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### **Libraries and Research Services: colleagues, clients, and collaborators**

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#### **I. Early History and Development**

The Swedish Riksdag decided in 1847 to establish a library. In 1850 the "Statutes Governing the Management and Use of the Riksdag Archives" were adopted and signed by the four Estates and on January 4 in 1851 the Riksdag Archives, later known as the Riksdag Library, were formally established.

The principal function of the Library was initially to serve only members of the Riksdag and their staff, together with the committees and agencies of the Riksdag. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, representatives of governmental bodies were granted permission to use the services. Over the years, close contacts with the libraries of the ministries, all situated in the neighbourhood, developed. As the collections of the library to some extent lacked a counterpart in other Swedish libraries, the Parliament decided that scholars should also be allowed access to the library. In 1918, when the Library became one of the agencies of the Riksdag, it was formally declared open to researchers and advanced students. This has always been interpreted in a broad sense and in reality it means that the library is open to the public. The Riksdag Library participates in a close cooperation with university libraries, special libraries of various kinds and public libraries of Sweden. Thus the library is a parliamentary library, but it also has obligations towards other groups.

With the resources of the Library growing, the expectations of the Members concerning responsibilities of the library also grew. Members started asking questions directly related to their political work that required written answers. Up to this point, the Library had tried to act as a small university library, with elaborate routines that were not always appropriate for a Parliament. As a result, the Library found it difficult to find time to take on this new kind of request, along with all the other chores of daily life in the library. However, since one of the younger librarians had already started to do research work, the Librarian decided to ask the Parliament for a budget to start a research service as part of the Riksdag Library. The Service was started in 1955, first on experimental basis, but very soon the work of the service was sufficiently appreciated that it became a permanent part of the Library. In 1961 the Research Service, with its vast experience in using parliamentary documents, was given the task of indexing these documents.

## **II. Conflict , Dissension and Separation**

However, the rapid development of the research service led to a deep schism within the library. The problems were soon known throughout the organisation. The Librarian and the head of the Research service – if they spoke to each other at all – were seen (and heard) screaming at each other in the corridors of the Parliamentary Buildings. One could even read about the scandal in the library in the Stockholm press. In 1964 the situation had become intolerable and the Riksdag asked the governing board of the library to develop a proposed solution for the problem, and for the future of the research service. It was clear that the problems were so deep-seated that it wasn't possible to keep the two parts of the library in the same organisation. The board suggested that the research service should be hived off to be another agency of the Riksdag, but under the same governing board as the Library. However, the Parliament decided to study the organisation of the Research Service more carefully and started its own investigation.

The report of the parliamentary investigation proposed that the Research Service should be part of the recently created Administrative Office in the Riksdag, and the recommendation was accepted. The Research Service was detached from the Library on July 1, 1966. As you can appreciate, the separation from the Library was not easy, and it cast a shadow over the relations between the Library and the Research Service for many years to come. The current head of the Research Service tells me that when he was a young researcher in the 1970's, he was sometimes met by curses from the staff of the Library when he visited.

It is difficult to judge a situation like this after so many years, but in my opinion it represented a total lack of professionalism to permit a situation like that to develop.

But what happened after the separation of the two units? Ultimately, the Library was also incorporated into the Administrative Office, but it took another ten years. In 1976 the Library ceased to be a separate agency of the Riksdag.

## **III. Early Efforts at Cooperation**

During the years following the separation, cooperation between the two units inside the Administrative Office was somewhat crippled. However, following the retirement of the two main combatants of the old war – the heads of the Library and the Research Service, efforts at cooperation were launched. Regular meetings were held, and several cooperation projects were started.

When I started as a Parliamentary Librarian ten years ago, the situation was still not perfect. Many of the librarians had moved from the Library to the Research Service, partly because the Library at the time was an old-fashioned and hierarchical organisation, and partly because the pay was higher as a researcher. Being better paid, the researchers found themselves somewhat higher in status than the librarians. The two services were also located far apart geographically. The Research Service had to move out of the Riksdag buildings into the Old town of Stockholm when the staff of the Riksdag grew in the 1980's. Thus, the researchers had to walk several blocks to reach the Library. They were still heavy users of the library services, but because of the distance they started to build their own collections. Some of the older librarians felt bitterness towards the researchers and said to me: "I refuse to give any service to the researchers. I do all the work and then they present it as their own work to the Members, and on top of it they get better paid!" It was hard to change this attitude.

Nevertheless, steps were taken by management to close the gap between the two units. The Head of the Research Service and I started a close and friendly cooperative relationship. At that time, the two units belonged to the same division, but there was no appointed head of the division. The Director of the Administrative Office was the closest superior to both of the units.

One of my first tasks in the Riksdag was to find new housing for the Library, where it might also be possible to locate the Research unit. In 1994 the work commenced to build a new Riksdag Library. The Parliament bought a block of beautiful old houses in the Old Town, close to the Riksdag Island. All information and knowledge activities of the Riksdag were planned to be located in this area, and in 1996 the new Riksdag library opened its doors. During the building period, like Cicero about Carthage, I had plenty of time to drum into the staff of the library the concept that the research service unit was one of our most important clients, and that we should give it top-quality service. Luckily some of the older librarians retired because of age, and that made my task somewhat easier.

The library also extended itself by inviting the researchers to take part in the planning of the new library. But the researchers were still somewhat reluctant to engage in these efforts, and though being located in rooms adjacent to the library they still wanted to keep their own collections. For many years they also had their own librarian employed in the research unit. This librarian did all the searches for the staff of the research service, and usually was the person who took care of the contacts with the Parliamentary Library.

#### **IV. Cooperation and Integration**

Gradually cooperation progressed. In 1997, I became head of the Division for Knowledge Management – which included the Library, Research Service, and EU Information Centre. This gave me the opportunity to try to improve cooperation still further. However, I heard later that some of the researchers thought it degrading to be led by a librarian, so some of the problems obviously continued despite my best efforts to work as if the old problems no longer existed. Gradually the Research Service sorted out most of the books in its collection and decided that it was not necessary to have its own librarian. I think it is accurate to say now that all the librarians of the Riksdag library now serve as the librarians for the Research Service.

## V. Continuing Organizational Evolution

However, in July 2002, the Research Service was moved organisationally to the Secretariat of the Chamber. The Secretary General wanted to try a model that would facilitate committee use of the researchers as a pooled staff for committee work. Currently, the Division for Knowledge Management has four units with a staff of about 100 persons: the Library, the European Union Information Centre, The Riksdag Journal “Från riksdag & departement” and the Unit for parliamentary documents. Despite the separation, the head of the Research Service soon realised that the new position gave him less influence on and less input from the other units in the Riksdag. As a result, he regularly takes part in the management meetings of the division for Knowledge Management, even though the research service organisationally does not belong to the same division.

A new analysis of the organisation of the knowledge and information activities began a year ago, and a commission for organising these services in the Riksdag will deliver a report to the Riksdag Board at the end of this year. This could possibly lead to the establishment of a new block for knowledge and information activities directly under the Secretary General. Possibly the Research Service will be part of the new block. At the end of this year we will know the end of this love and hate story. Will the Library and the Research Service get together again in the end?

## VI. Lessons Learned

What can this story tell us? I would like to give you three words that I find important to this story. They are: Management – Professionalism – Users.

**Management:** it is bad management to permit the staff to misuse time at work to fight other Units of the parliament. It is bad management to let such conflicts persist. It is also bad management not to scrutinise relationships between units in search of ways to increase joint effectiveness.

**Professionalism:** only professionals should be working in parliaments. Professionals have no need to diminish other professionals within the organisation. It is not professional to start time-consuming wars within the organisation, and behaviours like that should be not be permitted.

**And finally the most important – Users:** the users’ needs should be the central guiding principle for all services in a Parliament and especially for library and research services.

## VI. Mutual Benefits of Cooperation and Collaboration

I have asked myself many times: What can each institution do for the other?

The two organisations have different objectives, but are very closely connected in their work. I look upon research work as a development of library work, and this development began in ancient times when the first librarians started collecting the first books and manuscripts. It will never be possible to avoid totally the grey zone between the two services, if you don’t have a common post-box for incoming questions. Some questions put to the research service will be better taken care of by the library. Some of the question put to the library would be better answered by the research service. To the maximum extent possible, the

two services should try to get together and join forces for better efficiency. Librarians should be active partners in the research work.

To be able to cooperate in the best way, the two services must know each other very well. The Library must understand the pressured time limits that often are the reality for the researchers and work accordingly. The ideal situation is that the librarians also have good knowledge of the different research areas, and that is a challenge to every library head. The normal case in Sweden, as in most countries, is that librarians have an extremely good education, but it is not always easy to get the right mix among the staff.

The talent for communication is essential for both researchers and librarians if they want to understand one another, and if they want to communicate effectively with their clients.. And finally – personal contact – the fact that you know well the person in need of your service is the ultimate lubrication for good results.

And what would librarians like to have from the researchers? It is important that the researcher understands the processes of the library. For example, it is helpful to appreciate that it can take some time to get material from other parts of the world even in the electronic era. Further, the more time you get to answer a question, the better the result – which is a well-known truth for both librarians and for researchers in relation to their respective clients. In the ideal world researchers would also take an active part in the development of the collections – electronic and printed. Today the researchers in the Swedish Parliament have little time for this, even though the library arranges regular meetings with researchers to discuss their needs regarding the development of the digital library.

The librarians today take increasing responsibility for the education of members and parliamentary staff regarding information sources and searching. The new ways of supplying information has transformed the library profession. To get the researchers as professional co-workers in this area would add to the results of the work to create the digital libraries so ardently desired by parliaments.

Finally I think that the two services should support and defend one another within the parliamentary organisation. As one example, it is of great importance for research work that the library gets necessary financial support it needs to be the excellent library the researchers need. The supportive voice of the Research Service would be of great help to the library during tight budget times. The reverse is also true. The Library can and should support the need for more and better researchers to help the parliament.

How can library and research services work together more effectively?

In my opinion the best organisation of library and research services from the clients' point of view is an organisation where the two units can develop favourably and have the possibility of creating the services to supply the clients'

demands. This can of course be done differently in different countries. But, as a rule, it is my opinion that the best solution is to have the two services in the same organisational structure, and optimally under the same director. The two services are like communicating vessels: if one is weak, the other will have to be strong. For parliaments without a research service unit this work is mostly done by the party secretariats and/or by the library, and the library is then forced to take a major role in the supply of information and knowledge. If the library offers a poor service, normally the research service will be called on to provide the services usually done by the library. To create an ideal harmony between the two services, in my

mind, there is need for a well-informed manager with good knowledge of what is important both in library and research work.

It is a well-known fact that activities that are close to one another often end as rivals. Management must be aware of this phenomenon, because this is not something that is unique to libraries and research services, but is global human behaviour. Is it possible to stop this from happening or to mitigate its influence? I think so. One solution is to bring researchers and librarians together, to get to know each other personally, to lose the fear or antipathy for each other. Both groups are needed in a parliament. It would be of great interest to know if there are projects in any part of the world with the aim of mixing the two services into professional teams. I think the outcome of a new way of working could be a win-win situation for the researchers as well as for the librarians, but the ones who would benefit the most would be our clients!