



Promoting downloaded digital services in the public libraries in Denmark

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Date : 15/09/2006

Meeting:	122 - Public Libraries with Audiovisual and Multimedia
Simultaneous Interpretation:	Yes
WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 72ND IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL 20-24 August 2006, Seoul, Korea http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla72/index.htm	

Abstract

Over the past few years digital services have played an increasingly important role in Danish libraries without yet having achieved a real breakthrough with the patrons of the public libraries. It is, however, only a question of time, good user interfaces, clarified conditions of right and last – but not least – proper marketing.

License products with access to information databases are already a well integrated part of the libraries’ services, either with access from the library or direct remote access from the user himself. Now access to the primary products, music, full texts, sound and film in digitised form is also gaining a footing in Danish libraries via digital distribution. This paper will deal with two examples: Downlaan and the Libraries’ Net Music.

Introduction

For several years Danish libraries have collaborated on developing new digital services – either within what one might term “The cooperating library network” – or by way of funded development projects where a small group of libraries work together.

Act regarding library services from 2000 stipulates that Danish public libraries must also make digital services available as part of the library offer and as part of the demand for equal status of the various media. This equality should be seen as an expansion of the concept of the hybrid library, where – ideally - the physical lending and reference library is supplemented with the virtual library, accessible round the clock.

As superstructure for this library structure we have the Danish National Library Authority (an agency under the Ministry of Culture), who via two financial pools - The Superstructure Pool and not least The Development Pool - gives financial support to i.a. digital initiatives in the libraries, where the municipal public libraries develop projects with the help of their individual resources and competencies. Apart from that, the national superstructure library for the public libraries, the State and University Library, can assist with technical know-how and experience.

Staking this much on digital projects in Danish public libraries is a further development of the first governmental initiative with Denmark's Electronic Research Library, where joint license agreements were negotiated for the research and special libraries, making a number of license products available to the participants. The extension to the public library area is primarily done via the county libraries, which through their performance contracts with the Danish National Library Authority, handle the regional superstructure obligation.

Media and promotion

Digital services increasingly replace printed products – particularly reference works. And the services primarily promoted up till now are publishers' licenses to information databases which have also existed in printed form. These products have been supplemented with various net services, developed i.a. by libraries, that structure or enhance the use of available data.

These services are now being supplemented more and more by media in converged forms, targeted for net use and actual distribution of digitised full texts, music files, sound and other products that can be downloaded to the library's patrons in the library itself or straight to the private PC at home and 'borrowed' for a period.

In this way the library can also in a modern society with use of new technologies continue to handle the promotion of information, knowledge and culture which is the libraries' core function. Denmark now has several services running – and some on the way – with digital distribution on a lending basis:

- Bibliotekernes Netmusik (the libraries' net music) – music to be downloaded directly from your home
- Downlaan – electronic non-fiction and textbooks in full text to be downloaded directly from your home
- Bibcast – controlled experiment with distribution of films via broadband net via the library
- e-bogsportalen (e-book portal) – new e-book portal imminent
- SheetMusic now – printed music in electronic form for print via the libraries
- electronic talking books – talking books in electronic form as sound file for distribution to users of talking books.

User access and library process

Apart from being able to deliver these resources in electronic form, the libraries can promote information, knowledge and cultural experience in a new technological wrapping on a par with society's other media- and public service firms. Moreover, the libraries can to a great degree make the population more familiar with the new media, and enable people to gain the necessary competencies for using the new technologies, so that these are getting more widely applied and known, and are i.a. included in the libraries' own instruction activities and with the libraries as producers of content.

Over the past three years a number of libraries have been offering their borrowers digital loans in the form of text, sound or image to be requested via the library's homepage for download for a period directly to the user's own PC. This type of loan has many advantages. It is an ultimate decentralisation of the library's offer to the individual user without the limitations of the physical medium, such as the libraries' opening hours and the user's distance from the library etc.

There are a number of logistic advantages as well. Net-borne distribution will in principle eliminate waiting time caused by the lack of sufficient number of copies of a popular item. Traditional physical processes in the library such as request, reservation, collection, registration of loans and returns as well as payment of fines will in future be more or less superfluous.

The selection of these products also differs from what applies to the libraries' traditional choice of materials. Most license products are bought as packages of various information resources, which the libraries' have no possibility of sorting, and so consequently the traditional selection of material at single source level has to be abandoned. In Denmark it is also an ever-growing problem that there are very few Danish-produced library relevant license products available.

Rights and new modes of payment

Very specific conditions are associated with the libraries' promotion of digital products. The question of rights and the securing of documents/content as lending media have given rise to difficult negotiations along the way. Publishers of music and books have been hesitant, although it has at all times been made perfectly clear by the libraries, that copyright holders would be guaranteed their rights by DRM (Digital Right Management), which ensures that the temporarily downloaded borrowed material by means of copy control disappears again when the loan period expires.

The payment issue also presents a barrier which has delayed the development and the increase – particularly of Download.

In Denmark authors get paid for the loan of their works in the library via a public lending rights remuneration, administered by the Danish National Library Authority on the basis of reported number of copies purchased by the public and school libraries. Download, on the other hand, calculate per download/loan and a one-off fee to the author.

Obviously music and book publishers are extremely careful as to which model of payment should be used in the future, and the libraries now have to learn to handle various models of payment for in principle the same products, and also to handle this situation in relation to the users.

The Libraries' Net Music and Download as examples

Net Music

Music on CD (and LP) has for many years been popular library material and has already for a couple of years been a widely used digital product and an obvious task for the libraries. In 2003 Copenhagen Municipal Libraries developed a small frontrunner to the Libraries' Net Music, now known as Net Music, where the first digitised music tracks were lent to Copenhagen borrowers. Today there is a consortium of six county libraries and the State and University Library, which in collaboration with the firm Phonofile (the representative for the

international music trade organisation IFPI), developed a national platform for the loan of digitised music.

Net Music contains a catalogue of more than 210,000 tracks of predominantly Danish-produced music. About 130 public libraries have bought quota in the consortium for lending and now offer their municipal borrowers music tracks via the library's homepage. The music is downloaded via the local library's homepage, and you use the password given to you when you registered with your library. The use of the downloaded tracks are free of charge for the users.

After the first experimental years the loan figures are about 500,000 loans of single tracks, which is considerably lower than expected, but can be explained by the fact that the libraries' launching of legally downloaded music happened at about the same time as the big companies' initiatives. And Danish libraries have got nowhere the same budgets for marketing as has the commercial music trade. The technical platform could certainly also have been better as regards the mp3-format. The loan figure is less than 10% of the loan of physical CDs. The technical interface has recently been transformed into a more user-friendly version.

Downlaan

For the time being Downlaan is a limited project with loan of electronic books in Danish via the homepages of the nine largest county libraries. From 2007 the plan is for Downlaan to get into countrywide operation according to the tender model. The collection of materials consists of texts in the form of books and articles in full text. More than 1,100 books and articles are available to the users as PDF-files, and that figure is expected to rise to about 1,500 during 2006 when the project period ends. It is mostly with small and medium-sized publishers that agreements have been signed.

The books, which are DRM-encrypted, can be downloaded by the user for 30 days. The user must be a resident in one of the participating municipalities and be registered in the library and have a pin code.

Perspectives

The perspectives for the new digitally distributed services are not only to do with an updating of the libraries' services by dint of modern technology. Danish research libraries have already re-adjusted and incorporated a very high degree of loan of electronic documents – a development that the public libraries, too, have adopted and find very useful. A further development of the digital services in a closer cooperation with the research libraries, and possibly closer cooperation with private suppliers and producers, is an obvious perspective. In the public libraries the new digital forms of distribution also provide a better chance to create and offer more content which can be read, stored and produced on different media and technical platforms. It is not inconceivable that the libraries themselves can play a role as enhancer, administrator or producer of new products – either within the cooperative library system or in collaboration with private suppliers. Own productions can be 'transmitted' via the broad- and podcasting technologies that are under current – and swift – development.

Thus the digital services are also strong tools in the public libraries' actual work with developing (new) core services, for example within the field of learning, in integration contexts and in connection with social inclusion and empowerment initiatives. Here a solid basis exists for an innovative development of the library's traditional role as an institution that can help ensuring the continuous promotion of knowledge, public enlightenment, education and cultural activity.

Sources and links

www.downlaan.dk

www.bibliotekernesnetmusik.dk

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