Introducing evidence based library and information practice in Sweden

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Objective
To introduce the concept of evidence based library and information practice (EBLIP) in Sweden

Methods
The work to increase knowledge about EBLIP in Sweden has evolved in two directions, one at the Karolinska Institute University Library (KIB), and one involving the library community in Sweden. The internal work includes a journal club, as well as the production of evidence, through two research project; and aiding the scholarly writing process in the library, through collaborative writing. In 2007 KIB was approached with the question of hosting the 5th International Evidence Based Library and Information Practice Conference (EBLIP5) in 2009. A decision to accept the proposal was made, with the objective to broaden the participation in the conference to include staff from all library types, and with a large representation of European librarians. A number of marketing measures have been taken, including conference presentations, journal articles, and lobbying activities. A promotional film for the conference has been produced. Between November 2008 and May 2009 our work will culminate with conference presentations and workshops. A series of workshops for spring 2009 called Countdown to EBLIP5 is underway, introducing participants to EBLIP methods.

Results
Knowledge about EBLIP is increasing, especially in groups new to the subject. The misconception that EBLIP concerns only academic medical libraries is changing.

Further results will be available at the time of the ICML conference.

Conclusions
It is possible for one library to make a new concept for library operations known within the library community?

Full text
Introduction

“I’d like to get into contact with libraries using evidence based librarianship (EBL) or evidence based practice (EBP)”

The question above was sent to the discussion list for Scandinavian librarians, Biblist, in March 2007. The sender was a library student working on her Master thesis. She got two answers. Both were from Sweden and one of them was me. I suggested a third library for her to contact, and in the end she interviewed staff from the three libraries about our work with evidence based methods. In this presentation I hope to show how we have increased the knowledge, and perhaps use, of evidence based library and information practice in Swedish libraries during the last two years.
There have been at least three attempts to define the concept of EBL/EBP/EBLIP (Booth & Brice 2004) all of them having a slightly different focus. Without going into detail about the different definitions, EBLIP allows for library professionals to bridge the gap between research and practice by collecting, interpreting and integrating user reported, librarian observed and research based evidence. In this presentation I will give examples of activities to aid librarians to, mainly, collect and interpret evidence, as a way to implement EBLIP in Sweden.

Internal work at the Karolinska Institutet University Library (KIB)
The internal work includes a journal club, as well as the production of evidence through research projects; and aiding the scholarly writing process in the library through collaborative writing.

The journal club to appraise research based evidence
The concept of a journal club can be used for learning critical appraisal skills, while at the same time allowing the staff to get acquainted with the most important journals and authors in the field. (For examples of journal club set ups, see Pearce-Smith (2006) and Kraemer (2007). At one of the first journal club meetings at KIB we discussed two articles about evidence based library and information practice (EBLIP). It was the first time I met with the concept, and understood that a journal club was an important step in learning one of the important skills in EBLIP – critical appraisal.

The journal club at KIB (Haglund & Herron 2005) started in 2004 and is arranged about every six weeks during term time (Sept – May/June). All staff working in the library (appr. 120) is invited, and the article that will be discussed is advertised. When deciding on the article we try to avoid opinion pieces, and we also try to cover the six domains of EBLIP (according to Crumley and Koufogiannakis (2002)) as well as try to take into account what is a “hot topic” in our local library environment. Staff is allowed about two hours to study the publication during working hours. Usually 6 – 14 staff turns up to the one hour club meeting. The discussion during the meeting is then guided by two templates; one to look at the “facts” (journal quality, author affiliation etc), and one to critically appraise the article (CRiSTAL) (http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/eblib/use.htm and http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/eblib/needs.htm ; accessed on April 6th 2009).

Research projects for librarian observed and user reported evidence
The fact that library users visit the physical building to a lesser degree, and instead make use of the virtual library, means less opportunities for librarians and users to communicate about library operations and services. In order to counteract this, the Palpus program was created.

The objectives of the program were
- to find out about customer needs when it comes to library services, and changes to these needs
- to get ideas for continuous development of library operations
- to increase user knowledge and use of the full range of library competencies.

The program was started in spring 2007 and was divided into two phases. Phase 1 included identifying methods of communication with three (of four) defined user groups: undergraduate students, PhD students and academic teachers. In phase 2, one of the proposed methods was applied on the user group, to collect information about the needs of this specific group and their library use. The fourth user group, the biomedical researchers, had earlier
been investigated, using “participant observation” (Haglund & Olsson 2008). The methods used were interviews (undergraduate students, PhD students, and academic teachers), and questionnaire (undergraduate students). The Palpus program has increased customer focus among the library staff, and has supplied the library with new contact persons, especially in the academic teacher and researcher groups. From participation in the journal club and the research projects above library staff has learnt some research methodologies, and has also applied several methods, including how to compile and draw conclusions from research material, while at the same time collecting important evidence for the library.

**Publishing the evidence**

At KIB and other libraries, there is a need to reflect and write about practice. It is therefore important to think of ways of helping potential author librarians with an interest in written communication over the threshold into more scholarly writing.

The biggest barrier is perceived as **time**, and therefore originally the project was optimistically entitled “Speed Writing” in order to reflect the hope that the writing process would go quickly. However, this title evolved during the course of the project to become “Collaborative Writing” and may finally land in “Writing Support”, since this seems to be a more realistic outcome of the effort. Others have worked with writing support in a library environment; see Tysick and Babb (2006).

The project involved giving writing support to a member of staff who wanted to publish an article on the use of Constructive Alignment in the development of library education (Schmidt, 2007).

The writing process was facilitated in a number of general areas; word processing, information retrieval, reference management, language correction, writing the English summary, help with the publication process. There were also two areas that required some subject knowledge (that is, about educational development); mapping of the examinations against the SOLO taxonomy, getting feedback on the content of the text. In the project, the writing support was provided by the members of the user-education department, as well as the author of this paper and the academic developer at the library. The tasks were divided across the members of the team and support was provided in a synchronous and asynchronous fashion.

In this way the author librarian was able to focus on the demanding task of writing a more scholarly text, knowing that support was being provided “behind the scenes” by colleagues.

**Other activities**

During spring 2009 there are ongoing activities at KIB to increase knowledge among all staff about EBLIP, and how it can be applied to our library operations. There has been a shorter presentation for all staff and a more in depth “theme meeting” for the management group. The organizing of presentations for all departments and discussions about how they can apply EBLIP methods to their work are under way. In addition to this several staff members take part in the workshop series “Definitely maybe, or Do the right thing”, and some are also part of the local organizing committee for the 5th Evidence Based Library and Information Practice Conference (see below).

The approaches above show a dedication to implementing EBLIP at KIB, while at the same time giving staff a good base for becoming EBLIP “ambassadors” when discussing library topics with colleagues from other libraries.

**Introducing EBLIP in Swedish libraries**
In 2007 KIB was approached with the question of hosting the 5th International Evidence Based Library and Information Practice Conference (EBLIP5) in 2009. A decision to accept the proposal was made, with the objective to broaden the participation in the conference to include staff from all library types, and with a large representation of European librarians.

With the knowledge from the above question from the library student, about libraries using evidence based methods, it has been evident that much can be done to spread the insight that EBLIP is not just for medical, or academic, libraries, and that it doesn’t have to take over your “day job”.

**Marketing activities**

In the work to promote EBLIP in Sweden there have been some obstacles, the most important one being the largest medical library in the Nordic countries. In the cases where people had heard about evidence based methods, there had been some connection to medicine, making them prejudiced against the concept as being for medical libraries only. To be able to reach as many staff as possible in all kinds of Swedish libraries, a series of measures has been taken.

For lobbying purposes the important national organizations and libraries (as well as local) have been contacted, e.g. the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm Public Library, the Swedish Library Association, and the Swedish Association for Information Specialists. In most cases the author, together with a colleague, gave a presentation about EBLIP in a meeting with the management of the different organizations/libraries. In October 2008 all library directors (43) in the Stockholm area were invited to a breakfast with information about EBLIP and the upcoming conference. In most cases the meetings have resulted in an increased interest in EBLIP, including the insight that it’s not just for medical libraries and in some cases a commitment to especially the upcoming conference, with support in staff time, or funding.

In two cases articles have been published about EBLIP methods, in the journal of the Swedish Library Association (written by a journalist), and in the journal of Stockholm County Library.

A number of conference presentations have either presented an EBLIP topic (e.g. seminar at the Swedish Book Fair in 2008, the EAHIL Conference in Helsinki 2008), or presented some other topic while taking the time to promote EBLIP and the upcoming conference as part of the presentation (e.g. NordLib 2.0, Stå inte i skuggan). An important vehicle has been the promotional film for the conference produced by KIB, and available on YouTube ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-5nP2eEZPw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-5nP2eEZPw)), that has been showed at every opportunity.

**Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops**

During several years KIB has, as Swedish National Resource Library for Medicine, arranged a series of CPD workshops in November every year. In November 2008 a three hour workshop with the title “EBLIP – evidence base your work” was held, with the aim to illustrate the concept, discuss how you can use EBLIP in practice, how to run a journal club etc. The target group for the workshop was medical librarians from academic and hospital libraries in Sweden, the group most knowledgeable about evidence based methods from their work with evidence based medicine. The workshop was limited to 20 participants, and 19 took part in the workshop.
As a way of promoting EBLIP in Sweden, and marketing the EBLIP5 conference, a series of workshops were planned together with Stockholm County Library (responsible for, among other things, developing public library operations in Stockholm County). The workshop series is called “Definitely maybe, or Do the right thing” and comprises four three-hour meetings, with additional work between meetings (a total of 12 + 24 hours work). The aim of the workshop series is to introduce EBLIP methods, and the target group is librarians from all library types in the Stockholm area, with the goal to have a 50/50 representation from public and academic libraries. The workshop is limited to 40 participants, the participants are evenly divided between library types, including two library students, and a handful are even travelling as far as 500 km to participate. From KIB five librarians participate, two from the management team organizes the workshop together with one person from Stockholm County Library, and the author acts as secretary, observing and taking notes of the discussions and reactions of the participants during workshop meetings.

The themes of the four meetings

- A lesson in reflection
- The art of reading
- Lacking in evidence?
- Show the evidence!

At the time of writing three out of four meeting has taken place. Additional information will be available at the time of ICML.

Local Organizing Committee for EBLIP5
Since one objective when organizing EBLIP5 was to try to engage librarians from all types of libraries, the involvement in conference planning by representatives from different libraries was important. In addition to getting to know colleagues from other libraries, the librarians participating in the work of the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) acts as ambassadors for evidence-based methods in their own organizations as well as towards libraries of the same type. The LOC is staffed by four librarians from public libraries, one from the National library, one from a hospital library, and four from academic libraries (of which three from KIB).

Results
Interest in EBLIP is increasing in Sweden, shown by the participation at conferences and workshops. After the workshop series “Definitely maybe, or Do the right thing” knowledge about EBLIP will have increased markedly in the group, and hopefully in their libraries. The misconception that EBLIP concerns only academic and/or medical libraries is changing. The contribution of several papers and posters from Swedish library or research staff to EBLIP5 show an increased awareness and interest in evidence-based methods in Sweden. The participation of Swedish librarians to EBLIP5 will indicate if the marketing efforts described above have had effect.

Further results will be available at the time of the ICML conference.

Conclusions
Even with certain unfounded bias against a concept like EBLIP it seems possible, with the right alliances and dedicated work, for one library to spread the knowledge about a new concept for library operations within the library community.
References


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