

**How to reconnect librarians and researchers.  
An insight look into a current challenge of Swedish libraries.**

The annoyance that research and library have drifted apart in Sweden was discussed by Nolin, who stated in his article that the formerly strong connections, which had been represented by a special (or subject) librarian, had vanished. He expressed his opinion with the following statement “*It is the understanding of this writer that academic librarians have shifted their attention away from researchers in several ways*” (Nolin 2013). So at a time when research faced overload in tasks and tools, the focus of librarians has moved to more services for students, more online-resources or even by the building itself. For that reason Nolin called for more services for researchers, which should be domain specific and support collaboration and presentation (Nolin 2013). By comparing that situation to the connection of library and research in Germany you will certainly find a great overlap as finding and improving that connection is also a serious debate in the local community of librarians (Reimers and Sühl-Strohmenger 2014). A good example for that fact was a workshop at the German librarian day in Bremen this year that covered a best practice competition among university libraries organized by the Society of German librarians and managed by Fabian Franke, the director of the University Library of Bamberg. The intention was to promote the development of information literacy to junior and senior researcher as well as to advanced students (Franke 2014).

As both countries share comparable framework conditions in education as well as in research (Degkwitz 2013) one might therefore question, what we could learn from each other to master the reconnection of library and research. Since, in particular, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) strongly recommends collaborative efforts to assure development of high quality library and information services through trainings and strategic initiatives (IFLA 2011). This article will therefore discuss the following questions:

1. How to start an international partnership and how I was involved in that topic?
2. What are the general conditions at a Swedish library?
3. What was the status quo regarding the connection between library and research at a Swedish library?
4. What has already happened and where is the journey heading?
5. What are my personal conclusions?

In the first section I will discuss the first contact and the resulting partnership in which I had the luck to be slightly involved. The second section introduces the university and the library of Borås, whereas the third section discusses “The Borås Model”, a collaborative model for the development of information literacy which was implemented in 2009 but is now under review. Fourth a brief overview of some of the more significant events is given before a conclusion summarizes the lessons that I have learned.

1. How to start an international partnership and how I was involved in that topic?

Despite the fact that universities and libraries in Germany and Sweden have so much in common, neither an exchange of experience nor any kind of cooperation is usual (Degkwitz 2013). This is surprising, since in both countries higher education and research are mainly established in public-law institutions. This led to a wide range of academic training and qualification in both countries. Moreover due to free access to higher education in Germany as well as in Sweden the properties of universities and libraries depended highly on public funding (Degkwitz 2013). For this reason the “Bibliothek and Information International” (BI-International), as the standing committee of the Federal Association of German Library and Information Associations, supported in 2013 a study tour in order to connect Swedish and German librarians (Degkwitz 2013). In this context “The Borås Model” was presented by Malin Utter a librarian of the University of Borås. As the German Rectors' Conference gave recommendations for rethinking information literacy by

controlling processes differently (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz 2012) this presentation was a contribution to current debates in the community of German librarians.

The efforts to promote cooperation between German and Swedish libraries yield fruit already. As a result, Swedish librarians from Borås visited the University of Bamberg on recommendation of their director Svante Kristenson to get deeper insights in the daily processes and methods of information literacy in Germany. To enhance that partnership even more, a delegation of librarians from Bamberg took the chance and supported their colleagues from the library of Borås with the preparations for a Swedish conference on information literacy for Ph.D. students. This conference, provided by the Swedish Information Literacy Group, will be held in November 2014.

In this context it was possible for me, as a scholar of the Academy of the Bavarian State Library, to accompany that process for a while and get valuable insights into the culture and work of a Swedish library as well as in the beginning of an international partnership between libraries.

## 2. What are the general conditions at a Swedish library?

As in the following section “The Borås Model” is subject of analysis, some information about the University and the Library are provided first, to enable an understanding regarding the general conditions. Table 1 shows the student figures of the University of Borås in 2013:

Enrolled Students (complete)	13.299	(73% female / 27% male)
Enrolled Students (Fulltime)	5.896	

Table 1: Student statistics (University statistics 2013)

Astonishingly the rate of female students is much higher than the rate of male students. This can be explained by the study programs in Borås which put an emphasis on textile and library. So “*The Swedish School of Textile*” as well as “*The Swedish School of Library and Information Science*” are internationally renowned institutions located in Borås. Also the ratio of full-time students to the total numbers of students might be considered very high in contrast to a comparable German university and illustrates the importance of part-time studies for the University of Borås. To extend the overview table 2 shows the distribution of the staff at the University of Borås:

University staff	681	(59% female / 41% male)
Teacher	395	(50% Ph.D. students)
Professors	49	(24% female / 76% male)
Doctoral candidates	67	(63% female / 37% male)

Table 2: Staff statistics (University statistics 2013)

Of course there are quite a lot of figures related to statistics about libraries. So only a few figures were picked out to keep a brief overview. As you can see in table 3 the development from print to digital objects (e.g. book, journal) is already on an advanced stage. In 2012 the printed books were quite on the same level and that trend continued. So according to actual postings on the blog of the library the number of eBooks in 2014 is already higher than the number of printed books. As shown in table 1 and table 2 the total number of (full-time) academia (full-time students and staff) was about 7.088 in 2013. Assuming that the student and staff figures have not grown exponentially the number of visitors per day (2.221) makes it clear, that the library is still a hotspot of academically life on the Campus of the University of Borås. This is despite the fact of more and more electronic resources.

Total collection print	114.113
Total collection of eBooks	108.456
Growth of the print collection	-3.406
Print journals	427
Electronic journals	36.900
Visitors per day	2.221
Librarians	20
Librarians assistance	2

Table 3: Library statistics (Library statistics 2012)

3. What was the status quo regarding the connection between library and university at a Swedish library?

“The Borås Model” was the result of a project of the “Library & Learning Resources” and the “School of Library and Information Science” at the University of Borås during 2007 to 2008. It was designed as a model of collaboration between university departments and the library in order to facilitate the development of Information literacy (Nyaas & Söld 2008). At the initiative of the Rector “The Borås Model” was included in the strategic plan for 2009 to 2012 (Högskolan i Borås 2008). In figure 1 you can see the three different levels the model consists of:

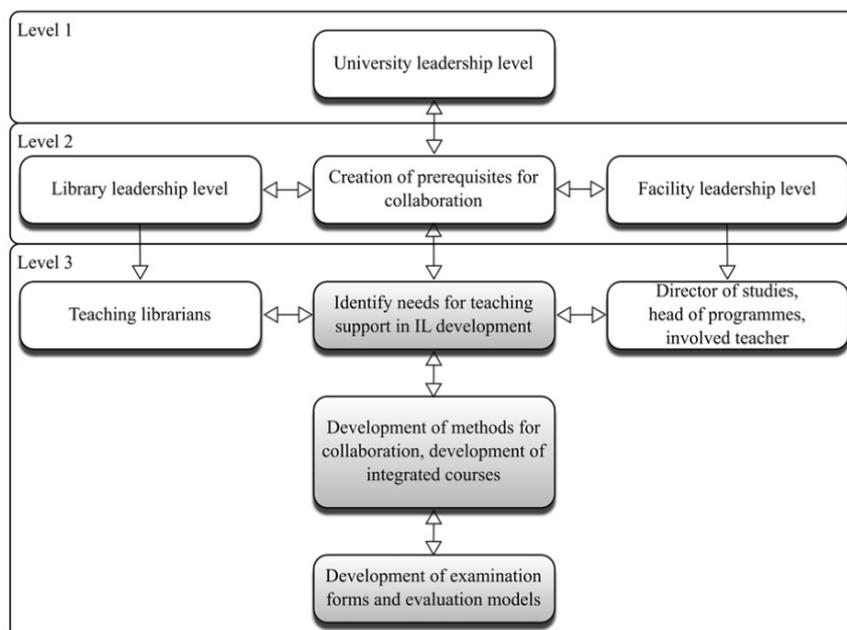


Figure 1: The Borås Model (Nyaas & Söld 2008), modified

As a top-down approach it has a hierarchical structure. On the first level, the model needs to be introduced and supported by the Rector of the University. That is also true for the second level, where the model needs support and willingness from the library leadership level as well as from the faculty leadership level. Level three is at last the level, which hosts the tasks of professional development (marked by grey toned boxes). The most important aspect of that last level is, that through a strong collaboration of librarians and researchers (directors of studies, head of programs, trainers) a deep insight into each other’s professional

domain is gained. This takes the quality of courses to a higher level and is a great benefit for the imparting of information literacy to students (Bytoft-Nyaas & Söld 2010).

The development of a model alone was noteworthy and a great benefit to the cooperation of library and research. But although the first courses were implemented in 2010 the model could, despite the willingness, not be rolled out over all departments and programs (Bytoft-Nyaas & Söld 2010).

#### 4. What had already happened and where does the journey head?

The following list gives an almost chronological overview of the processes regarding “The Model of Borås”, which stands for a sustainable cooperation between library and research at the University of Borås (Bytoft-Nyaas & Söld 2010).

- “The Borås Model” was embedded in the strategic plan (2009 – 2012) of the University of Borås (Högskolan i Borås 2008)
- The first implementations were done and problems discussed (Bytoft-Nyaas & Söld 2010)
- Jolin demands a reconnection of librarians and researchers (Jolin 2013)
- Evaluation of “The Borås Model” by the Swedish School of Library and Information Science (2013 - 2014)

Figure 2: Status quo of the “The Borås Model”

As explained in chapter 3 “The Borås Model” was embedded in the strategic plan (2009 - 2012) of the University of Borås in 2009. The model focused on the promotion of information literacy to students and was implemented in several departments and programs in 2010. Besides the fact that not all departments and programs implemented the model (see chapter 3), Jolin’s statement (see introduction) that the focus of libraries has shifted away from supporting research (Jolin 2013) headed the debate about the future of sustainable cooperation between library and research at the University of Borås. The model was recently evaluated by “*The Swedish School of Library and Information Science*” (2013 - 2014). The results are currently under discussion.

But it is already clear that new services for researchers are essential for a sustainable future cooperation. So the librarians in Borås are making their best endeavours in searching solutions. As the German Rectors' Conference might say, they need to think processes differently in the context of information literacy (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz 2012). But they have already formulated a strategy which is discussed in the following section.

- Internal discussions of how to reconnect library and research (09/2014)
- Discussions with a delegation of Bamberg and the Swedish Information Literacy Group (09/2014)
- Conference organised by the Swedish Information Literacy Group (11/2014)

Figure 3: Discussions in the community of librarians

As figure 3 stated, the first step towards finding solutions was an internal discussion with all librarians of the University of Borås including me as part of the delegation of the University of Bamberg. The discussion was organised as a multi-step process. First every librarian had the chance to read a set of articles (e.g. Jolin 2013) in advance. In the discussion itself the paper of Jolin (Jolin 2013) was introduced and then discussed in small groups. The results were eventually presented by each group and then discussed in plenary.

The next step was an exchange of experiences with the whole delegation of the University of Bamberg and colleagues from other Swedish libraries, who were organised in the Swedish Information Literacy Group. As the promotion of information literacy to junior and senior researcher is very relevant for all Swedish libraries, the meeting was also used for the preparation of a conference in the autumn of 2014.

In addition to the internal and external support by the community of librarians from Sweden and Germany, the University of Borås itself is also a great supporter. The discussed steps (figure 3) are accompanied by a librarian who joined the Ph.D. program at the reputable “*Swedish School of Library and Information Science*” in order to reconnect librarians and researchers. That step alone is a real innovation in the profession of librarians in Sweden. Besides that, the work is still in process and final results how to get indeed a better connection of library and research cannot be presented yet.

##### 5. What are my personal conclusions?

In addition to the issues described in that report (international partnership, reconnection of librarians and researchers), I learned a lot about the general conditions in different kinds of libraries in Sweden (public libraries and libraries in universities of applied sciences). Moreover I also gained my experiences with different business procedures and IT landscapes in Swedish libraries.

For my future development I realized that I have to broaden my horizon. It is truly a challenge for librarians to realise trends in general conditions very fast. We are working together with companies who are global players, with researchers who are embedded in international communities and last but not least with students who go abroad to enhance their studies. For that reasons an exchange of experiences and knowledge between librarians on an international level might be the only way to be successful in the future.

In conclusion, I am very thankful to all colleagues from the library of Borås for their great support and integration. Also I want to express my gratitude to the BI International for the financial support.

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