisfaction. Students all over the University are dissatisfied with access to rooms or places for group-work. In addition, in some faculties students are dissatisfied with the number of available computers. For certain units there are also wishes for evening- and weekend opening hours. The satisfaction with library courses
is neither high nor low, but the groups’ experiences of these aspects are also very limited. The most evident dissatisfaction for all groups concerns the possibility of influencing the choice of books to the library collection and the library development.

Centre for Research into Quality (CRQ) has conducted regular surveys of student satisfaction at University of Central England in Birmingham over the last ten years. After a run-through of the most recent reports of undergraduates’ and postgraduate students’ experiences (Harvey et al. 1998 a & b, 1999, 2000 a & b) focussing on their ratings of library services, the overall picture that evolves have big similarities:

"At the institutional level, students indicate that all aspects of library provision are very important and satisfactory. Students are particularly satisfied with the helpfulness of library staff and opening hours. However the following aspects remain only adequate: the availability of recommended course material, multiple copies of core books, the availability of group study rooms.”  

The purpose of this part of the analysis was to show user satisfaction with library services to produce management information for action, in line with the SSA-model (Harvey et al. 1998 a). The results in this part, separated from the total context of the study, are more directed at the library organisation itself. However, the dominant feature of the ratings of library services was high degrees both of satisfaction and importance. Unfortunately this gives a too homogeneous basis to be of real help in deciding on specific measures for development of different library services. Afterwards it is also evident that ca 1000 from each user group was not a sample big enough to give each of the over 50 smaller library units their respective figures. The results were shown for the two largest libraries and for every faculty/sector.

Level 3 - Organisational aspects: Significance of library services in knowledge development

All over the University students are using the libraries in more varied ways than postgraduates and researchers-teachers are (Figure 3). They pursue different study-tasks, read their recommended literature or search for broader perspectives in other books, but they also meet their friends for discussions and group-work, often at the computers. Therefore, there are several aspects of library services that are more important to students, as shown in figure 2. They, compared to the other groups, consider that it is more important to have access to literature within several different subject
fields. This points to the specific role of a good study-environment for flexible or self-governed learning and for training of information-retrieval skills that libraries have. It looks also as if, for students, libraries have become the kind of intellectual meeting place that long ago they were also for researchers. To fulfil the new goals for knowledge development in the HE act all students should have access to complete workstations in well-equipped and not too narrowly specialised libraries.

Figure 3. Utilisation of the traditional library services at the University. (1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Every third month, 4=Every month, 5=Every week)

Postgraduates use the library actively for searching literature mostly through electronic media. They are also the group with the highest frequency of loans. Of the different sources that postgraduates acquired in April 2000, 58% were either loans that were fully copied or material printed from a database (corresponding shares for students and researchers-teachers were 18% and 38%). The figures show the importance of the copying-machine and the printer for a permanent acquisition of literature at the University. Besides borrowing literature the second common way of acquisition both for postgraduates and researchers-teachers was to print it out. The possibilities of permanent acquisition through copying and printing make postgraduates and researchers-teachers less dependent on the library for later returning to their sources.
LUB consists of more than sixty different library units. Most students, postgraduates and researchers-teachers also visit more than one of these libraries regularly. Yet, 13% of the students, 8% of the postgraduates and 11% of the researchers-teachers have not visited any of the libraries belonging to LUB during the past year. Postgraduates located outside Lund, especially in medicine, regularly use other libraries. In some fields, such as technology or natural sciences they also, like researchers-teachers, sometimes rely more on electronic sources than on actual visits to the library. They utilise library services - but not the traditional ones. For students not visiting LUB, or visiting it very seldom, there are no such explanations available, though some of them use public libraries. And this group does not compensate for not visiting the LUB by using electronic media or other information channels for their knowledge development. Going back to the framework for interpretation and the variations in library relations among each group for different subjects, the most probable explanation would be that this group, consisting of undergraduates, does not go to the library because it is not necessary for them to do so in order to manage the educational requirements. Most of these students come from the technical sector, but there are also groups in social sciences and other faculties. This draws attention to the question of how traditional strictly guided reading is balanced against self-governed or flexible learning in different subjects with their special pedagogical and didactic traditions. In the Student Barometer 2000 the undergraduates rated the amount of hours spent at lectures every week. The connection was quite obvious; in faculties/sectors with a large number of lectures student are using LUB much less than in faculties with fewer lectures.

Undergraduates in technology do not indicate any great dissatisfaction with the library service. On the other hand, there is a large proportion of these students (1/3) who state that they have no experience of essential parts of the library services. They are also the group who use the library least (on an average once per term - so not for regular reading and study) and who also state that they are somewhat dissatisfied with their own skills in making searches and following developments in their own subject field. Seeing that the doctoral students in technology do not present a similar picture, this points to a large difference between the information qualifications required at the undergraduate level compared to the doctoral studies level in technology. This difference does not appear so obviously in other faculties. A big study of library use from 1996 (Höglund) shows a similar variation where undergraduates in technology are least prepared for information retrieval.

Another problem area can be described as the difference between on the one hand the users’ generally very high estimation of their own skills in information retrieval and, on the other hand, their lack of experience, both
of large parts of the electronic library services and of the choice of programmes offered within their sector. The availability of computers for information retrieval is consistently rated as good by all groups, except those from the performing arts, where the students are dissatisfied. However, large groups of students from all faculties have no experience of using electronic library services. The Performing Arts sector and the Lund Institute of Technology have the largest groups of students who lack this experience. On the other hand, those groups who do use these services are most often very satisfied.

A comprehensive question is also how the libraries stimulate or encourage their users to take part in the selection of literature and the development of the library. An attendant question to this is whether the user groups understand that their collaboration can be important. Both teachers/researchers and doctoral students and also undergraduates state that it is rather important (Figure 2) to be able to have some influence here. However, a majority in all three groups have never made a suggestion for purchases of literature. And the groups are not specially satisfied. Teachers and researchers are somewhat more satisfied than the doctoral students with their chances to have a say in the choice of literature. But here too, there are large subgroups (20-35%) that state that they have no experience of these chances. Since the doctoral students are a group of skilled users who possess up-to-date knowledge of the best way to use the electronic tools for systematic searches, they stand out as an unexploited resource when it comes to cooperation in selecting literature and developing the libraries. The participation of the teachers and the researchers also appears problematic, considering that they are not dependent on the library services in the same way as the doctoral students, and that, within this group, there are those who constitute the front line of knowledge within their subject field. In the continued development of the library network special attention should be given to questions regarding how different groups of users can be involved as participants in the selection of literature and in library development.

In spite of the quite unproblematic result of a high degree of satisfaction with most aspects of library services, that was shown earlier, on the organisational level there are a quite evident number of interrelated problems. Today LUB offers an overwhelming wealth of high quality scientific information that can be easily accessed through electronic tools, yet it is utilised in a quite uneven and limited way by students and researchers-teachers. And still they assess their competence in information retrieval as good, not to say very good. The undergraduates seem to be quite strictly directed with regard to the choice of literature. The Library Barometer thus
indicates that traditional teaching methods probably are more prevalent at
the University than the discourse on educational development supposes.

At the organisational level the Barometer reveals several important needs for
development that cannot be regarded as belonging solely to the library
organisation. Now, when students are supposed to develop information
competence already during their undergraduate studies, and this training has
to be more closely connected to the specific nature of the educational con-
tent, this raises the demands on pedagogical co-operation between libraries
and departments. A greater part of teaching should probably be based on
library-connected tasks. This means that teachers and librarians have to
work closer together. Students in most fields are already utilising the good
study environment that libraries offer. Yet it clearly looks as if they have to
be supervised and guided into utilising electronic tools in a rewarding way
in their subject field. The network and information society puts libraries in
the centre of the undergraduate education instead of in the periphery. And
perhaps that could be a good reason for teachers to spend some time and
effort there too.

The result also points to the changing conditions for libraries when it comes
to supporting researchers in their scientific work. If the core activity of the
university library system is to maintain and develop ongoing, electronically
based scientific communication, this cannot be successful without close
collaboration between researchers and librarians. And the Barometer shows
that this is not yet evident to researchers. Some of them may even think that
the library network should have no say in this matter. This points to the fact
that there is no longer a self-evident delimitation of the meaning of library
services. For this reason it is also important that the co-operation needed to
guarantee the influence of researchers and teachers on library development is
based on openness from the library organisation regarding the way this can
be supported and fruitfully organised. Perhaps it is no longer merely a
question of formal representation on different library boards. What is
needed might be a closer working collaboration built on how qualified com-
munication in research today is evolving. This would also put library
services more at the heart of ongoing research activities.
Discussion: Experiences and conclusions

The character of the Barometer - a user study as a base for university self-evaluation

When the reference group decided on the aim of the Barometer, the explicit purpose was to conduct a study that would produce a rich and many-sided material that is normally not available in an everyday library follow-up. The purpose was also that the material presented should provide a new basis for self-evaluation and development work both in the library network and in groups with library responsibilities in faculties/sectors. For that reason the original material published (http://evaluat.lu.se/publ.htm - in Swedish) was quite extensive. The intention was that the report should be interpreted and utilised in a bottom-up manner, by the people at the University engaged in questions of library development. The material was also published just at the beginning of the implementation period of the new library organisation, when the further consequences of the re-organisation were still being elaborated. Nonetheless, to utilise the Barometer in this way different groups were supposed to read and make an interpretation of their own of the data concerning their library domain. But to expect this is to presuppose that there are people both willing and able to put work into making conclusions of their own. In this perspective the full result of the Library Barometer thus cannot, and should not, be concluded with the first presentation of the compiled material.

A big and sufficiently complicated user-study definitely has dominant features in common with scientific investigations, especially when it comes to methods. The importance of well-formulated questions, of representative samples etc is quite the same. Still it could be argued that a big user-study, meant to be a starting point for development work at different levels in a big organisation, has a more immediate and complex relation to the surrounding world than a scientific investigation has. In the university environment it is probably easier to confuse what is expected of the two different kinds of work. While the scientific study, from its aims or hypothesis, should give a clear and ready-made answer to the questions previously decided on, this could not be the principal model for a big user-survey based on purposes like those valid for the Library Barometer. If the purpose really is to support an active interpretation of the situation, it could be said that the more work that is put into understanding and discovering new questions based on the study, the more successful is the user-study. On the other hand, if the expectations from the receivers of the user-study are to get simple answers and conclusions – then it will be most adequate to put forward the question from one of the subtitles: What is the use of user-studies? One conclusion of
the process of conducting the Library Barometer is that this message must be clearly communicated to all parties - You, the users of the user study, will have to be a part of creating the result of the study.

Another conclusion is that a user study of this complex character could not be useful in the manner proposed above if it gave no support for an overall perception of what a university library network is supposed to be in times of profound changes in the conditions for communication. Already in the beginning of the work in the reference group one could say that a relatively unconscious or at least unexpressed comprehension of this guided the standpoints of the group and resulted in the scope of the questionnaire. There is no neutral or value-free framework either for producing or for understanding a picture of users' perspectives.

In reporting on the Barometer to different audiences we have tried to emphasise those parts of the results that can be of specific interest to the group in question. In this paper, for instance, the concentration is on general aspects of how the different user groups are utilising their information channels and library relations. And, in order to do this in an intelligible and professional way, we suddenly find ourselves treating the results as if they were traditional research findings. There is no category into which a qualified user-study aiming at organisational self-evaluation really fits. It can be seen as hybrid of different expectations.

The Barometer as a study of the relation between the university and the library services

The results of the Barometer can be used for evaluating to what extent the library network organisation and the University departments have been able to create a system for library and information services that is optimally utilised by students, postgraduate students, researchers and teachers in their knowledge development. In this evaluation the combination of the user groups' estimation of their own information-retrieval skills can be compared with the patterns of utilisation of various library services. But to come to an evaluative conclusion takes more than that. The information thus obtained cannot be assessed unless it is connected to a) a conception of what is the desirable information pattern for students, postgraduate students, teachers and researchers in the subject domain in question, and b) a conception of the suitable qualities in the library services that can be afforded. And the first of these contexts puts us right in the heart of the varying didactic and pedagogical traditions in each subject field (Figure 1 as a starting point for this being more descriptive than prescriptive). The other puts us right in the
middle of the rapid changes in the media carrying the scientific and scholarly communication and what can be regarded as good conditions for developing knowledge in research. This highlights the need to find a new mutual responsibility for developing the services that previously were apprehended as “something they should deal with in the library”. Today the library is on every desk at the department.

![Diagram](image.png)

Figure 4. Library services viewed as integrated in university core activities

The Library Barometer as a path to a new organisational identity?

After a run-through of the different user studies that have been conducted at Lund University during the past decade (Åkerblom 1991, Elsässer 1993, Cavallin & Nilsson 1994, McNeal 1998) it is evident that their tacit point of departure is the conception of a university library as primarily a traditional research library. In all of the studies the great number of students that nevertheless occupy the chairs is commented on, but not seldom as an obstacle. All of the studies thus conclude that students are the predominant user group. But their use of the library services is sometimes regarded as less qualified and not demanding important library services. Obviously students have formed the great majority of the LUB users for some decades. If the different user-studies had taken less for granted and had more explicitly expressed a concept of the core functions of the university library, the paradoxes in the attitude towards students’ needs of library services might have been visible earlier in the organisation. The university tradition with small separate student libraries for course-books (Franck 1997) has probably also contributed to the split vision concerning how to make provision for students’ needs of library services. It has been difficult to envisage a university library equally suited for students, researchers and teachers. Through taking as its starting point the construction of a common user survey with equal interest in the three major user groups and, through the possibilities this approach gave to compare the differences between these groups as regards the conditions for knowledge development, the Library Barometer
has thus contributed to making the new organisational identity visible. But that contribution was founded as much in the starting points for the study as in its obtained results.

Evaluation documents (LUB 1992, Heseltine 1994, Åkerblom 1995, Höiøseth & Heseltine 1999) and user surveys from the early 90's until today clearly show the gradual changes in the perception of what is regarded as the core functions of a university library network. And such changes also entail new decisions on how responsibility and co-operation should be shared in the university as a whole. Yet, there is still great variety in the conceptions of the core functions of Lund University Libraries. One can see the transformation as three intertwined processes, where one can take different positions along the way.

Lund University Libraries develop:

- from being primarily a group of research libraries to becoming a network of integrated centres for library services and knowledge development, directing their services equally to students, postgraduate students, researchers and teachers;

- from having a core function in holding accessible paper-based deposits of published scientific and scholarly texts, to acquiring a core function in supplying a qualified electronic network for participation in ongoing scientific, scholarly and educational knowledge development, besides assuming responsibility for connected archives in different media;

- from principally working as a separate institution alongside departments for learning, teaching and research, to functioning more as an integrated element in university activities for knowledge development.

In a recent book about perspectives on evaluations in organisations Dahler-Larsen (1999) analyses the growing range of motives for carrying through different kinds of reflective activities in organisational life. Like Power (1997) he notices that evaluations, alongside quality audits and accreditation, have become one of the ways management earns public respect. Evaluations also have several other symbolic functions. Dahler-Larsen writes:

"By the means of auto-communication an organisation interprets the communication, originally transmitted from the organisation itself to the outer world, through the reactions from its surroundings, as a coded message telling who the organisation is and in what way it relates to the outer world." (Ibid s 133) (Present author's translation from Danish.)
In this perspective of auto-communication a couple of suggestions can be made concerning the character of the process of planning, conducting and utilising the Library Barometer 2000.

Even though the Barometer could not give differentiated ratings of library services (the degree of satisfaction being too homogenous), the patterns of the non-use of vital parts of the new information systems gives a good basis for discussions of further development measures in the interface between library services and departments.

As auto-communication, the Barometer sent out several messages, both in the design of the questionnaire and with the final report. One is that the services of LUB should be equally directed towards students, postgraduate students, researchers and teachers; another is that the electronic or virtual library should be regarded as a core function for LUB. The different answers from the surrounding world are still returning. Thus, it is evident that the Barometer, even if it cannot easily be utilised for deciding on concrete measures, has had a symbolic function of supporting the direction of the new library organisation, by filling the messages with an overview of the relations between the users and the library system. A picture of the character of the network is thus taking shape inside the network itself.
References


Proposition 2001/02:15, Den öppna högskolan.


