

THEORY AND HISTORY OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

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THE SKILLS OF INTEGRATION LIBRARIANS**Bo Skøtt**

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ANNOTATION

Introduction: *The starting point for this article is the assumption that librarians who participate in integration activities not only activate their institutional values and LIS skills (Schreiber & Elbeshausen, 2006) but are also always personally involved. In a study conducted in spring 2019, I demonstrated how a major change in Danish society's administrative structures again directed the public libraries' focus toward rationalisation and efficiency processes and reshaped the relationship between the librarian and the public. Consequently, the reform led to larger but fewer library units, digitisation and higher levels of self-service. This contrasts with the focus on integration work that preceded 2008. However, integration work has not disappeared but exists in a transformed edition.*

Methods: *This article is based on two different approaches: a study of different theoretical perspectives on librarians' skills, as well as two semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann, 2013; King & Horrocks, 2012, pp. 35, 49-53). The first interview was conducted with an integration librarian mid-January 2019 and represents the main empirical findings. The second one was conducted in a series of interviews with asylum seekers at the end of July 2018. The latter interview function as a supplement. Ten research and dissemination articles on the evolution of the librarian profession concerning integration were verified and reviewed. I use these articles' theoretical and practical observations to substantiate the analytical model I developed in the spring of 2019 – and apply it to analyses of the above-mentioned interview.*

Findings: *In my model, the librarians' skills are placed in a field of tension between the librarian as generalist and specialist (horizontal axis) and between the librarian's professional skills (vertical axis). The analysis shows that the integration librarian is professional and uses both her generalist and specialist skills when involved in integration activities, e.g. facilitating individuals or communities by applying search and dissemination skills. Furthermore, the analyses show a deep, personal commitment. The integration librarian's professionalism systematically ensures equal treatment of individuals, while personal involvement means a commitment far beyond the LIS domain.*

Conclusion: *My study shows that the integration librarian is professionally involved in integration activities and uses both generalist and specialist skills to assist individuals and communities of other ethnic origins in their everyday life. Additionally, the integration librarian evinces a deep sense of personal engagement – with the benefits and challenges this entails.*

Key words: *Public libraries, integration, qualification, competence, skills*

Introduction

Scandinavian public libraries have always facilitated groups in the community that were thought to need special attention. Therefore, Danish librarians have a long tradition of engaging in various forms of inclusion processes, regarding social, cultural and linguistic minorities. At the

same time, various stakeholders – e.g. cultural politicians, public opinion makers, and librarians – have always discussed who these groups were, what their specific needs were and what services would be appropriate. Thus, various types of best practices (e.g. Jansen, 2016; Naficy, 2009; Refuge for Integration, 2001), projects regarding either practical service (e.g. Ward, 2003; Hickok, 2005) or the development of various library policies in the field (e.g. Tirimanne, 2001) have been reported in the literature, while only a few discuss what personal skills (professional, psychosocial as well as private) are useful or needed by librarians to ensure successful results. One of the few examples of the latter is offered by Fiona Blackburn, who conducted a study in 2015, stating that:

The requirement for capacities and aptitudes beyond technical skill and facility with established library systems and practice is clear. Gomez (2000) described weeding a foreign language collection by drawing on the knowledge of a speaker who was not library trained and discusses the need for flexibility in library systems... (Blackburn, 2015, p. 178).

In this article I seek to challenge this question: how do librarians empirically relate to challenges that require skills not part of a library professional's curriculum? And which personal skills are activated by the integration librarian in their target group-oriented culture work with ethnic minorities? What interests me is both how my respondent articulates specific skills and how she speaks about the underlying motives as justification for her actions. At the same time, the article is an attempt to revisit the representative role, which many articles attribute to public librarians. Within Cultural Studies, it has long been recognized how it is people and not cultures that act, yet librarians are still often referred to as representatives of the mother institution in their meeting with the public. Of course, librarians represent their institutions and a professional community as well, but they are also always individuals with personal approaches to and interpretations of how their professional roles may be fulfilled in practice.

Methodological considerations

My research question stems from two statements I encountered while collecting empirical data for two other projects. The first statement was expressed during a survey of asylum seekers' experience of integration activities provided by public libraries at two reception centres in Denmark. The second statement appeared during a study of how integration activities in Denmark have changed over the past 10-15 years. Even though the two statements are taken out of their contexts, they still point to personal skills as necessary and important.

The first statement was made by respondent 050718, an Egyptian asylum seeker at a reception centre in southern Denmark. In July 2018, I conducted interviews with six asylum seekers who stayed at two different reception centres. The purpose of the study was to investigate how asylum seekers perceive and use the library service provided by those two centres (Skøtt, 2019). When asked what the significance of the librarian in charge being of Arab origin and speaking different Arabic languages was, respondent 050718 replied:

In fact it is also a very good idea that administration brought him because if you brought for example (a) Danish one the people can't contact with him so it is helping people (in a) very, very good way, (a) respect[ful] way [...] as he treat me, as he help me. [I] trust the relation (Respondent 050718, line 574-578)

The second statement was made by a librarian of Danish origin who had been involved with integration activities in public libraries for 15 years and who, when questioned about whether she had ever lacked certain qualifications, replied:

[yes] Arabic! That I could speak Arabic! Yes, well but again so what?! [...] no, I haven't. I am an old librarian for children. Maybe this is a skill anyway because there [you build] relations... (Respondent 150119, line 445-448)

This statement emerged during an interview as part of a pilot study of how librarians view their roles and functions concerning the public library's integration activities (Skøtt, 2019).

Both interviews were conducted as semi-structural interviews (Brinkmann, 2013; King & Horrocks, 2012, pp. 35, 49-53). While conducting semi-structural interviews, the interviewer utilizes an interview protocol as a guide in order to get answers to questions defined in advance as crucial to the answering of the research question. As the term indicates, the semi-structural interview allows the respondents to improvise and pursue their narratives while responding, thus enfolding their answers with backgrounds or motives the respondents themselves consider essential. In this context, the ambition is to use parts of the two interviews to get a snapshot of how personal skills are activated, e.g. in contrast to the historical approach frequently used by other studies (e.g. Weisbjerg & Elbeshausen, 2006, pp. 141-175). Accordingly, the focus of this study is on the librarian's statements. This respondent's responses were transcribed in full and analysed based on the model in Model 1.0 (see below). The respondent's different statements were read and clustered into four different groups corresponding to the model's different quadrants. Subsequently, appropriate citations and illustrative references were selected and reproduced in prose in the final analysis.

In this study, the six interviews with three asylum seekers from two different reception centres in Denmark serve solely as a supplement.

The interesting thing about the asylum seeker's and the librarian's statements, respectively, is their emphasis on personal skills as important to the integration work in public libraries. Despite their disagreement, they both highlight this point (cf. Tirimanne, 2001, p. 71). Because the empirical material used in the present context has been collected in conjunction with other studies, there are differences in the way the interviews were conducted. Therefore, the interviews are supplemented with several research and dissemination articles on the development of the librarian profession, with emphasis on the target group-oriented culture work. These studies are used, among other things, to substantiate the analytical model and the analysis of the integration librarian's replies.

Theory

Two concepts become central when I seek to map the librarians' prerequisites to be part of the integration work: qualifications and competences. I have chosen to apply a process analytic perspective in this study, even though others exist, e.g. neo-Weberian power-related perspectives or modern organisational theoretical perspectives (Weisbjerg & Elbeshausen, 2006, pp. 143-146). In a process analytic perspective, qualifications refer to the acquisition of knowledge and abilities enabling the employee to perform new work functions and processes, e.g. through peripheral legitimate participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These qualifications may consist of formal knowledge, acquired through study or educational programs, which end with a professional assessment of the student's learning processes:

Qualification is achieved when a competent body determines that an individual's learning has reached a specified standard of knowledge, skills and wider competences. The standard of learning outcomes is confirmed by means of an assessment process or the successful completion of a course of study. Learning and assessment for a qualification can take place through a programme of study and/or workplace experience. A qualification confers official recognition of value in the labour market and further education and training. A qualification can be a legal entitlement to practice a trade (Toward a European qualifications framework for lifelong learning, 2005, p. 12).

Compared to work tasks where the employee may fulfil his or her function by: '... following predetermined routines and instructions, she can manage with qualifications' (DFS, 2019). However, in larger and more complex task solutions, where the employee is required to make different kinds of situational assessments, the development of competences becomes necessary. Hence, competences are more than just the sum of an employee's different qualifications. Competences include the ability to solve various specific work tasks, and issues in practice,

including the ability to understand, develop and reflect on work methods, evaluate the results of different kinds of task solutions for future corrections, and the abductive application of solutions from one professional field to another. Thus, the concept of competence also embraces informal personal assessments:

Competence includes: i) cognitive competence involving the use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially; ii) functional competence (skills or know-how), those things that a person should be able to do when they are functioning in a given area of work, learning or social activity; iii) personal competence involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation; and iv) ethical competence involving the possession of certain personal and professional values (Toward a European qualifications framework for lifelong learning, 2005, p. 11)

Different degrees of formalisation may be identified in the acquisition of qualifications and competences. Some qualifications and competences are acquired through formal teaching activities, while others are acquired through non-formal learning processes. Still others are experienced through informal socialization processes (Jarvis, 2010, pp. 38-66). I am aware of the different meanings of the two concepts, but instead of distinguishing between them I will use the overarching term 'skills', as containing both meanings.

Skills in a library context

In previous studies, I have argued how the librarian profession should be considered using a four-winged model, illustrating various degrees of LIS professional and personal skills. Model 1.0 was initially established on the base of activities, referred to as 'cultural dissemination' in a Scandinavian context. In this article, the model will be used tentatively in the analysis of librarians' skills. Initially, I will briefly describe how the model emerged, and substantiate the depiction with theoretical perspectives on librarians' skills in the integration work. The original discussion can be found in Skøtt 2018 (pp. 120-138).

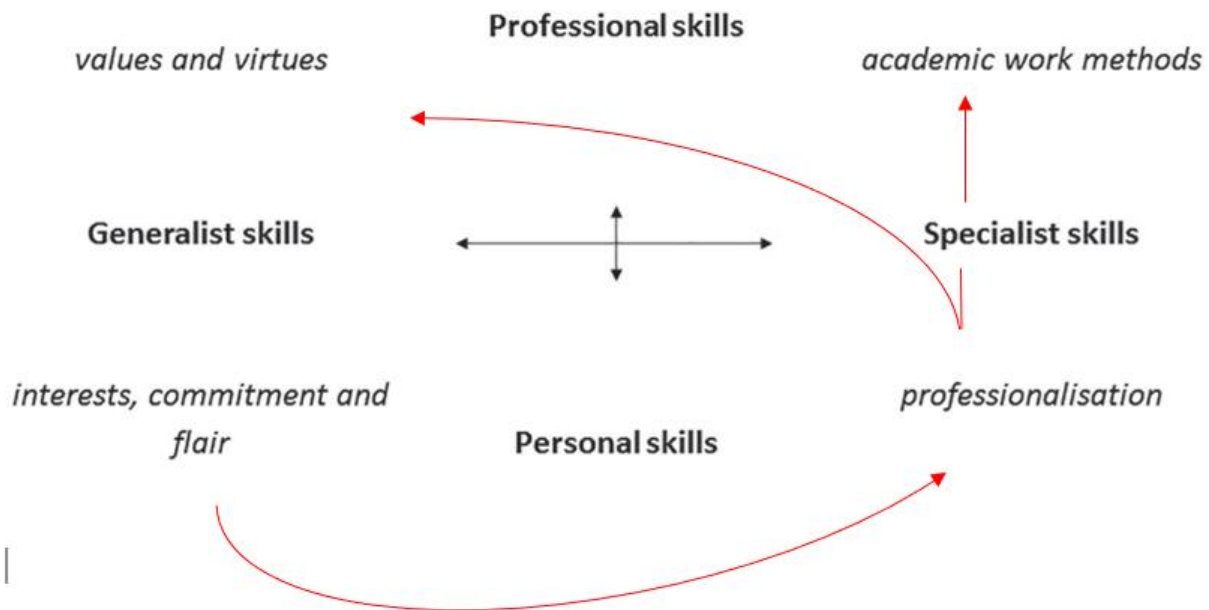
'Cultural dissemination' may be defined as a specific library professional term referring to communicative processes, containing elements of e.g. learning, enlightenment, communication, and information (Gudiksen, 2005). However, the term is not well defined and different stakeholders use the term differently and disagree on its content. Culture dissemination was initially defined from a functionalist communication view emphasising the librarian's communication skills as a sender and thus her ability to formulate a message (Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2016, p. 79 ff.). The sender's perspective required specialisation: the more professional the librarian became, the greater the chance to pinpoint and articulate a message that target groups would understand and act upon.

During the 1960s, an awareness of the public as an actively co-creative and meaning-producing entity emerged, and theories based on the recipient's reception were established (Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2016, p. 117 ff.). Simultaneously, the cultural and political perspective changed, increasingly recognising different subcultures' existence within the borders of the nation-state as valuable. This relativization of the culture concept motivated librarians to facilitate the identity construction and self-narratives of different target groups. And this way, the library skills were generalized. Firstly, from a recipient perspective and later as actual user involvement (Hvenegaard-Rasmussen, 2016, pp. 151 ff.). Increasingly, the librarian became able to negotiate with different citizens, in different subject areas, and at different levels.

Based on the development of the culture concept dissemination and discussions of the librarian profession, I chose to work with four concepts of skills: personal skills versus professional skills (cf. Bilodeau & Carson, 2015) and specialist skills versus generalist skills (cf. Petrinic & Urquhart, 2007). I also chose to extend my model and define the quadrants that lie between the two

sets of opposite concepts with terms matching 'Toward a European qualifications framework for lifelong learning' (2005, p. 11) as follows;

- *interest, commitment, and flair* are situated in the lower left quadrant and is equivalent to *personal competences*
- *professionalisation* is situated in the lower right quadrant and is equivalent to *functionalistic competences*
- *academic work methods* are situated in the upper right quadrant and is equivalent to *cognitive competences*, and
- *values and virtues* are situated in the upper left quadrant and is equivalent to *ethic competences*.



Model 1.0 'Library staff skills in practice' (Skøtt, 2018, p. 134)

'Library staff skills in practice' as analysis model

The horizontal axis

The horizontal axis illustrates a spectrum of different stances librarians may take between generalist and specialist positions. The horizontal axis refers both to an organisation's external distinction between research and public libraries (e.g. Petrinic & Urquhart, 2007) and to an organization internal distinction between librarians and other professional groups (Bilodeau and Carson, 2015, p. 44). Compared to subject specialists and their specialized problem-solving, the public librarians are generalists because they disseminate professional knowledge on a general level and involve themselves in artistic and cultural activities of a more expressive nature. (e.g. Dare, 2015). Unlike subject specialists, whose positions and job titles depend on formal professional skills obtained within other subject domains, the public librarians' task portfolio is broader, and they do not necessarily hold deeply specialized professional knowledge, extending beyond the library and information science. Public librarians' specialist skills relate to information retrieval, information organization, and dissemination, carried out independently of insight into other professional domains. (Bilodeau & Carson, 2015, p 38).

Internally in public libraries, generalist skills may be considered as a specialisation within the library and information science. Here, the relationship between specialist and generalist skills relates to the degree of interdisciplinarity and the interdependence of employees; generalists have a high degree of substitutability, while specialists have a low degree. Hence, the end of the librarians' employment monopoly by the recruitment of non-librarian professionals may be regarded as a desire to increase specialisation in public libraries, too.

The vertical axis

However, in this context the vertical axis is the most interesting, because of my focus on personal skills. The two statements initially motivating this study may be placed in a tension field between professional and personal skills, illustrating how the fluctuation between the professional and the personal reappears within the library domain. As mentioned, professional skills may be general or specific, but as expressions of knowledge, characterising a certain domain, professional qualifications must include some standards of what every employee should know and be able to do. These standards include e.g. general values and virtues, and specific academic working methods constituting a common professional foundation, which members of the domain in general acknowledge and recognize as a starting point for practice. Simultaneously, these norms define the border with unqualified laypeople. Therefore, professional qualifications relate to the formal level of knowledge and abilities that educational institutions provide their graduates with and guarantee by issuing diplomas. (cf. Jarvis, 2010, pp. 38-66; Schreiber, 2006, pp. 15-46). This does not mean that e.g. LIS students do not acquire informal or social skills throughout their studies. It merely indicates how it is the formal professional qualifications that are subjected to professional evaluation, not the informal or social ones.

In contrast to formal professional qualifications, personal qualifications refer to interest, commitment, and flair, as well as to the informal socialization into professional domains. Interest, commitment, and flair precede the employee's professional training, while informal socialisation refers to the acquisition of tacit knowledge. Here, the employee may experience a practice scenario based upon personal interest and professional skills, but in a way that allows the employee to develop her individual understanding of the profession. Thus, personal qualifications refer to the conjunction with professional qualifications, and constitute the link between abstract and theoretical knowledge, and the pursuit of this knowledge in practice.

Any attempt to define concepts contains sliding transitions between these categories. Therefore, it can be difficult to clearly define when e.g. an information search belongs to a professional generalist's competences and when it belongs to a professional specialist's competences – and whether the personal interests consist of a desire to find out and know, master technology or to help the public with their information needs. At the same time, certain concepts are subject to a historical dynamic, allowing former informal personal qualifications to become considered a formal necessity, e.g. the ability to create social relationships. Despite these reservations, model 1.0 will be used in the analysis of the interview I conducted with respondent 150119 on January 15, 2019.

Analysis

Model 1.0 can be regarded as a static categorization of various competencies that library staff have developed in practice, and that are necessary to be able to act in a public library domain. But the model may also be read as a process model (the red arrows), with personal interest, commitment and flair (lower left quadrant) as a starting point, made subject to professionalisation through professional education and work in libraries or other information businesses (lower right quadrant). This formal and informal professionalization leads to the recognition of academic working methods elements of the field (upper right square) and its more general virtues and values (upper left square). When analysed using model 1.0 as a process model, personal interest, commitment, and flair become the basis for professionalisation, because personal qualifications, as mentioned, have become an indispensable complement to professional qualifications with the emergence of late modern society (cf. Blackburn, 2009, p. 181).

Personal qualifications: interests, commitment, and flair

If I consider respondent 150119's statements from a point of view based on interests, commitment, and flair, it is especially her engagement that comes to mind. When interviewed, the respondent had been an integration librarian for approximately 15 years. Her engagement was kick-

started by the arrival of a contingent of Arabic boys challenging the library staff and the public as they transformed the library space into a veritable youth centre. The respondent described how she was tasked with being present together with the boys, and how she actively began to engage in negotiations with them on how the library could be used, e.g. regarding the computers. At that time, the library made ten computers available to the public. Nine computers were available for free use, but the tenth had to be used for information retrieval only. Once the other computers were occupied, the unfortunate youngsters who had arrived too late to use one of the nine free computers had to negotiate with the respondent what the tenth computer could be used for. The respondent used this contact to satisfy a human desire to understand and interact, while at the same time she conveyed good (library) behaviours, e.g. concerning noise, tidying up or language use. In other words, it became respondent 150119's task to be the one: '... who had the index finger raised!' (respondent 150119, line 21) whenever necessary. This function was aimed not only at young people but became extended to include (especially) fathers from other parts of the world who went to the library to look after their children – but also to meet like-minded people, read newspapers, etc. When the children's play became annoying to staff members or the public it was the fathers who had to be called to order (Respondent 150119, line 484-490).

It was this task with the Arabic boys that made the respondent assume the role of the one who took care of: '... those who did not feel so good, those [...] who did not do so well!' (Respondent 150119, lines 53-54). This included Danish children and young people. For the past 15 years, the respondent had worked in various constellations of colleagues but: '... have never met one who turned on, [to the task] as much as I did.' (respondent 150119, line 163). The respondent was perfectly conscious of how personal skills determined her function as an integration librarian in practice but otherwise found it difficult to put into words exactly what she did to ensure the responsiveness of the various groups of youngsters: '... I think it depends a lot on what I do and who I know [...]. (It's) very much my [solutions], what I do, what I want, and I never say no ... ' (Respondent 150119, line 401-407).

The personal involvement of the respondent extended far into her private sphere. Thus, the respondent described how her phone was never off, and how she e.g. had answered a Danish male's queries about language stimulating materials for his Thai spouse on a Friday evening after working hours. Or how a personal interest in football had become the gateway to some of certain young peoples' otherwise semi-closed circles. The slightly more conservatively raised Arabic boys in particular were astonished by a – in their eyes – mature, female librarian's knowledge of football, how she had an opinion on which player best contested which positions on various teams, and how she was willing to discuss it (Respondent 150119, lines 509-524).

However, the respondent would not engage in all kinds of involvement over the years (see also Naficy, 2009, pp. 165-166). In connection with a municipal project, the respondent was asked to visit mothers and children in their homes – and had declined:

I'm not supposed to be the one coming [from the municipality] into people's homes. [I had] another colleague who was willing to do that. She had no scruples about it, [...] but I can't. When I help down here, I don't want to know people's [personal] stories (Respondent 150119, line 192-194).

Personal skills have ensured a commitment far beyond what the professional and formal frameworks surrounding the respondent's education and employment conditions entailed. What seems to have motivated the respondent is precisely how personal skills could come into play in education and/or socialisation processes: '... well, I think it is fun to have 70-100 ambassadors down the assembly hall, where we just convey our services and they are just amazed...' (respondent 150119, lines 419-421).

Personal skills: professionalisation

In a process analytic perspective, professionalisation consists of the transformation of certain personal interests, commitment, and flair into a professional context in which they may be consciously expressed and applied. At the time of the interview, the respondent was still employed on equal terms with her colleagues, as a regular librarian participating in dissemination, counselling and facilitation activities. The organisational framework was somewhat fixed and allowed the respondent to spend 5-6 hours per week on integration-related activities. These hours covered, e.g. maintenance of websites, purchasing of literature and other materials, planning and carrying out events, networking activities, meetings, and of course interaction with the public. One of the key professional skills, explicitly articulated by the respondent was 'relation competence'; the ability to create, enter, and maintain social relationships with other people regardless of age, nationality, and ethnicity. Relation competence is something that can be practiced and refined but you must be socially attuned to people in advance. The respondent's decision to become a librarian was perhaps a coincidence – she could have pursued a career as schoolteacher or family therapist instead – but the point is that it was her personal interests that became decisive for her further career. Although her library education allowed her to hold such a position, the respondent had never worked either as e.g. a system administrator nor as a business librarian, but believed her relation competence had been refined by her past as a child librarian: '... the ability to say 'no' [...] I think is (important) because otherwise, you may easily become intimidated' (respondent 150119, lines 447-449).

Other personal competences transformed into professional skills that were mentioned in addition to her dissemination activities were 'good planning skills' and thorough preparation of e.g. events, including the ability to anticipate possible complications, to improvise and have a plan B, in case something did not progress according to plan. This skill was expressed in the respondent's network functions as coordinator and member of various municipal and local networks. In one context, the respondent worked as the coordinator for a network consisting of: '... the Job Centre, the Social Benefit Office, the Language Centre, the Nordby [The northern city] project, the Learning Centre [city name] (and) what was previously called the Family Department ...' (Respondent 150119, lines 290-293). This network was a municipal network made up of various stakeholders working with integration and served as the basis for coordination, idea generation, and exchange of experience. Citizens of other ethnic origins did not participate directly. However, the network organized dialogue meetings in collaboration with the local cultural history museum and with the participation of Arabic women, local companies, and employees of cultural institutions to get people into work.

The respondent was also involved in these types of practical endeavours. In both cases, the respondent's thorough preparation became an asset. The respondent herself believed her planning skills probably had their origin in her personal experiences in raising a child with socio-psychological challenges, and again displayed how personal experiences had been transformed into valuable library skills (Respondent 150119, lines 463-470).

When asked directly, the respondent mentioned two types of skills that she had missed throughout her career. The linguistic barrier had been an obstacle to interacting with the Arab communities, which correlates with what respondent 050718 mentioned, in the second study (the appropriateness of having Arab or Arabic-speaking librarians). Another challenge had been conflict management. The respondent had neither received instruction nor training to defuse escalating situations. However, this lack had been most pronounced in the work with young Danes (cf. Tirimanne, 2001, p. 71).

Professional skills: academic working methods

Respondent 150119 did not unequivocally define the academic features of her working methods but articulated which practical library professional work methods underpinned the day-to-day operations of the library. Throughout history, the public library has evolved into a domain in which the institution's societal obligations are defined in various legal terms (Acts regarding library

service, 2001). Those obligations are still reflected in the visions, strategies, and missions of late modern public libraries e.g. in the task of supporting a democratic community by providing knowledge and culture. This obligation is interpreted as applicable to all – individuals as well as communities. The 'Danish Library Centre for Integration' under 'The Royal Library' has developed a service (literature repositories in foreign languages) to build and maintain collections within various language areas. These repositories are accessible for public libraries as depots when they lack the finances or the expertise to build physical collections themselves (Royal Danish Library, (wd.); see also Hickok, 2005). The respondent and her co-workers made particular use of these, in the work of providing books, audiobooks, digital books, and films for children and adults from different language areas:

And we are the ones who move quickly [...] we order what depots we can from there and I can say that our collection is better than the one they have in Aarhus [...] so we boast a bit about it. (...) We have a nice collection [...]. So, we can pretty much boast about it because it is ok. It's just not our own. There are constant shifts (Respondent 150119, lines 528-543).

The procurement of materials in foreign languages was a way of ensuring a proper and up-to-date service was provided to the target groups. Because these were materials in languages from areas with different publishing traditions, from areas affected by conflict and embargo, or because the target groups are socialized to other kinds of library use, the material collections were largely physical. However, one area was especially prioritised because it served several different purposes; '... we do a lot [to acquire] Danish language training materials, [...]. We have just made supplements, but it is for the sake of another target group, namely people [Danes] with dyslexia!' (Respondent 150119, lines 545-547).

The key concepts regarding working methods are efficiency and rational workflows, which no longer apply exclusively to the physical collection (cf. Hickok, 2005, p. 249). During the 15 years since the respondent received this task, the public libraries have undergone a digital transformation, which has resulted in the provision of various digital resources to be used, also by ethnic minorities, e.g. websites containing free Danish language courses for children and adults, as well as easy-to-read material. Accordingly, part of respondent 150119's work became the development and maintenance of a blog with digital resources, targeted integration activities (line 565-575).

The respondent's statements indicated a specific conception of academic working methods as subject to her pragmatic applicability; theories and methods were of no interest except for her use in practice and their consequences according to the target groups. This attitude became apparent in the respondent's retelling of a project, aiming at employing people of different ethnic origin, showing various psychosocial, cultural or linguistic challenges – and which partially failed. Like many other events referred to by the respondent, this project was a joint venture project between the municipal, private businesses and NGOs, and as such depending on interaction:

[...] but we did not get them into work [...]. If we had measured on soft values, we would have succeeded. We got 18 students from what is called DU1, that is, the poorest to speak Danish [...], the worst [in terms of] psyche and health [who had] major post-traumatic stress, [...] women who had never imagined they would have to work. [We got them] to smile and laugh, be safe with us, look us in the eyes when we spoke. And we got all the women to shake hands because we just did so. We hugged and said hello (Respondent 150119, lines 74-88)

Professional skills: Values and virtues

Not surprisingly, some of the general task solutions and functions described by the respondent refer to various general library virtues and values, as the basis for the public library's *raison d'être*. The three most significant values were the library's commitment to facilitating:

- 1) the everyday lives of ordinary people;
- 2) various forms of literacies, including reading pleasure; and
- 3) democratic participation in community processes.

These three values are considered as general values because they do not only target people of another ethnic origin alone but apply to the public in general; and because other institutions support similar processes (e.g. primary schools). An example of how the library facilitated the everyday life of ordinary people was related to the issue of self-help. The respondent regularly experienced how people of other ethnic origin needed help to communicate with the public authorities and to buy or sell items via the Internet (also cf. Naficy, 2009, pp. 163-164). In these cases, the respondent guided the citizen to appropriate websites where they could serve themselves and explained the principles of this self-service – without becoming directly involved:

We have a place on our websites, which we refer to when you need help [...] beyond our services. We hate to say no. As a principle here, we never say no. We say: but you can go here [...]. We refer to other websites. (Respondent 150119, line 212-215).

Another example, demonstrating how literacy was facilitated, was respondent 150119's emphasis on various forms of reading comprehension campaigns, reading aloud as language and pronunciation exercises, the training of writing and wording skills, etc. (cf. Reinholdt Hansen, 2017). The respondent stated how:

I was the one who showed them the good places on the web, made sure they did not copy-paste, [taught them about] source criticism, all such things. [...] And I was the one who found good books for them and [...] read along with them, because I found how a lot of these kids were good at reading [but they] didn't know what the words meant ... (Respondent 150119, line 228-232)

The unwillingness to say no, and the desire to help people as far as possible, may also be interpreted as a personal competence which here was transformed into a library professional value. For integration purposes, literacies relate to all, children as well as adolescents and adults who are about to acquire the Danish language, but the task is not limited to people of other ethnic origins. In general, services aimed at target language improvements in public libraries are focused on specific target groups, such as young people, students or pupils, or people of all ages with reading or writing disabilities (Respondent 150119, lines 275-279 and 545-547).

One final example shows how the library facilitated democratic participation through user-driven involvement. Through her network-oriented approach, my respondent had recently acquired ten respondents for an interview and a photo exhibition on refugees' journeys from their home countries to Denmark. Here they could tell their own stories, which proved challenging for some of them: '... mega fun, but also a little transboundary for some of them, because they had to dig into stories, which they had probably repressed... (Respondent 150119, line 121-123).

Neither democratic participation nor user-driven innovation can be considered integration activities, only aimed at people of other ethnic origin but represents a general orientation towards more user involvement in both organizational and dissemination activities. (Haagen & Kulturministeriet, 2008; also cf. 'Reach Out: Naviger i brugerinddragelse og brugerdrevet innovation.' 2012).

Discussion

As mentioned above, it is the relationship between interest, commitment, and flair, and professionalisation that I find interesting, as a starting point for identifying the use of personal skills in public libraries' integration activities. When my respondent exclaimed 'I just do it ...' (Respondent 150119, lines 633 and 637) in response to my questions about whether she used concepts and strategies, and e.g. defined people of different ethnic origin as library 'ambassadors', she in fact referred to librarians as predominantly professional practitioners who manage to put different sets of formal, non-formal, and informal skills in play, both in recognisable and in new

situations (as abductive practices). The respondent's interest in the target groups and their inclusion in Danish society is thus not solely based on a legal obligation and her employment, but also on a combination of specific organisational needs and individual skills.

Formal professional skills

The library's professional desire, to meet the wants and needs of different target groups, is professionalised through the objectification and standardization of solution models, why it makes sense to designate one or few employees to the tasks, e.g. as integration librarians. Various responses in the interview show how the respondent's actions are both targeted and focused, and always initiated based on professional opinion. The ability to create social relationships is an example of such a skill, vital to dissemination activities, the practical interaction with the public, and in reference interviews. Therefore, it is included in the formal education of student librarians (the curriculum).

The interesting thing about the respondent's statement is how it shows her extremely fine sense of what library work means and how far the librarian may get involved personally, e.g. when she rejects both her own and other librarians' involvement in asylum application processes or appeal cases. According to the respondent, some librarians did assist in such processes, however, not in the library system in which she had employment. The problem is that of librarians lacking the right combination of personal and professional skills. They showed personal commitment but lacked the professional insight to be able to advise properly, and thus ran the risk of erroneous or incomplete problem-solving. Errors and deficiencies in application procedures or appeals cases can potentially have very far-reaching and serious consequences for the parties involved. Naficy puts it this way:

On the one hand, we want to help the customer, and on the other hand, we need to be cautious and avoid assisting users with filling out forms, which could be interpreted as counselling. The latter carries legal responsibilities (and therefore liabilities) and, therefore, is to be avoided by library staff. (Naficy, 2009, p. 166).

This sense of the extent to which professional skills and personal commitment reach characterizes the professional librarian.

Non-formal common skills

As the analysis shows, the theoretical distinction between 'interest, commitment, and flair' and 'professionalisation' is associated with certain practical difficulties. Many of the professional skills emphasized by the respondent have a personal pendant, e.g. relation skills, and planning abilities. However, the interesting point is to define the interaction between personal and professional skills – and not necessarily to decide what came first. The respondent's strong relating skills, including the ability to immerse herself within a limited subject area valued by the target group (football), and the willingness to enter into equal negotiations with the target group's members, shows how she unfolds her dissemination skills in a field between personal engagement and a professional position. When needed, the respondent can show her personal side – but without losing her professionalism (the raised index finger).

The same goes for her planning skills, which have equivalents in the respondent's private sphere. This skill was refined and targeted during professionalisation and could subsequently be unfolded in professional practice. Again, the distinction between the different analytical categories becomes arbitrary: can the quotation, regarding 18 students from DU1 (Respondent 150119, lines 74-88), not also be interpreted as an example of how the respondent's involvement unfolds? The answer is: yes – but the passage may also be interpreted as an illustrative example of how both personal and professional skills work together and are being used in integration activities. The quotation points to professional practice with a unique purpose; to provide people with employment. Despite the project's failure, the respondent, as project manager and participant, manages to improvise and create value for the participants. Security and presence are some of the basic emotions participants must necessarily develop in their ambitions to create a new life in

Denmark. Based on the above, I would argue that attention to informal experiences of being human, must be added to the librarians acquisition of formal skills (e.g. Blackburn, 2009) and non-formal skills (e.g. Bilodeau & Carson 2015).

Informal personal skills

Respondent 150119's problem-solving went far beyond what are commonly defined as librarian tasks. Currently, the librarian's formal education includes neither conflict management, intercultural training, education for various kinds of psychosocial problem-solving, or the like. Such skills must be experienced prior to the education, through practice when needed, and with the help of peer training (cf. Bilodeau and Carson, 2015) – or as a personal flair. It became clear from the interview how the respondent had never received any kind of professional training in these areas but excelled in her actions despite this (Respondent 150119, lines 500-508). An example of how this commitment is expressed was the respondent's willingness to share her interest in football with the adolescents. It is not football but football as a common interest that enables an equal dialogue. In such a dialogue, different people from different backgrounds may meet and create new social relationships in appreciative ways. The common interest thus becomes a catalyst, creating a basis for interaction and participation, while the topic becomes secondary. However, sharing personal interests and experiences with other people requires a willingness to invest oneself and put one's own opinions and ways of thinking at stake – and thus does not form part of formal or non-formal library practices.

The personal commitment combined with changing teams around the integration work (with respondent 150119 as the only recurring figure) leads to an organisational accumulation of knowledge, centred on one or a few employees, who thereby constitute a significant resource for the institution concerned. Such a centralisation provides a unique opportunity to reach the target groups serviced, and to address one of the major public library challenges:

Library programs have attempted to meet the needs of minority and underserved communities by providing reading programs, language classes, bilingual story hour, and bookmobiles. However, these programs have often been created for diverse populations with little or no input from cultural and ethnic groups served (Overall, 2009, p. 79).

However, in a more general organisational view, the public libraries' service to different target groups become highly dependent on the persistent interests and commitment of these small teams. The target group-oriented culture work becomes vulnerable to structural, social or organisational changes because the organisational memory is concentrated on few employees. Additionally, there is the risk of operational imbalances e.g. concerning personal preferences (as librarians) or geography (e.g. between urban and rural areas).

Conclusion

As a starting point for this study, I set out to investigate which personal skills the integration librarian activates in the target group-oriented culture work aimed at ethnic minorities. I note how the answer depends on what perspective the questioner seeks. From a practical perspective it is possible to identify several skills, which the respondent explicitly mentions in connection with her involvement in integration activities, e.g. formal library professional skills such as information retrieval, dissemination skills, building collections, and access to knowledge and literature in foreign languages. These skills refer to activities, which serve as reference points for the respondent's professional collaboration with the target groups. But also, more non-formal skills such as relation competence, and good planning skills were mentioned as necessary. Such abilities and talents have a personal origin but may be refined through exposure to practical work situations, where solutions require such skills. And finally, a need was identified for informal skills, which were particularly evident in the respondent's willingness to engage in dialogue with refugees and asylum seekers on their terms and based on their interests – e.g. football.

However, from a process-analytical perspective, it is possible to identify a more theoretical answer. Professionalisation of various social functions takes place through objectification and standardisation of solutions. For the same reason, library professional skills are formal skills, evaluated by peers as they are considered as a starting point for professionalisation, while at the same time ensuring the profession's social status and thus widely recognised by the library professional domain. As mentioned initially, librarians represent both an institution and a professional community, but simultaneously they also always represent themselves as individuals with personal approaches on how to fulfil their professional roles in practice. And because the public is not a passive receiving mass but must be regarded as comprised of many different actors actively involved in constructions of meaning, the interesting endeavour in this study is to define the interaction between the librarian's personal and professional skills. This interaction is created in a dialogue between e.g. citizen and librarian, where the citizen has many different interests and needs, while the librarian has her personal experiences and professional skills available. And to reach a common understanding of the nature of the need expressed and of how (and to what extent) the librarian may address these needs, a common agreement must be established between the parties regarding how the library is a safe place to express such needs – especially in the integration process. And this is what the librarian's equal dialogue can be used for when she shows her willingness to put her own personal (and subjective) attitudes at stake. The common interest is precisely the catalyst, creating a common basis for interaction regardless of the nature of the topic.

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