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# SCONUL Study Tour to Denmark and Sweden May 2009



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## INTRODUCTION

...and so the SCONUL trail leads on along its long and winding road from Boston and Washington (1995), Barcelona (1997), New York (2003), Australia (2006) and South Africa (2007) to Denmark and Sweden over a week in May 2009. A group of 24 committed individuals representing a range of higher education institutions from across the UK and Ireland met in Copenhagen for their first gathering on a bright but breezy and hence increasingly cold Sunday evening at a bar on Nyhavn, a popular venue for library tourism and locals alike. It was here we encountered our first learning object – the blanket! The pink glow in the picture comes from the other basic requirement to café life in Copenhagen in May – the gas heaters.



*The blanket - significant learning resource!*

The objective of the tour (as set out in the invitation to join by our leaders Christine Fyffe and Liz Chapman) were as follows:

- To visit a range of academic, public and national libraries in the four fascinating and vibrant cities of Copenhagen, Malmö, Uppsala and Stockholm. The libraries selected had much to offer, from fine collections of rare books to inspiring examples of Scandinavian design.
- Inspired by our visits, to stimulate discussion and spark new insights into the issues and challenges that face us. Our focus therefore was on new approaches to designing library space and services to meet changing needs.
- To take up the opportunity to network with our hosts and to meet other Scandinavian librarians and information specialists.

#### THE PLACES WE VISITED WERE AS FOLLOWS:

Det Kongelige Bibliotek (The Royal Library) – The Black Diamond  
(<http://www.kb.dk/en/dia/index.html>)

Copenhagen University Library and Information Service (<http://www.kb.dk/en/kub/index.html>)

- Faculty Library of Humanities (<http://www.kb.dk/en/kub/campusbib/kubsyd/index.html>)
- Faculty Library of Social Sciences (<http://www.kb.dk/en/kub/fag/samf/index.html>)

Malmö University Library (<http://www.mah.se/english/Library/>)

Malmö City Library (<http://www.malmo.se/bibliotek>)

Copenhagen Business School Library (<http://uk.cbs.dk/bibliotek>)

Uppsala University Library (<http://www.ub.uu.se/eindex.cfm>)

Stockholm University Library (<http://www.sub.su.se/startasok.aspx>)

Stockholm Public Library (<http://www.biblioteket.stockholm.se/default.asp?id=5308&refid=5294>)

#### OUR HOSTS - A WORD OF THANKS

From our first visit of the trip to the Royal Library in Copenhagen to our last visit on Friday afternoon at Stockholm Public Library, we were very appreciative of the warm welcome given to us by our hosts in the libraries we visited.

Their obvious delight in showing us their buildings in which they had great pride was infectious and led to some lively and informative discussion sessions on how the buildings related to service delivery.

We were treated to delightful lunches and (of course in Copenhagen!) Danish pastries at coffee times which eased our way through what turned out to be an arduous schedule.

#### MONDAY 11 MAY - ROYAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, COPENHAGEN

As with previous SCONUL Study Tours we took the opportunity to discuss with colleagues in the libraries we visited a wide range of topics in addition to our declared aim to look at new approaches to designing library space and services to meet changing needs. It soon became obvious that consideration of strategic planning, staffing models, marketing and communications, learning spaces, openness to change, information literacy, and collections development and management all fed into the design of space as well as benefiting from it.

Indeed, our first visit of the tour to the Royal and University Libraries in Copenhagen was a good example of how this range of factors drive the design of buildings and development of services and collections within them.

We were welcomed by Director General of the Royal Library, Erland Kolding Nielsen and the Head of Copenhagen University Library (CULIS), Michael Cotta-Schönberg and members of their management teams. Their explanation of the development of CULIS and ongoing efforts to upgrade its various libraries to match the facilities offered in their flagship building, the Black Diamond, illustrate the huge effort involved in developing a new service organisation whilst maintaining access to collections. Not least, being the realisation that there was and is a need to build trusting relationships between those leading the developments and those developing the new services and buildings.

#### *Tour of Black Diamond*

Erland Kolding Nielsen led us on a tour of the Black Diamond building which truly lived up to its reputation. The Information Desk area sits on the bridge over the road and links the old and new buildings – it was explained to us that the design of the Information desk area is continually



*The Black Diamond*



*The Black Diamond - Information Point*



*The Black Diamond – Atrium*

reviewed in order to ensure that the best service to users can be made. The atrium allows light to flood into the building and affords spectacular views across the waterscape it looks out on. The reading rooms run off each side of the atrium of the new building and again use the height of the building to good effect. There is a great emphasis on security with the use of cameras – even under desks! – to scrutinise user behaviour as a result of major thefts in the past. The building also acts as a cultural centre with a splendid auditorium for performances of all kinds as well as a restaurant and bookshop.

### *Faculty Library of Social Sciences Library*

After our Tour and lunch at the Black Diamond, Tina Pipa, The Head of the Social Sciences Faculty walked us through the centre of Copenhagen to the Social Sciences Library at Gothersgade 140. At the time of our visit this stately building was being refurbished but we were able to gain a flavour of the environment it would provide in the future. We then received a presentation of the development of library services for the Social Sciences Faculty and undertook a useful discussion session. Interesting points which came out of the discussion were the organisation of book stock by accession number rather than a classification scheme. Additionally there would be a steady state collection size reviewed every five years with relegated stock being available via a requesting service from store(s). In terms of information skills training, the approach for subject advisers was to 'teach the teachers' rather than provide induction and basic skills teaching sessions for undergraduates. Subject advisers would still be committed to providing one-to-one clinics as required.

### *Faculty Library of Humanities*



*CULIS - Faculty Library of Humanities*

A quick coach ride to the other side of the city enabled us to finish off the day with a visit to the Humanities Faculty Library. Hans Kristian Mikkelsen, the Head of the Library, afforded us the same hospitality as Tina Pipa but within a completely new library building opened in September 2008. As was to prove the case in most of the new libraries we visited, tremendous use was made of glass walls to provide users with a light-filled environment in which to study. The use of uninterrupted floor to ceiling vistas also was to become a typical device for offering an inspiring environment. Furnishings were modern in design with brightly coloured casual seating in the atrium but a more down to earth provision

of blankets for users in order to keep themselves warm as the building did incline to having cooler periods.

#### **TUESDAY 12 MAY – MALMÖ UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND MALMÖ CITY LIBRARY**

We took the short rail trip to Malmö in Sweden just across the Öresund Bridge from Copenhagen to visit the University Library and the much admired Malmö City Library.

##### *Malmö University Orkanen Library*



*Malmö University Orkanen Library*

Malmö University is comparatively new being founded in 1998 but already having some 23,000 students amounting to some 11,000 FTE. It is made up of three faculties – Culture and Society, Health and Society, and Odontology – and two schools – Education and Technology. All of these provide for multidisciplinary courses aiming to give their graduates a broad outlook in preparation for their lives outside academia.

The impact of the University in changing the character of the city from an industrial centre to a University town has been substantial. The campus has been built on the old ship yards which had previously been the mainstay of Malmö's economy.

One of four libraries supporting the University is located on the top floor of the Orkanen Building which is located on the harbour front and affords users spectacular views of ferries coming into port. The shape and size of this building to some extent gives the Library its distinctive shape – an elongated rectangle. With a three sides predominantly made of glass light pours in to the building providing a very positive environment which has to be protected against heat gain when the sun is shining strongly.

Amongst its facilities the Library included the use of the long walls to provide galleries for displays of student art works; a quiet room for all religions for prayer and contemplation; a 'take a ticket' system for handling user enquiries; a language workshop; an area furnished especially for small children visiting the library with their student parents; and a mix of seating (both with or without PCs) located so that advantage could be taken of views to the outside.

An exchange of views with library staff identified that the design of the library had come from the work of a small group of librarians and IT staff to develop a vision. Academics had been consulted but not students directly, but they are subsequently surveying students to gain their impressions of the building and how it works. The balance of the use of space was influenced by the perceived need for group learning space and the expected growth in use of laptops, which would mean less need for dedicated PCs on desktops.

This perception is backed up by a collection development policy to move towards electronic and digital resources and services as much as is possible within budget and technology. Some print resources will continue to be purchased but budget for them is not expected to increase year-on-year.

Interestingly, all but two members of staff are qualified librarians with pedagogic training but they are starting to think of replacing the traditional librarian role with ones that have specific expertise. A 'Book a librarian' service is offered providing user education, clinics for individual students which can be arranged via e-mail boxes.

A very busy start to the day, so the group set off in twos and threes to sample Malmö's opportunities for lunch – and very good they were too!

##### *Malmö City Library*



*Malmö City Library*

A short walk through the city led us to Malmö City Library, a building which has been an example to how other public libraries may developed to meet future needs both in Sweden and Scandinavia as a whole. The new building was opened in 1997 adjacent and connected to the old central library building, which itself was then refurbished being re-opened in 1999.

We were impressed by the way in which the building's design – with its huge glass wall looking out to the Kungsparken across the road to the north – gave the impression of being 'in the trees'. The building is known as the 'Ljusets Calendar' (Calendar of Lights) and it was easy to understand why as we were shown round its 18 metre high main reading room. A good description of the architectural aspects of the building can be found in an article by Peter Davey in *Architectural Review*, which also gives an interesting comparison to a building we were to visit later – Stockholm Public Library <sup>1</sup>.

From a library operational point of view we were impressed by the monster automatic book sorter; the informal information desk in the main reading room; and the wireless network which actually stretched out into the Kungsparken across the road. The refurbishment of the old building has resulted in a number of beautiful, light wood panelled rooms housing collections of various kinds but also a lifelong learning room.

However, we were all very much fascinated by the self-service – return especially as the books were transported on a conveyor belt to the automatic sorter along a transparent glass covered channel. Little children and crusty librarians alike were delighted to track the progress of returning material!

After our visit, a stroll through the town and visits to buildings such as the Turning Torso were made by members of the group before returning to Copenhagen for an evening of gentle reflection.....

### **WEDNESDAY 13 MAY – COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL LIBRARY**

Wednesday was our last day in Copenhagen but we used the morning to visit the Copenhagen Business School Library (CBSL) before all but one of the group flew out to Stockholm in the afternoon or evening – one intrepid individual enjoyed a companionable five hour rail trip!



*Copenhagen Business School Library*

The CBSL turned out to be another example of excellent contemporary design in terms of library space although it did appear that it was very near to its capacity in terms of use given the take up of its study spaces and the general bustle of the building!

René Steffersen, the Director of the Library Service, acted as our main guide for the visit which was centred on the largest of the three sites the service runs from at Solbjerg Plads. The total student population of the CBS is about 15,000, about two thirds of whom study at the Solbjerg Plads campus. The library service has a total budget of £4m, two thirds of which is for staff costs. Within this there is an information resource budget of £840K of which two thirds is spent on e-resources.

The library building again very much aimed at bringing in light to an open design building enhanced by a well, allowing views up and down the height of the building. A range of spaces for students to work as individuals and in groups has been provided with individual seats on the outer walls being very popular. The building has wireless functionality with the expectation that laptop use would increase – there were shelves provided on many walls to allow use of laptops.

Organizationally, the service is structured around the key elements within its strategic plan – facilities, e-resources, contact and learning support, research support and dissemination. CBS Library also has responsibility for the CBS website which provides an interesting opportunity to work with IT Support!

We received two presentations from Leif Hansen on faculty and research support and from Anette Koll CBS on library buildings and services. There were many parallels in Anette's presentation both in what we are experiencing in the UK and Ireland and in what we were to see and hear later

on in the tour, including an e-booking service for individual study desks and quiet room spaces, a 'request a librarian' service and laptop recharge points.

Lief's presentation highlighted the opportunities offered by the service having responsibility for research registration within the institution and maintaining a research database from which individual researchers web pages could be provided with content. There is also an institutional repository for working papers and Ph.D theses.

After these presentations we were treated to a very good lunch in the restaurant of the Kilen Building, which in itself is worth a visit to CBS. Its atrium is truly awe-inspiring and its toilet facilities a great adventure, with the lighting in windowless rooms activated by sensors which were not too reliable – so some of us we literally left in the dark.

This was our last visit in Copenhagen and we went back to our hotels to prepare for our flights to Stockholm.

#### **THURSDAY 14 MAY – UPPSALA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND SWEDISH LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE**

Our fourth day saw us travel by train to Uppsala some 70km north of Stockholm. Our schedule included a visit to the Swedish Library Association Conference and a visit to Uppsala University which, having been founded in 1477, is the oldest higher education institution in the Nordic countries.

#### *Swedish Library Association Conference*

A short walk from the main station is the Uppsala Kongress and Konsert (UKK) where the Swedish Library Association Conference for 2009 was being held. As well as experiencing the splendours of this new building, we were able to visit the stands of the suppliers of furniture and equipment we had been impressed by in the libraries we had visited so far at the conference exhibition and meet librarians from Swedish university and public libraries.

Our joint leader, Liz Chapman, gave a well-received presentation to the conference on library design and over lunch and whilst visiting the exhibition many of us took the chance to meet up with an old friend – George Hammond of Dawsons!

Before embarking on our visit to Uppsala University Library we received a presentation from Lars Bjornhage, Director of the Open Access Journals project based at the University of Lund in Sweden. The group took the opportunity to comment on Lars's update and to contribute their knowledge on how the open access debate was developing in the UK, with examples of what was happening in this area in their own institutions.

#### *Uppsala University Library*



*Carolina Rediviva, Uppsala University*



*A rare gathering of the group!*

A bracing walk to the University led by Ulf Göranson, the Chief Librarian, through the old town (including visiting the splendid Lutheran cathedral) blew the cobwebs away and we arrived fresh for our library tours and discussions with staff from the University Library. Uppsala University has some 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students and some 6,000 staff of whom about 4,000 are teachers and researchers. It is organised into nine faculties – Theology, Law, Arts, Languages, Social Sciences, Education, Medicine, Pharmacy, Science and Technology. There are 50 undergraduate programmes and 45 masters programmes with some 2,000 single subject courses. Postgraduate education includes 2,000 doctoral students with about 400 doctorates being awarded each year.

The University has a strong commitment to internationalisation and has 20 international Masters programmes and 3,000 single subject courses taught in English, along with agreements for student exchange with some 500 foreign universities in 50 countries.

The University Library was founded in 1620 and for some two centuries the Library was housed in the Gustavianum but the main building of the library since 1841 has been the Carolina Rediviva. There are some 14 site libraries, including the Carolina Rediviva, with a total of 200 staff. There are some 133 kilometres of shelves of printed materials – so about 4 million volumes! The library subscribes to 13,000 electronic journals.

We only visited the Carolina Rediviva so saw none of the site libraries. The Carolina Rediviva relies on its innate qualities as a building to provide a high quality environment for its users and has not yet been subject to the considerable renovation seen in other buildings we visited. The exhibition area for special collections material adds considerably to service offered to users. The Library shop, selling a range of goods reflecting the special collections and archive holdings of the library, received special attention from the group and was a good exemplar of making use of material in special collections to provide an additional funding stream!

Our afternoon session with librarians reflected on:

- digitization initiatives;
- the 'Electronic Publishing Centre' and the DiVA, the University's staff and student research publications database;
- development of an information skills training programme.

#### **FRIDAY 15 MAY – STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND STOCKHOLM PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Our last day of the trip and the opportunity to visit two striking buildings of quite different ages.

#### *Stockholm University Library*

In an article published in *Architectural Review* in 2002, Henry Miles describes the impact of Ralph Erskine<sup>2</sup>, the architect responsible for the design of the University Library and others on the campus, as follows:

'It was a grim place until Erskine arrived. His *Allhus* (AR November 1981) gave the campus a social centre; his university library was full

of humane invention, setting an example for the building type throughout the world. It offered an extraordinary range of experiences, from individual private brooding, to communal chatting, from smoking on balconies to delving in the stacks.

All these are clearly quite different from the original mass of the campus - they are (to use Aldo van Eyck's terminology) full of individual places, rather than vacuous spaces. They have a proper sense of the importance of the particular, the nature of the small group, complex widening social inter-relationships and the simultaneous need to remain an individual - perhaps the most difficult challenges facing people of undergraduate age. All with prolific invention and a sense of fun: all at a time when Swedish architecture in general was in the ice-clammy grasp of a deadly alliance between the bureaucracy and the contracting industry... How did Erskine do it? Partly at least through a profound understanding of the system, using prefabrication and standardization on the whole and saving resources for special moments like light chutes and key elements you touch, like handrails.'

This was indeed the impression we formed of the building as we were shown round as well as a growing realisation that Erskine had based his design very much on the lines of an ocean-going liner with cabins, portholes and handrails as mentioned above. Even as 1980s' design it was easy to see the way different types of spaces were made available for a range of learning needs – individual, group and social.

A tour of the library showed that signage was bilingual (Swedish and English); there was no card catalogue, a text book collection, a meeting point for users, quiet and other reading rooms with lockers, and social areas for meeting and eating and lots of individual toilets!

Our tour was followed by a presentation by the Director of the Library, Catarina Ericson-Roos, and an enthusiastic group discussion with members of the University Library staff. Catarina's presentation described how the University was organised into four faculties – Humanities, Law, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. Its budget in total was some £13m in 2008 – 43% on staff, 17% on acquisitions. The Library received some 1.2 million visitors per annum along with about 1.5 million accesses to its website. It held some 2.5 million volumes in print, subscribed to 100 databases, 15,000 e-journals and some 150,000 e-books. This reflects well the emphasis on moving to

e-resources as the main thrust of their collection development plan.

The 'vision' for the ongoing development of the Library Service is typified by key concepts such as openness and sustainability, innovation and creativity, user-centredness and simplicity in supporting learning, teaching and research. As with many of us there is a great need to embrace the opportunities offered by the advancement in communications and information technology.

To support this collection development plan there is a strong information literacy programme, which is delivered from within the customer services team; and a strong commitment to e-publishing and bibliometrics. The use of bibliometrics to confirm research performance was regarded as very important. Although delivered from within the Library Service, it was considered very important in gaining both acceptance of the results of the analysis but also in agreement to carry them out that it should be the responsibility of someone with an academic background rather than a librarian.

The information literacy programme has been developed on the basis that undergraduates receive only face-to-face training whilst post graduates training is only delivered digitally. There is also a determination to 'teach the teachers' to think very much in the tradition of the Seven Pillars Model of Information Literacy<sup>3</sup> so that it becomes inculcated into the culture of learning and teaching.

A busy morning but a kindly bus driver helped us on our way to the next venue after a lunch outside in warm sunshine at a café.

### *Stockholm Public Library*



*Stockholm Public Library*



*The awe inspiring book galleries in the Rotunda*

From a personal point of view I had been looking forwards to visiting Stockholm Public Library as rumour would have it that the design of Birmingham's own Main Library (completed in 1959) was inspired by it!

Stockholm Public Library is a Neo-classical rotunda library building designed by Swedish architect Gunnar Asplund, which was opened in 1928 but finally completed in 1932. It was innovative in its time for adopting the principle of open shelves so that users could find the books they wanted without assistance from library staff! Furnishings in all the rooms were designed for specific purposes including the children's reading room where the original chair for the story teller is still in use. It has about 1 million visitors per annum.

More modern responses to technological innovation are now in place with self-service machines and information kiosks in place. However imposing the outside of the building is, there is little to prepare first time visitors for the splendour of the floor-to-ceiling galleries of books in the rotunda – a breathtaking experience and an awe inspiring space. This – coupled with attention to detail in design of the building, much of which is still in situ – made this building, it could be argued, the star of our tour.

However, times and demands change. In response for more space which would allow a planned approach to service provision, the need for a new library has been accepted but is still awaiting confirmation of funding. There will be a physical link between the old and new buildings with the current building used as a point of discovery of libraries and what they mean for children as well as for cultural events.

### **AND SO THE END**

Those of us who remained in Stockholm that night enjoyed a good meal in one of the many restaurants in the oldest part of the city on the island



of Gamla Stan reflecting on the different aspects of our trip. In both Stockholm and Copenhagen we felt we just about coped with the transport systems although I suspect the deeper subtleties of the ticketing systems will always remain a mystery to some of us. We were grateful to our leaders in finding very good restaurants to have one or two evening meals as a group. For myself I greatly enjoyed the opportunity to visit Scandinavia for the first time and can perhaps look upon episodes of Wallander in a more understanding way!

#### NOTES

- 1 Davey P. Malmö masterpiece (Public Library, Malmö, Sweden, Henning Larson architect), *Architectural Review*, June 1998, 203 (1216), p.52-58
- 2 Miles H. Erskine's Aula (University Great Hall, Stockholm, Sweden, Ralph Erskine, architect), *Architectural Review*, May 2002, 211 (1263), p.48-51
- 3 See [www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/information\\_literacy/seven\\_pillars.html](http://www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/information_literacy/seven_pillars.html) (accessed 25 April 2010)