

# ***How can we raise the level of competence among school librarians? 12 years of experience with net-based courses in Norway***

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- How to cooperate to get a common focus on raising the level of competence of school librarians in Europe? Discussion.

education for TL, LT and teachers, Web 2.0, Online-, blended- education

## **School libraries in Norway – the oil country**

First some background facts about the country: A map will show you that Norway is a long, narrow and densely populated country – 2500 km from south to north, with a population of 4.7 millions. It is also relatively young as a cultural nation, and the tradition from the old peasant society was that books were something belonging on shelves in the home. This may explain why people are satisfied with having the public library open a few hours a week.

The teaching tradition is still to a large extent based on the use of textbooks and lessons by the teacher. This may explain why there has been little understanding for the need of a school-library and how to use it as tool in the learning process.

Norway has around 4000 primary schools (ages 5-15) and 1000 of these have less than 100 pupils. The average is around 250 pupils per school. The country has around 600 secondary schools (ages 16-18) with from 150 to 2000 students.

In 74% of the primary schools the library is staffed less than 7 hours per week, usually by a teacher without any instruction in school library work. The smallest schools are usually staffed 1-2 hours per week, and the national average is 5.4 hours.

The libraries in the secondary schools face a different situation with established libraries professionally staffed. As traditional library skills; cataloguing, information storage and information retrieval became computerized in the 1990, the librarians in many schools became familiar with these tools before the majority of the teachers, and often essential in

introducing them for learning purposes to the students and staff. This, of course, is not the situation today, and there is a great need for further development of skills in information literacy and Web 2.0 supported instruction.

At present, school library policies from the governmental point of view seem directed towards improving the libraries in the primary schools with emphasis on improving reading abilities. Both are of course important goals, but not at the expense of developing digital competence and the further development of the libraries in the secondary schools.

To sum it up: In spite of the fact that Norway is a rich oil nation, these resources have not resulted in better libraries with sufficient staffing in the primary schools. This makes it impossible for them to become vital centres for implementing new methods of learning

### **Meeting the challenge of educating the school librarians**

The school librarians in the secondary schools are usually trained at the University College of Oslo or at the University of Tromsø, where the education of librarians in Norway take place. The most important place for educating teachers in charge of library services at their schools has been at the University of Agder (formerly University College of Agder), where education for this group started 20 years ago.

### **School librarian 1 – Basic course**

Since 1997 this course has been net-based with two physical gatherings. I have been an extern lecturer from 1997 till 2007, teaching library subjects such as cataloguing, classification, subject cataloguing, categorization, and the evaluation of data systems for school libraries. I have also cooperated in larger projects.

The course consisted of these elements: ([Rafste on the IFLA Blog](#)):

- The school library as part of the learning arenas at school:  
The educational function of the school library in school
  - theories on learning and knowledge
  - organizing learning arenas
  - use of the school library in curricula
  - information literacy
  - the role of the school librarian in school
  - the school library in school development
- Library Science
  - cataloguing and classification
  - reference and bibliography
  - organization and administration
  - ITC and library

- Children's and young adults' literature and use of media.
  - the book collection in the school library, a wide variety of genres
  - texts from a diversity of media
  - educational use of the literature; reading for joy

More about the course (in Norwegian): <http://z.pe/5sV>

The course lasted three terms (one year and a half) to enable the participants to perform their work as teachers and school librarians while studying. The cost was around 20.000 NOK.

The course consists of 12 modules. Two of these were physical gatherings. The first gathering took place at the University's location in Kristiansand, and gave basic information about the course and what it meant to be an external student. The second gathering was a three days workshop where the students planned a project for the pupils in their own school in cooperation with the teachers there.

To pass the course the students had to take an examination in two subjects and do a larger project. The course normally had 30-40 students, most of them teachers from primary schools. In each group there were about 5-7 participants working in secondary schools.

The course is from 2008-09 cut down to 2 terms (fall and spring) and is now free like other studies. The number of students has increased to 60.

### **School librarian 2 - a study of literature**

This course took place over 3 terms and contained the following elements ([Raftste IFLA blog](#))

Literature for children and young adults

- The history of children's literature
- Introduction to a wide variety of literature genres for children and young adults
- Analysis and discussions of the texts

Use of literature in education

- Theoretical perspectives
- Stimulation of reading and use of the school library

The course gives 30 credits.

More about the course in Norwegian: <http://z.pe/5sU>

### **School librarian 3 - Information literacy**

In 2008 UiA extended its education for TL's with a new 30 credit course in information literacy over 3 terms. It contained the basic on I.L. and training in searching, using and evaluating resources on the net and using Web 2.0 applications and a physical workshop and a bigger project carried out by the students. This course was run only once and is now under development to a bachelor's degree with the theme: information literacy in focus.

This new study will be over 2 terms like they others at UiA and are going to start 2010.

Earlier the courses at University of Agder (UiA) cost NOK 20.000, a large amount of money that the students usually had to pay for themselves. Sometimes the municipality refunded the sum if the student completed the course. Teachers that return with credits will increase their income because of the courses – to a certain limit.

During the last 20 years approximately 800-900 school librarians have been educated at HiA/UiA, mostly educated teachers.

### **Experiences**

In our courses we have had many satisfied participants – but many have also told us that this was a hard course to attend when they had to teach at the same time – as well as keeping up with the work in the school library. Where are these participants today? There is no surprise that many of them no longer work as school librarians, as they returned to a school library with a limited amount of hours allocated to library work. Many have given up – and work as teachers – or as administrators such as head masters. Often I get calls from former students, who are head masters and want a study day with the whole school to introduce the school library as a teaching method. This is a more unintentional effect of these courses.

Read more about the courses here: <http://z.pe/3XN> (Elisabeth Rafste: Education for School Librarianship in Norway – from the IFLA-blog. <http://iflasblog.wordpress.com>

In the upper secondary school in Norway, the situation is completely different, as we will see in the next section.

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### **Supplementary courses for professional librarians in secondary schools**

So far the only course given to librarians wanting to specialize in school library work has been at the University College of Oslo. Here last years library students have been offered the course *“The Library as a learning arena; the School Library”* as one of four optional courses. Last year, however, very few students have chosen this option, and hence there was a great need for supplementary education for librarians working in the schools.

Biblioteksentralen, a national institution offering service to public libraries and school libraries, wanted the colleges to take on this task. As this did not happen, we saw no other possibility but to make these courses ourselves.

As educational leader at Biblioteksentralen, and in cooperation with school librarian, sociologist and teacher Maren Brit Baadshaug, was responsible for designing and carrying out these courses, held in more than 400 schools in Norway between 2005 and 2009. The secondary schools are the responsibility of the counties, and the basic pattern of the course was adjusted to suit the local needs. Thus both the school owners and the school librarians had a considerable influence of content and - to some extent – also the form of the course.

Each course consisted of 5 days of instruction during the school year, and participants were both school librarians and teachers. Basic goals of the course were to develop cooperation between teachers and librarian, and to integrate the library in the overall pedagogic planning in the schools. The principals of the participating schools were therefore invited to the first session of the first day.

No credits were given, but a diploma was issued when all required assignments were delivered to the net side of the course.

The outline of the course:

Day 1: (early fall) The role of the school in realizing the school's curriculum, the need for developing information literacy, introduction to tools and methods.

Day 2: (one month later) Information literacy and the school library, with practical examples

Day 3: (January/February) Theme: Web 2.0

Day 4: (around Easter) Theme varied: Reading stimulation, cooperation teachers/librarian, etc.

Day 5: (April/May) Oral presentation of project with Power Point of project from each school.

Documents to be submitted prior to each day:

1. Present status of the library. Electronic questionnaire provided.
2. Scenario for future development by means of mind map.
3. Plans for projects in own school. Theme, participants, method, time etc
4. Plan for development of school library in a 3-5 years perspective, based on scenario and accepted by the principal
5. Power Point presentation of project with evaluation of process.

The documents were published on a closed web site, where the students from all courses had access. In this way the participants were able to profit from the ideas about school library development from all parts of the country. All lectures were also published on this site; during the last couple of years recordings were also made as MP3-files. The idea was to build a net based foundation for lifelong learning for school librarians, who often find themselves in an isolated position in their schools.

Read more about these courses here. IFLA blog: <http://z.pe/3XO>

Maren Brit Baadshaug: The school library - learning centres of tomorrow.

### **Conclusions:**

The courses were held in 13 of the 19 counties in Norway. In most counties all schools participated, and the county – the school owner - paid for the course.

The courses were well received, and in the process the schools developed an action plan for the library and an awareness of the necessity of close cooperation between the schools leadership, the teachers and the librarian to obtain the goals. The presentation of the projects showed many examples of cooperation between librarian and teachers, and we believe that cooperation will continue on for years to come. The internet site of the courses still continues as a bank of ideas for this development.

### **The Web 2.0 school 2007-2008 – 10 months with new tools!**

School librarian Joyce Valenza has written that she wants a re-tooling of school librarians. How do we approach this in practice – and for permanent changes with the use of Web 2.0 tools in our school libraries? This was the challenge! Here is our solution!

Through a course of 10 months we invited interested (school) librarians and others to follow a course of 10 single day classes every month from April-07 to March-08.

In these courses the participants were able to choose between 1) being present on the premises in Oslo 2) being “virtually” present, via PC, or 3) being a “non-synchronous” participant, that is taking the course later.

### **The course contained these subjects:**

Day 1 - 26.04.07: What are these new phenomena: Web 2.0, Library- and School Library 2.0

Day 2 - 22.05.07: Blogging

Day 3 – 07.06.07: Wiki

Day 4 – 11.09.07: Podcasting

Day 5 – 02.10.07: Educational methods that suit the Web 2.0 tools

Day 6 – 07.11.07: Screen film, animation and video

Day 7– 06.12.07: Other social 2.0 programs

Day 8 – 15.01.08: Communication on the net

Day 9 – 12.02.08: Putting it all together. What should you know about RSS

Day10 – 04.03.08: Presentation of the participant’s projects, and the road ahead – international trends

In the morning sessions, we invited speakers who could give an introduction to the subject and get it down to a practical level here in Norway. In the afternoon, we had a workshop where we did practical exercises for example blogging, wiki, screen casts etc.

We used the internet meeting room [OPAL](#) where we could invite the lecturers – and participants in real time and in this way we could accomplish our gatherings in a way that enabled the participants to participate from home if they wanted to. We recorded the introductions, and these were put on a Wiki that also collected all resources both BEFORE, DURING and AFTER the course gatherings. Together they made a resource for self studying for the participants who followed the course non-synchronous.

The wiki was closed for course participants, but now open for this lecture: <https://biblioteksentralen.wikispaces.com/web20skolen>

### **Conclusion:**

Many of the participants wanted to be physically present in Oslo, but by the third time several wanted to stay “at home” and participate in real time. Some preferred to attend as non-synchronous participants during most of the course.

All of the participants were allowed to switch between the three ways to follow the course, and this is exactly what they did! It was probably the practical work shops in the afternoons that were the biggest challenge for those who worked at home – and in the beginning they had some problems to make relevant questions to the course leader. We studied the different Web 2.0 subjects – and most of the time the layouts were a bit complex, but the presentation form both physically meetings - and virtually attendees worked very well - most of the time.

A couple of times we lost contact with the server in Texas, and we had to continue with Joyce Valenza via SKYPE. Many of the participants made blogs, wikis, and some podcasted during the course, but the big question in retrospect is whether or not the participants today are actually using the Web 2.0 tools we dealt with during the course. My feeling is that just a few have managed to do so.

Similar experiences have been observed in Norway after several library courses on the "23-things" platform. The problem is to make practical use of the Web 2.0 tools – at least in the short run.

### **The national conference for school librarians 26.-27.03.09**

Our method holding conferences have not changed during the last years in spite of all the new technical remedies and programs at hand. At this years national conference for school librarians we wanted to test new methods. Three months prior to the conference, a sub group was formed on our [Nordic School Library NING](#), and here was the subjects of the conference and the first speakers introduced. The future participants were encouraged to read three books as some sort of skilled basis for the conference - a Norwegian, a Swedish, and an American book. They were also encouraged to debate the books on the NING, but nobody tried this.

The 2-day conference was traditional in its structure, with 4 keynotes and 6 parallel sessions – but in the afternoon of the second day, we tested the unconference and invited all the participants to come with requests on what subjects they wanted to debate on the conference. All of them were published on the NING, and 12 subjects (8 large and 4 small) were selected for group work,

The participants were invited to join the conference physically – either with or without hotel and dinner, or participate in real-time, or non-synchronous later on based on digital recording from the conference. Only a few wanted to participate in real-time, and they were either persuaded to participate physically, or were offered podcasts later on.

As the total amount of podcast participants appeared to be low and we decided to publish the whole conference on our NING, so all school librarians in Norway, the rest of Scandinavia, and the rest of the world (Only Ross Todds presentations are in English) could enjoy the lectures later on. In this way, we have arranged for "lifelong skills development" among our school librarians. The recordings from the conference will be available on the internet to September.

### **Conclusion**

We spent a large amount of money to be physically present on conferences, and we paid a large amount of money to get our key note speakers to be physically present as well. In the future we will attend many conferences, but then we will sometimes attend them from home, via our own computers – either via video transmission / sound transmission in realtime – with debate forums or twitter activity – alternatively non-synchronous via recordings from the conferences

The courses James Henry and Sandra Lee have accomplished in February - 09 and in June-July -09 is a good example on how the courses for school librarians MAY be used the future. More than 250 participants were given two lectures a day, and debated good, hard and long via the Sosius-network. The questions is how one can turn this new knowledge and resources into use, so that people who DIDN'T have the time or money to attend, can utilize the content later on for their lifelong learning?

You can read more about thoughts for virtual elements on the IASL/IFLA conferences in the [IFLA blog for SL](#) – and please feel free to participate in the belonging debate on the subject

## Arrangement for a debate on our need for skill development for our school librarians in Europe

Based on our Norwegian experiences and on the experiences from [YourSchoolLibrary](#) 2009, we should start with a thorough debate on what needs we have in Europe to create courses, conferences, online collaborations, for example via NINGS or other social communication tools.

What do we define as suitable subjects for international skills development of school librarians, that come from a variety of different systems in the European countries? In what form should these actions have to include the target goals? Is it important to offer larger courses, or is it better to offer many small courses that can be directed towards new subjects and challenges as we go along. Is it important to get credits, or is it enough to get a diploma.

Finally, it important to get a started on the school library development on a European level and participate in projects, for example Grundtvig- or Minerva-programs as active participants.

Therefore I would invite you to start this debate here in Padua – and that we schedule a meeting next summer, so with interest can get together (physically – or virtually) to debate these interesting questions

### References

#### Links referred to in this document:

*Voldaundersøkelsen 2007 –Scool-libraries in Norway. - A study of the situation in Norwegian School-Libraries – [IFLA newsletter no 44/june 07 p. 6-11](#)*  
*Elisabeth T. Rafste: [About courses at HiA/UiA](#) (in English)*  
*Kilde til lyst og læring : jubileumsskrift for skolebibliotekarutdanningen ved Høgskolen i Agder (HiA) [pdf-utgaven](#) (in Norwegian)*  
*[Skolebibliotek 1 kurs](#) (in Norwegian) at UiA - program*  
*[Skolebibliotek 2 kurs](#) (in Norwegian) at UiA - program*  
*Skolebibliotek 3 kurs (in Norwegian) at UiA*  
*[Kursnettsted for VGS-kurs](#) (in Norwegian)*  
*Maren Brit Baadshaug: [About](#) courses for upper secondary schools in Norway (in English)*  
*HiOs valgfag: [Biblioteket som læringsarena: skolebibliotek](#) – 15 credits (in Norwegian)*  
*[Wiki for Web 2.0](#) (in Norwegian)*  
*[YourSchoolLibrary 2009](#) (in English) with debate on [Sosius](#)*  
*[IFLA blog for SL](#) (in English)*

#### 2009

*[Nordiske skolebibliotekNING](#) (in Scandinavian, some in English)*  
*[Nordiske nyheter](#) via RSS: (in Scandinavian, some in English)*  
*[Infoblogg: Skolebibliotek og informasjonskompetansen](#) ( in Norwegian)*  
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### Statement of Originality

This statement certifies that the paper above is based upon original research undertaken by the author and that the paper was conceived and written by the author(s) alone and has not been published elsewhere. All information and ideas from others is referenced.