

**The 21st Annual Conference of Library and Research Services for Parliaments
Oslo, 10-12 August 2005**

STRATEGIC SERVICES OFFERED BY THE STORTING LIBRARY.

Wednesday 10 August - Gro Sandgrind

Good morning everyone.

I hope you all had a good time yesterday and that you are all ready for another conference day.

Tonight we will have dinner at Østmarkseteren – and I do hope it won't rain. People in Oslo have their favourite part of the woods surrounding Oslo. We have Nordmarka – to the north of Oslo – where we will go hiking on Saturday – and we have Østmarka to the east. Østmarka is my favorite. Here I go on my weekly hike and it is here I work out by running - finishing with a swim in the lake close by.

Then to the subject of this morning's presentation :

Strategic services offered by the Storting Library.

I will start off and give you an introduction and a brief description of the library's main services. My colleagues, Ebbe Aarvåg, Jeannette Berseth and Nina Svendsen will go into more details about some of these services which are:

- news and news monitoring services
- training and the use of electronic services.

We will give you our experiences and tell you more about how we plan and carry out work. Maybe there is something for you to learn or something you will nod to and say –“This is the way we do it as well”. The aim of our conference is to learn, to share experiences and best practice. I hope we succeed in this! I'd be glad to take any questions at the end of my presentation.

First of all I have to present our mission statement and the library strategy.

- The Storting library's mission is to be an open and accessible knowledge and documentation centre supporting the parliamentary processes
- and to
- deliver high-quality services to support Members and staff in their work and
 - advice and train customers or users to become self-reliant.

Norway is a small country with 4,5 mill inhabitants.

We have

- a small parliament (165 MP's - after the election there will be 169 MP's - with a staff – both political and administrative of 560)
- a library with a staff of 13 – 10 of them librarians .

When I joined the Storting library in 2000 I found a well functioning library with a staff with high competence in reference services. My objective became to push on automatization of workprocesses and services and to integrate them with the Storting activities.

I wanted to involve my staff in this process of change. I believe that their engagement is of vital importance when developing or changing services. My ambition was to get the library staff to team up and work towards common goals.

So what we did was first of all was to try to look into the future. We looked for the main drivers of change and ended up with different scenarios for the future Storting library. Based on the knowledge we got from the scenario writings we developed the library strategy.

The library strategy consists of seven key points:

1. The Library shall be open and accessible for Members and their staff. A 24/7 library and dedicated first of all to the MP's needs.
2. The Library shall provide relevant and quality information (in all formats) and support Members to perform their democratic roles.
3. The Library shall develop and run efficient user programs and self-help services and support and guide the user to become self-reliant. (The younger MP's and political advisors are skilled in the use of Internet and might think they are very competent but what we see is that they have lots to learn in order to search for information more efficiently.)
4. The library staff shall have the knowledge, skills and resources to meet the needs of today and tomorrow. (Everyone needs to upgrade their skills. We have concentrated first of all on the ICT skills and especially on how to use the web as a professional tool for librarians. This spring we upgraded our skills on EU information systems.)
5. The Library shall contribute to cost-efficiency in all matters. We spend the tax payer's money and should use them sensible. (In a small parliament I think it is essential to develop cross-sectional cooperation in order to avoid duplication of work and competence. We should all focus on the needs of the users and not compete with other administrative units. The Storting Library's main cooperative partners are : the Research Services, the Archive section, the web-editor and the IT section.
6. The Library shall be a knowledge centre for external users who need access to Norwegian and Nordic Parliamentary papers. (Even though the library is primarily for internal users, we do assist external libraries and professionals who need assistance in searching for parliamentary papers or need information on parliamentary business. I will later on say a few words about information seminars that we arrange for librarians from all over Norway).
7. The Library shall be a cultural asset at the Storting (examples: the library collection includes fiction literature for entertainment purposes - MP's do also need to relax, we arrange book fairs now and then and invite the users to sit down and read newspapers and journals. The library is from now on situated close to one of the cafeterias. We will invite the users to bring their coffee and to read newspapers etc. in our new open area.)

Integration with parliamentary business

For a library like ours it is essential to become integrated with business of parliament.

We want the Library to offer services that the politicians cannot do without- which add value to the political processes. It should make a difference to have the Storting library.

Examples of what we do are:

- We have developed a links directory adjusted to the committees ongoing work. We have 13 standing committees and try to target one librarian to each committee, to focus on their needs.
- We run a news alert service that monitor the ongoing political debate.
- We coordinate and buy information resources (books, journals, databases etc.) that are needed for MP's and committees.

As I told you earlier on we are a relatively small parliament. We enjoy this position because it makes it easier to get to know Members and staff and to get an overview of all their activities.

So what do we do to get to know our users' needs?

It is some years since last we had a large users survey. But what we have done some times when we have to find out what the users' needs are on specific topics – we send out an e-mail to key-users and invite them to give their views. This has given us useful information.

Much of the information we get comes from more informal communication. We meet Members and staff and talk to them in the Library or on the phone, the corridors, in the restaurants (we have three restaurants – all are open to everyone at the Storting), do sports activities together etc. Like you see here on the photo- the Storting skiteam last winter in Helsinki - including MP's, political advisors and other administrative staff. We try to anticipate their needs and are flexible. The Storting is exposed to change – in the same way as other institutions – we try to react quickly to new ways of doing parliamentary work.

My ambition is to cope with the changes and be able to manage to adopt new technology fast enough. To meet the demands from the users and to become integrated with the Storting business. I think we manage fairly well.

Then to an overview of the Library services:

Reference services is of course a key service in a library.

Providing easy access to information resources is a matter of meeting the needs of the users at the right time and in a user-friendly manner. The Library attempts to achieve this by offering a high standard of service at the reference desk as well as helping users to find their own way in the information jungle. All librarians participate in all kinds of reference work. We are all generalists, with a few specialists on EU information and on parliamentary papers.

The Storting internal portal – the intranet– Løveporten

in English – the Lion gate – has become the Storting internal personalized information channel.

With the Løveporten and the new ICT strategy, the distribution of information has changed. Most of the internal information is now either sent by e-mail or published on Løveporten. I guess this is what you see in your parliaments as well. Have we reached our objectives – has Løveporten become the main information channel?

Yes – but it is still an ongoing process - the challenge has been to change the habits of the users. They have gone from passively receiving information on paper/email to actively retrieving information from the intranet.

The Library website is part of the Løveporten

The website includes ready access to the Library's collections and services, a directory of links to relevant websites, databases, library catalogues, news sources and a tip-of-the-day service with information on current topics. I gave a presentation on the library website at the preconference in London in 2002. But things are changing fast and the web portal of today includes much more information and is better integrated with parliamentary business and work processes than it was three years ago. I also told you about the news services at that stage. The Storting library has for many years given high priority to all kinds of news services. Both printed, audio and visual. Still these are amongst the most popular services on the intranet. My colleagues will tell you more about this in their presentations later on.

Training users

The Library offers various training activities to ensure that Members and staff become acquainted with the library products and services and are able to use the relevant information resources in Løveporten, in databases and on the Internet. Nina will tell you more about how we do this.

Once a year every autumn - the Library invites librarians and information officers from all over Norway to attend a two-day seminar on how to search for parliamentary proceedings and official documents from the Storting and the Government. The idea of arranging such a seminar we got from the Swedish parliamentary library. It has been a success. If you want to know more about the agenda- we are ready to tell you more about that later on. Next year we plan to start a cooperative project together with one or two county libraries in Norway. The aim is to make public libraries and librarians more competent in parliamentary business and in how to retrieve parliamentary documents.

Library locations

Before I finish, let me say a few words about our redesigned library.

A Library to me is:

- collections
- services
- a building or a room — which I think still is important

although today the library might as well be the one you meet on the net – in the virtual room.

As part of the ongoing renovation of the Storting - the Library has been rebuilt this spring. I had hoped all work had been finished by now, but unfortunately not. We need spaces – meeting places – where people can come together, mingle or just see each others faces. Our library is not like the grand old libraries I have visited in some of your countries. It is quite small and simple but anyway quite functional and fit for the Storting. It is situated in an adjacent building together with other administrative services. Those of you who want to visit it might come along with me later on today.

When we got the chance to redesign the library locations, I wanted to design a library where people could meet, read newspapers and periodicals, close to PC's and other ICT equipment in an informal atmosphere where they also can bring their coffee. With open shelves for that part of the collection which is used the most – and where the users can help themselves. We do not have that much space – so a majority of our collection is stored in closed shelves not accessible to the users. But close enough for us to get any book in 5 minutes! We have had some challenges on our way – but that is another story. Part of the collections, the furniture, PC's and other electronic equipment is still lacking though. But in some weeks everything should be in place and we will be ready to receive all new and old MP's and staff after the election in September.

To conclude then:

I have given you an overview of the library, the strategy and our services. I did not go into any details – the more detailed versions you will get from three of my library staff waiting to give their presentations.

Thank you for your attention.