

Extending the media welfare state

The role of libraries in the Nordic countries

TERJE COLBJØRNSSEN, HÅKON LARSEN, KIM TALLERÅS,
& MACIEJ LIGUZINSKI

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVISTICS, LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE,
OSLO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, NORWAY

ABSTRACT

An account of the Nordic media welfare state that does not consider the library sector, its historical mandates, and the role it plays in securing universal access to media content while also contributing to sustaining the media industries, is missing a piece. With this chapter, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of public libraries in relation to a wider media context. As holders of collections of media – books, but also audio and audiovisual media – as well as important enablers of public discussions and events, libraries co-exist with media industries in multiple ways: They purchase media content, promote various forms of media, and compete with the mass media for the attention of the public as well as the resources of the state. We ask questions about the intersections between libraries and the media industries: What are their mandates, social remits, and forms of regulation? What are the challenges that face them today? What are their roles within an extended media welfare state?

KEYWORDS: media welfare state, Nordic cultural model, media policy, cultural policy, public libraries

Colbjørnsen, T., Larsen, H., Tallerås, K., & Liguzinski, M. (2024). Extending the media welfare state: The role of libraries in the Nordic countries. In P. Jakobsson, J. Lindell, & F. Stiernstedt (Eds.), *The future of the Nordic media model: A digital media welfare state?* (pp. 299–316). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855893-14>

Introduction

In their influential book on the organisation of the media sector in the Nordic countries, Syvertsen, Enli, Mjøs, and Moe (2014) argued that it makes sense to talk about a Nordic media welfare state, alongside other aspects of the so-called Nordic model, which for the most part has been dedicated to welfare policies and working-life issues (Alestalo et al., 2009; Dølvik et al., 2015). According to Syvertsen and colleagues (2014), such a media welfare state rests on four pillars: universal services, editorial freedom, a cultural policy for the media, and policy solutions that are consensual and durable, based on consultation with both public and private stakeholders.

Throughout their analysis, the authors of *The Nordic Media Welfare State* make use of a common delineation of what constitutes the media: They stress the importance of print media, public service media, and the corporate structure of the Nordic media and communications sectors. Syvertsen and colleagues' book helped situate media actors within a larger, sociopolitical context and connect media and communication literature with a broader set of social science literature. Nonetheless, the emphasis on actors and processes in the media sector comes with the risk of leaving elements outside of the media industries that could be said to constitute essential aspects of a welfare state which caters to media and culture. Some scholars have argued that the media institution makes up only one of five institutions underpinning the public sphere in the Nordic model (Engelstad et al., 2017). Others have highlighted that missing pieces may include aspects of digital infrastructure (Ala-Fossi, 2020; see also Flensburg & Lai, Chapter 8; Sjøvaag & Ferrer-Conill, Chapter 9), and that new patterns of digital media usage, as well as economic-ideological transformations, challenge the notion of a media welfare state (Jakobsson et al., 2021; Lindell & Hovden, 2018).

In this contribution, we wish to point out how the libraries of the Nordic countries play an important part in what may be termed an *extended* welfare state model for media and culture. We argue that the account of the Nordic media welfare state will be stronger if it also includes the library sector, the historical mandates of libraries, and the role libraries play in securing access to media content and contributing to sustaining the culture industries, as well as providing an infrastructure in support of the public sphere. We do not argue that the library sector and the media sector are one and the same; rather, they form separate institutions that intersect and interact. By incorporating libraries into the discussion, we also see that interesting and understudied patterns of conflict and collaboration come to light. In our chapter, we ask the following questions about the intersections between libraries and the media industries:

- RQ1. What are their mandates, their social remits, and forms of regulation?

RQ2. What are the challenges that face them today, specifically with digital media?

RQ3. What are their roles in a media welfare state?

With this chapter, we aim to contribute to an understanding of how libraries co-exist with media industries and media actors. The role of libraries vis-à-vis the media sector at large is interesting for several reasons. Here, we wish to highlight how publicly financed libraries operate alongside commercial media companies (e.g., publishers or producers of books, newspapers, music, and film), forming complex and sometimes fraught relationships. We especially wish to shed light on how digital formats and technologies have put a strain on the relationship between libraries and the media industries.

In the following parts of the chapter, we first put the development of public service media and libraries in a policy context before we discuss how digitalisation has affected the cultural sector and specifically the relationship between libraries and media producers. In our conclusion, we come back to the question of where the media welfare state is headed and why we believe that it is important to take libraries into consideration.

Media, culture, and the Nordic model

To understand how libraries can fit within an extended model of the media welfare state, we first need to place them within the context of policy development in the Nordic countries. Many features of Nordic policies for media and culture are common across the countries and were developed along the same historical lines. According to Duelund's (2008) summary, the trend for Nordic cultural welfare policies was set in motion with the social democratic movement in the 1920s and reached "full blossom" in the 1960s. A common goal was to establish institutions to promote art and culture, ensuring artistic freedom and cultural democracy (Duelund, 2008; Mangset, 2020). Still, the backdrop for the formation of national cultural and media policies is far from one-dimensional: Denmark and Sweden have been independent states for hundreds of years, while Finland, Norway, and Iceland are comparatively newly created nation-states.

Today, across the Nordic countries, the state is active in supporting the media and culture sectors but is reluctant to impose demands on the content produced. As such, there is a liberal aspect built into these policies: They are designed to promote autonomous organisations who can engage in critique of the state. This has been possible because the state's provision of economic support to media organisations, arts organisations, and culture organisations is accompanied by freedom from restrictions on journalistic, artistic, or cultural expressions (Engelstad & Larsen, 2019). The so-called arm's length principle (Mangset, 2013; Moe & Mjøs, 2013) is thus crucial for securing a

balance between socialist and liberal values, a combination that has strongly influenced the Nordic societal model (Berggren & Trädgårdh, 2006; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Sørensen & Stråth, 1997).

As parts of the state-supported cultural infrastructure, public libraries and public service media have partly tangential historical developments in the Nordic countries, but there are also elements that set them apart. One significant factor is that public libraries are slightly older than public service media institutions, dating back to the 1890s and 1920s, respectively. The Nordic states all have comprehensive media policies, with different types of economic support for newspaper production or distribution, in combination with strong support for public service broadcasting (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Syvertsen et al., 2014). Overall, public service broadcasters have a strong position in the media markets of the Nordic countries. A system of broadcasting in the service of the people was originally based on the idea that broadcasting (first radio, later television) was such a powerful medium that it needed to be organised as independent from the market and the state. As a consequence, the broadcasting institutions were set up to serve the people and, through that, democracy (Engelstad & Larsen, 2019). The contribution to democratic goals and ideals remains part of the mandates for public service media across the Nordic countries. As stated in the public service contract for DR, the Danish broadcaster is “an indispensable part of democratic debate” (DR, 2019). (This and all other non-English quotes are translated by the authors). In Finland, Yle presents itself and other European broadcasters as “responsible for strengthening democracy and culture and promoting equality and inclusion” (Yle, n.d.).

In a similar fashion to how the media sector and specifically public service media have evolved, the Nordic states have developed sophisticated systems for supporting the production, publication, distribution, and dissemination of arts and culture (Duelund, 2003, 2008; Mangset et al., 2008). One aspect of this expansive cultural policy is the formation of public libraries that are free to use, regulated by national governments and funded by municipalities.

The Nordic library sector

Across the Nordic countries, the library sector is extensive, performing multiple functions from a mostly non-commercial position. What we term the library sector brings together national networks of different library types, including school and academic libraries that support educational needs and research activities throughout the education system, libraries with national responsibility related to cultural heritage, and public libraries in the municipalities. In addition, there are several libraries that handle document management in companies and public institutions. Although these libraries have much in common through their basic and practical functions, they also

operate on the basis of a variety of objectives and mandates. Here, we concentrate mainly on the public library sector.

Public libraries are among the most widely used cultural offerings in the Nordic countries, with Finns and Danes particularly eager to visit the library. While the Covid-19 pandemic caused a dramatic drop in the use of most cultural offerings, statistics from the years before the pandemic indicate that library visits are stable. In Norway and Denmark, visits have increased since 2010, while in Sweden and Finland, they have decreased to a certain extent.¹

While libraries and public media institutions are seldom discussed together, their political organisation is similar, being subordinate to the ministries of culture. Further, the library systems are similarly organised with a National or Royal Library at the top with the responsibility to collect, store, and disseminate the nation's cultural and media production, and municipal public libraries that offer universal services directly to the population. In all the Nordic countries, public libraries are subject to laws that formulate similar social missions and purposes that associate them, at least implicitly, with the notion of a media welfare state. Central themes in these laws are inclusion, democracy, and "the formation of an educated and informed citizenry" (Rydbeck & Johnston, 2020). In Norway, the law contains the following sections:

The task of public libraries is to promote the spread of information, education, and other cultural activities through active dissemination and by making books and other media available for the free use of all the inhabitants of Norway. Public libraries are to be an independent meeting place and arena for public discussions and debates. (Lovdata, 1985)

The etymology and traditional understanding of what a library is suggests an assortment of books. Public libraries have traditionally been just that, a collection of books, and gradually other types of media, that have been made accessible to citizens. The Norwegian law states that one of the means to achieve its purpose is to make available "books and other media". The Danish law is more specific about the library collection and what it should contain, mentioning films, music, audiobooks, and multimedia resources on the Internet (Kulturministeriet, 2000). Conversely, the Icelandic Library Act states that a "common purpose of libraries [...] is to provide access to a varied collection of library material" (Icelandic Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs, 2017).

Nordic library acts also express ambitions beyond the facilitation of universal access to media content. The Swedish law states:

The libraries in the public library system shall promote the status of literature and an interest in learning, information, education, and research as well as other cultural activities. (Riksdagen, 2013)

Both the Swedish and the Finnish library acts emphasise the *activities* of the libraries and do not mention specific media types or collections.

Despite some differences, the library acts exhibit an apparent trend in the Nordic public library sector towards relating the social mission to learning, democracy, and the public sphere (Koizumi & Larsen, 2023). This has previously been referred to as a shift “from collections to connections”, where one “focuses upon the mission instead of the tool” (Audunson & Aabø, 2013). In recent years, governmental strategy documents have underlined this development. Both the Norwegian (Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education, 2019) and the Swedish (Swedish Government Offices, 2022) library strategies state that libraries contribute through their missions to a strong democracy and an informed citizenship.

This attention to democratic ideas does not imply that libraries are no longer concerned with collections and lending, but it does convey a stronger emphasis on activities that take place inside physical libraries (Kaun & Forsman, 2022; Mathiasson & Jochumsen, 2020). Recent years have seen a reorientation (perhaps even a rebirth) of the library as a *place*, with monumental library buildings in Aarhus (Dokk1, built 2015), Helsinki (Oodi, built 2018), and Oslo (Deichman Bjørvika, built 2020) as prominent manifestations (all have been awarded “Public Library of the Year” by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions). These buildings are expected to conform to certain ideas about the library, some new and some old: The library is expected to be open, participatory, engaged, and contributing to urban development, social inclusion, and public debate (Audunson et al., 2020).

The new role, where the library no longer just promotes the works of others but is also itself an active curator and facilitator of public debate, does not come without challenges (Larsen, 2024). The role of ensuring access to a variety of media content is based on a tradition of professional practice, while taking an active role in the public discourse requires new interpretations of the library’s role, both on a general level and in local communities where libraries often serve as providers of physical rooms for meetings and events. In recent years, there have been several discussions about how libraries should deal with organisations on the political extremes wanting to utilise library facilities, demanding inclusion in the universal mandate (Golten, 2022: 89–90; Larsen, 2024). Established guidelines for editorial and ethical assessments are partially lacking in the sector. Expectations for public libraries to serve, at least in effect, as extensions of welfare state institutions such as schools (e.g., offering help with homework), employment offices (e.g., helping with job applications), and youth centres (offering a place to hang around and meet friends) are also not uncontroversial or without dissenting voices (Fagerlid, 2020).

Media and cultural policy in a digital age

Historically, public service broadcasters were financed directly from the public, through the collection of a fee paid by everyone in possession of a radio, and later a television set. New technologies and media consumption patterns have now rendered this model outdated, and politicians have been struggling to replace the license fee with an economic model reflecting the contemporary media landscape. Like other media organisations, public service broadcasters are adapting to a digital media environment (see Ala-Fossi et al., Chapter 5), and politicians are developing policies and legal frameworks to preserve public service broadcasting organisations in current times (Engelstad & Larsen, 2019). Similar issues have beset the libraries as these historical institutions have worked to stay relevant in the digital age.

For libraries, securing funding has hinged on the perceived legitimacy and relevance of the institution. The so-called turn from collections to connections can be seen as a response to digital technologies that make obsolete the idea that we need library buildings as storage spaces for physical media (Audunson & Aabø, 2013). As a consequence, public libraries have instead emphasised their social role in local communities. Scholars have also argued that collections can make up an important part of public libraries' societal role in local communities (Söderholm & Nolin, 2015).

One example of a reformed political framework that impacts both media institutions and libraries is the revision of the paragraph on freedom of expression in the Norwegian Constitution in 2004, in which the state is explicitly provided with the responsibility to take care of the infrastructure necessary for an enlightened public discourse: "The authorities of the state shall create conditions that facilitate open and enlightened public discourse" (Lovdata, 1814: Article 100). In other words, the state is obliged to provide "positive freedom" (Berlin, 1990) to its citizens, which is secured through active media, culture, and knowledge policies. In addition to securing a well-functioning media sector, operating at arm's length from the government, the state is also expected to support cultural institutions such as public schools, public universities, and public libraries (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 1999). The revision of the paragraph on the freedom of speech in the constitution later inspired the 2014 change in the Norwegian public libraries act, which now specifies that "public libraries should be an independent meeting place and an arena for public discussion and debate" (Lovdata, 1985: Article 1).

Libraries, the media, and cultural industries in a digital age

Because of their position as significant gateways to culture and media (especially books), libraries occupy an interesting position vis-à-vis producers and publishers of media content. Since libraries rarely produce content of their own, they depend in large part on media industries “that produce and distribute the knowledge and information they provide” (Rubin, 2020: 5). Accordingly, as per Rubin (2020: 5), in order to develop library collections and services, librarians and other library professionals need to understand “the characteristics of these industries”. Simultaneously, as libraries are significant customers, competitors, and collaborators, it is indeed important for professionals in the media and cultural industries to understand the library sector.

The need to understand the characteristics of media production applies to library acquisition managers who wish to lend out any type of media to patrons: Films, videogames, other audiovisual content, and music recordings are examples. Still, the special relationship between the library sector and the media and cultural industries is most substantially developed between book publishers and libraries, where it is deemed as effectively “symbiotic” according to some accounts (Holzman & Lippincott, 2019). Over the centuries, close relationships based on transactions, collaborations, and a shared love for books have formed between those who publish and those who lend out printed volumes. Today, as holders of collections of media – books, but also audio and audiovisual media – as well as important enablers of public discussions and events, libraries co-exist with media industries in multiple ways. They purchase media content, promote various forms of media, and compete with the mass media for the attention of the public as well as state resources. However, while the notion of symbiosis suggests a balanced and mutually beneficial relationship, where both parties see the benefit of the other’s existence and practices, there are multiple examples of controversies and disagreements, not least going into the digital age (Colbjørnsen, 2017; Darnton, 2009; Larsen et al., 2022; Marcum & Schonfeld, 2021; see also Halvorsen & Bjerke, Chapter 6).

The state can act as a mediator in these controversies, balancing out the stakes of disagreement through legal frameworks. One example is the principle of public lending rights, “the idea that an author is entitled to be compensated for the multiple uses of his copyrighted books in libraries” (Stave, 1981). The idea of public lending rights dates back to 1919, when the Nordic Authors’ Association passed a resolution calling on governments to compensate authors for library lending. Denmark was in fact the very first country to establish a public lending rights system in 1946, followed by Norway in 1947 and Sweden in 1954 (Parker, 2018).

While legal frameworks, common values, and ideologies, as well as established practices of collaboration, enable a functional relationship between actors in the book sector and towards the state, there is no shortage of disagreements and complicated issues. In the following, we want to highlight how the relationship between, on the one hand, media producers, publishers, rights holders, and media industry stakeholders, and on the other, libraries, has been challenged as a result of the emergence of digital formats and forms of distribution. Our first example deals with digital books and the systems and arrangements that have been set up to enable the lending of e-books and digital audiobooks. Our second example takes the distribution of films through digital library services as an example of the complexity of non-book digital lending practices. At the heart of both cases are negotiations over distribution rights and the balancing act between commercial and public interests.

E-book and audiobook lending

As libraries have sought to distribute e-books and digital audiobooks, they have become reliant on so-called e-lending models, which set specific terms for library practices (Liguzinski, 2023). A key part of the e-lending model is that digital books, unlike printed ones, are made available by means of licensing. This marks a significant departure from traditional transaction models because it restricts what libraries can do with materials and changes how publishers are compensated (Perzanowski & Schultz, 2016).

There are wide variances in the specific terms that apply to e-lending models, but fundamentally they include restrictions on usage or lending that are not inherent to the technology: “artificial frictions” (Perzanowski & Schultz, 2016: 106). A digital copy of an e-book or an audiobook may thus be unavailable because it has been checked out a certain number of times or it requires a renewed license. For every licensing period, the library must pay the publisher, or the representing aggregator, often at prices exceeding those for physical books. Artificial frictions also dictate that the digital copy will typically only be available within the country (or a specified region) and without options for further lending or sharing with a third party.

The Nordic public libraries predominantly use a model that limits how many simultaneous users are allowed (“one copy, one user”) or a pay-per-loan model where the library is charged for every loan, or a combination of these two. Application of a particular model depends on many factors, but it is evident that the question of whether the title is front- or backlist is one of the most important. The “one copy, one user” model gives more control over lending costs for libraries, but limits accessibility for patrons. This model may be favourable for bestsellers that the publishers want to distribute mainly in commercial channels. In contrast, pay-per-loan is applied to older titles that are not in high demand, so paying for every single loan can help the publishers to make a profit.

While e-lending models are a feature of public libraries in all the Nordic countries, the specifics of their introduction and development vary somewhat. The rather conflicted introduction of eReolen in Denmark in 2011 is a case in point (cf. Grøn & Balling, 2016; Worsøe-Schmidt, 2019). The platform was launched by the Danish Agency for Libraries and Media, in cooperation with the biggest public libraries and publishers. The growing popularity of e-book lending and fear of the cannibalisation of sales led to several withdrawals and comebacks of the biggest publishers throughout the years, also because of discontent from the authors' side. The eReolen platform is nowadays governed by a municipal association, The Digital Public Library, and seems to be well established. According to Worsøe-Schmidt (2019), the partnership solution with publishers led to the situation where the Danish libraries took on a new role as drivers for building an e-book market.

The free-of-charge principle that is embedded in the mission statements of Nordic public libraries and national library laws may be challenging for library budgets in the context of digital books. While libraries cannot charge the patrons for loans, they are charged by the copyright holders (often via distributors) for licensing packages or for every loan, depending on the e-lending model. We can illustrate the consequences of such lending conditions by the way the pay-per-loan model caused a stir in Sweden in 2011 (cf. Rambøll, 2015). With no restrictions on the number of simultaneous loans, libraries paid 20 Swedish kroner (approx. 2 euro) for every loan. With the publication of in-demand e-book titles, including the biography of football player Zlatan Ibrahimović, the lending solution turned out to be unsustainable for both libraries and publishers. Through November 2011, the Zlatan biography was downloaded 13,000 times from the libraries, resulting in overall cost for e-book lending at around 1 million Swedish kronor (approx. 100,000 euros) that month. Meanwhile, the comparatively meagre sales through bookstores led to discontent from the Swedish publishers' side, who, fearing cannibalisation of their sales, introduced a quarantine on new titles. As a result, in 2014, a new e-lending model was established, with more internal "frictions" (and less turmoil).

The disputed introduction of e-lending models can be seen as exemplary of conflicts between public and commercial institutions, but they also illustrate the ongoing negotiations over terms of access for digital media. Unlike the "symbiotic" practices of publisher–library collaboration that characterise the dissemination of printed books, there is more turmoil in the digital context, where markets are unstable and immature.

Library film streaming

Despite disagreements, e-lending models represent a continuation of established library usage patterns for books. Film lending, however, is less institutionalised. Nevertheless, libraries have, since the emergence of personal

video formats (VHS and later DVD and Blu-ray), lent out films and television shows to patrons (Bay Sengul et al., 2012). Across the Nordics, public libraries have usually had video collections of different sizes since the 1980s, though the introduction of video formats was not without reservations (see, e.g., Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education, 1981; Dahlkild & Bille Larsen, 2021; Frenander, 2012). The association with popular culture and commercialisation created a different context for audiovisual media than for print media, which were associated with “high culture”, enlightenment, and *bildung*. Today, centralised media acquisition services, such as the Norwegian Biblioteksentralen or Swedish BTJ (Bibliotekstjänst) provide possibilities for purchasing DVD and Blu-ray titles for libraries, alongside books, videogames, and other media.

With the advent of streaming services for film and other audiovisual content, popularised by Netflix in 2007, libraries were confronted with a challenge. The increasingly popular streaming services meant that the physical formats were made redundant and less relevant (as many people got rid of their DVD players). Meanwhile, the new streaming players did not offer institutional access options for libraries and schools. The problem was identified by The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2014: 21) in a background paper:

If “Netflix-like” subscription services become more established, it is anticipated that it will be very difficult to negotiate access for library users.

One response from the library sector (besides cutting down on film and television material) was the establishment of library film-streaming services. While some of these services are owned by public institutions as part of a cultural policy offering, most are run by commercial distributors and provided specifically *for* libraries.²

As libraries are not film-producing entities, the services rely entirely on deals with film distribution companies. Available film titles thus largely reflect what film distributors and producers consider fitting to release for library lending. Arguably, one important consideration is whether a title has commercial potential that is better exploited in paid streaming services or other distribution windows.

A brief look at who owns and runs the various Nordic services reveals some patterns, while the sizes and content profiles of the catalogues vary considerably. One significant player is the commercial distribution company Norgesfilm AS, which runs both Norwegian Filmoteket (est. 2020) and Swedish Viddla (est. 2017, in cooperation with library service provider BTJ AB). In both countries, the selection is wide, with 1,400–1,800 titles, mostly feature films and a selection of television series. Cineastera (est. 2017) represents a similar venture, developed by Swedish FörlagEtt AB, with localised versions in Finland, Sweden, and Norway.³ Film selections vary between countries and the libraries that have signed up for the service, but the content profile

is broad and the catalogue extensive, with some 3,200 titles available in Sweden. Two Norwegian and Danish services are somewhat dissimilar to the aforementioned. Filmbib (est. 2015) is operated by the national film institute in Norway, while Danish Filmstriben (est. 2009) is developed by Norgesfilm and DBC Digital in close cooperation with the film institute. The content profiles of both differ from the commercial services, relying on expert curation and with a stronger emphasis on short- and documentary films.

Similar to the situation for e-books and audiobooks, the charges per usage of film streaming can infer significant costs for the library. Typically, the library will have budgeted a certain amount per month, and if that sum is exceeded, the films are unavailable until the next month. In Malmö, the library had to shut off access to Cineastera in 2020, as increased streaming incurred unsustainable costs for the city library (Mousaviyan, 2021).

The emergence of library film streaming represents new ideas about how to introduce digital media in the library. Drawing on the dominant technological format of streaming, library patrons are offered a service in the shape that most prefer. Still, the film-streaming offers from libraries pale in comparison to similar commercial services, and the collaborations with outside partners can be considered a compromise, as it leaves libraries with less control of the collection.

In conclusion: The extended media welfare state?

The concept of an extended media welfare state – that is, one which extends to libraries – can help us as media and social science researchers to see that the characteristics of the media welfare state are applicable beyond the media sector as it is commonly understood. As such, it can be a useful analytical concept. In this chapter, we have highlighted some of the characteristics and policy frameworks that unite libraries and media industry actors, in particular public service media. With common mandates across the Nordic countries to contribute to sound democratic societies, libraries and media actors (public or state-supported) are faced with many of the same expectations. We have shown that it is worthwhile to discuss the four pillars of the media welfare state – universal services, editorial freedom, cultural policy, and consensual policy solutions – in relation to the libraries in Nordic societies. This is not to say that the public library is a media institution, but to suggest that a notion of “media welfare” – or a “media welfare society” as suggested by Jakobsson, Lindell, and Stiernstedt in the Introduction to this edited volume – is incomplete without libraries added to the mix.

We argue that the clear commonalities in social missions and policy expectations indicate that it not only makes sense to analyse the institutions of libraries and media together, but also that it is relevant – pertinent, even – to extend the media welfare state concept. This way, we can more easily identify

tangents and better understand the dynamics and challenges of each sector. The conflicts and breakdowns that have accompanied the libraries' development in the digital age are not unique to this sector. It is worth exploring further the similarities between the library–publisher bond and the entangled relationship between commercial media companies and public service institutions in the audiovisual sector (cf. Kammer, 2016).

Our purpose with this chapter is not just to launch a concept or argue that we need to widen our perspective. We also want to shed light on the specifics of the relationship between libraries and various media sector actors. The diversity of library institutions (school, university, public, etc.) means that there are multiple aspects to this relationship and many ways to start analysing them. Significant differences in national policies for literature (and culture more broadly) are likely to influence how libraries relate to media and the role of the state as a kind of mediator (Bom & Schaffalitzky de Muckadell, 2021; Duelund, 2008; Lindsköld et al., 2020; Tallerås et al., 2023). Still, the public library institutions are similar across Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. As customers, collaborators, and competitors, public libraries stand in a close relationship with media producers, specifically book publishers but also extending to providers of newspapers, magazines, music, film, television, and videogames. The patterns of cooperation and conflict within a shared policy framework that we have started to explore in this chapter are not commonly discussed in the academic literature nor in textbooks for the education of librarians or media professionals. Hopefully, this contribution can be a starting point for more works at the intersection of libraries and media.

Not least, we have devoted parts of the chapter to how the institutions of media and libraries are changing, and to some extent converging. Unsurprisingly, one central and common driver for change is digitalisation. In the final parts of this chapter, we have exemplified with two cases of digital media distribution: lending models for e-books and audiobooks and library film-streaming services. Both showcase the complexity of setting up sustainable lending models for digital media. Examples such as Danish eReolen (e-books and audiobooks) and Swedish Cineasterna (film) indicate how digital lending models are the result of negotiations between rights holders and libraries over content and licensing terms. Cultural policy measures and ambitions create only a partial framework for this development, with disputes and breakdowns featuring heavily in the history of digital book lending models. Film-streaming services that are operated by public or state-owned organisations, such as Norwegian Filmoteket, exemplify the expansion of the state's cultural obligations into a digital terrain. Meanwhile, commercial vendors of digital media enter the fray with tailored services to library institutions, as libraries themselves risk losing control over collections in the longer run.

Libraries, in the way we discuss them in this chapter, are rooted in national and local contexts. As such, they find themselves in a precarious position in

a time of globalisation and transnational media developments. One might ask why it would make sense to uphold national systems of libraries in a time of platformed information providers – and further, if institutions from small Nordic countries can ever compete with global actors. These questions seem hard to avoid, but arguably miss the point. The services performed by institutions like public libraries and public service media may resemble those of the global media platforms, but they are embedded in a different value system. As the media landscape changes, it may be tempting to separate the values from the institutions. However, decoupling the institutions from the social goals and values of the media welfare state (see Jakobsson et al. in the Afterword) comes with the risk of throwing the baby out with the bathwater: Who can be trusted to safeguard universal access and editorial freedom in the new media landscape? For all their shortcomings as institutions born out of bygone social contexts, both public service media and public libraries perform roles that the new players are more reluctant to take on (to say the least). Repurposing online platforms under public control, as suggested by Huws (2020), is a tempting idea, but utopian and, ultimately, a risky endeavour in itself.

By making this argument on the relationship between libraries and the media, we have also attempted in this chapter to connect media policy research and cultural policy research, which too seldom intersect. The two fields have their own conferences and journals, and researchers typically work in different types of departments. The result is that media policy researchers will often disregard sectors that, for historical reasons, were deemed outside the scope of media and communications research, like book publishing and libraries. Likewise, cultural policy research tends to ignore the important cultural role that institutions like public service broadcasters and newspapers perform. This unfortunate situation is compounded by the fact that much of the research on libraries takes place in yet another field, that of library and information science. The widely shared expectations and fears resulting from digitalisation have made researchers see the benefit of scholarship that connects “media” and “culture” (Hylland, 2020; Roberge & Chantepie, 2017; Valtysson, 2020). We hope to have made another small contribution with this chapter towards connecting different strands of policy research, in seeking to extend the concept of a media welfare state.

References

- Ala-Fossi, M. (2020). Finland: Media welfare state in the digital era? *Journal of Digital Media & Policy*, 11(2), 133–150. https://doi.org/10.1386/jdmp_00020_1
- Alestalo, M., Hort, S., & Stein, K. (2009). The Nordic model: Conditions, origins, outcomes, lessons. *Hertie School of Governance Working Papers*, 41, 1–58.
- Audunson, R., & Aabø, S. (2013). From collections to connections: Building a revised platform for library and information science. *Information Research*, 18(3).
- Audunson, R., Andresen, H., Fagerlid, C., Henningsen, E., Hobohm, H.-C., Jochumsen, H., & Larsen, H. (2020). Introduction – Physical places and virtual spaces: Libraries, archives and museums in a digital age. In R. Audunson, H. Andresen, C. Fagerlid, E. Henningsen, H.-C. Hobohm, H. Jochumsen, H. Larsen, & T. Vold (Eds.), *Libraries, archives and museums as democratic spaces in a digital age* (pp. 1–22). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110636628-001>
- Bay Sengul, E., Emery, S. C., Torok Fleming, C., Hartman, L., Hill, C. E., Stone, C. B., & Shaw, D. (2012). Movies in public libraries: A checklist comparison with internet movie database recommendations. *Public Library Quarterly*, 31(4), 352–362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2012.732496>
- Berggren, H., & Trädgårdh, L. (2006). *Är svensken människa?* Norstedts. [Published in English as *The Swedish theory of love: Individualism and social trust in modern Sweden*]
- Berlin, I. (1990). *Four essays on liberty*. Oxford University Press.
- Bom, A. K., & Schaffalitzky de Muckadell, C. (2021). National icons in education: Hans Christian Andersen and the cultural policy of the canon of Danish literature. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 27(4), 411–421. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2020.1801660>
- Colbjørnsen, T. (2017). Åpenhet i det digitale bibliotek: Om politiske føringer og gnisninger mellom kommersiell bokbransje og bibliotek i en digital tid [Openness in the digital library: About political guidelines and friction between the commercial book industry and libraries in a digital age]. In A. Anderson, C. Fagerlid, H. Larsen, & S. I. Straume (Eds.), *Det åpne bibliotek: Forskningsbibliotek i endring* [The open library: Research libraries in change] (pp. 23–49). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Cooper, D. M., Ruediger, D., & Skinner, M. (2022). *Streaming media licensing and purchasing practices at academic libraries*. Ithaca S+R. <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.316793>
- Dahlkild, N., & Bille Larsen, S. (Eds.). (2021). *Dansk bibliotekshistorie* [Danish library history]. Aarhus Universitetsforlag.
- Darnton, R. (2009). *The case for books: Past, present, and future*. PublicAffairs.
- DR. (2019). *DR's Public Service-kontrakt for 2019–2023* [DR's public service contract for 2019–2023]. <https://www.dr.dk/om-dr/detnyedr/public-service-kontrakten>
- Duelund, P. (Ed.). (2003). *The Nordic cultural model*. Nordic Cultural Institute.
- Duelund, P. (2008). Nordic cultural policies: A critical view. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 14(1), 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630701856468>
- Dølvik, J. E., Fløtten, T., Hippe, J. M., & Jordfald, B. (2015). *The Nordic model towards 2030: A new chapter?* FAFO.
- Engelstad, F., Larsen, H., & Rogstad, J. (2017). The public sphere in the Nordic model. In F. Engelstad, H. Larsen, J. Rogstad, & K. Steen-Johnsen (Eds.), *Institutional change in the public sphere: Views on the Nordic model* (pp. 46–70). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110546330-004>
- Engelstad, F., & Larsen, H. (2019). Nordic civil spheres and pro-civil states. In J. Alexander, A. Lund, & A. Voyer (Eds.), *The Nordic civil sphere* (pp. 39–63). Polity.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Princeton University Press.
- Fagerlid, C. (2020). Democratic coexistence, tiny publics and participatory emancipation at the public library. In R. Audunson, H. Andresen, C. Fagerlid, E. Henningsen, H.-C. Hobohm, H. Jochumsen, H. Larsen, & T. Vold (Eds.), *Libraries, archives and museums as democratic spaces in a digital age* (pp. 285–304). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110636628-014>

- Frenander, A. (2012). Statens förhållande till folkbiblioteken, 1912–2012 [The State and its relation to the public libraries]. In A. Frenander, & J. Lindberg (Eds.), *Skrifter Från Valfrid. Styra eller stödja? Svensk folkbibliotekspolitik under hundra år* [Writings From Valfrid. Control or support? Swedish public library policy for one hundred years] (pp. 15–88). Högskolan i Borås. <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:hb:diva-3641>
- Golten, E. (2022). *Folkebiblioteket som uavhengig møtestad og arena for offentlig samtale og debatt i ei digital tid* [The public library as an independent meeting place and arena for public conversation and debate in a digital age] [Doctoral thesis, OsloMet, Norway].
- Grøn, R., & Balling, G. (2016). Kampen om eReolen: Biblioteker, bogmarked og framing af det litterære kredsløb [The battle for E-Reolen: Libraries, book market and framing of the literary circuits]. *Nordisk Tidsskrift for Informationsvidenskab og Kulturformidling*, 5(3), 53–68.
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511790867>
- Holzman, A., & Lippincott, S. K. (2019). Libraries. In A. Phillips, & M. Bhaskar (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of publishing* (pp. 379–397). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198794202.013.19>
- Huws, U. (2020). *Reinventing the welfare state: Digital platforms and public policies*. Pluto Press. <https://www.plutobooks.com/9780745341842/reinventing-the-welfare-state>
- Hylland, O. M. (2020). Digital kulturpolitikk [Digital cultural policy]. *Nordisk Kulturpolitisk Tidsskrift*, 23(1), 29–47. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2000-8325/2020-01-03>
- Icelandic Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs. (2017). *Library act no 150/2012 (official translation)*.
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. (2014). *IFLA 2014 e-lending background paper*. <http://www.ifla.org/publications/node/8852>
- Jakobsson, P., Lindell, J., & Stiernstedt, F. (2021). A neoliberal media welfare state? The Swedish media system in transformation. *Javnost – The Public*, 28(4), 375–390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2021.1969506>
- Kammer, A. (2016). A welfare perspective on Nordic media subsidies. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 13(3), 140–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2016.1238272>
- Kaun, A., & Forsman, M. (2022). Digital care work at public libraries: Making digital first possible. *New Media & Society*, OnlineFirst. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221104234>
- Koizumi, M., & Larsen, H. (2023). Democratic librarianship in the Nordic model. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 55(1), 208–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006211069673>
- Larsen, H. (2024). Managing Norwegian public libraries as civil public spheres: Recent controversies. *Journal of Documentation*, 80(1), 116–130. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-02-2023-0036>
- Larsen, H., Colbjørnsen, T., & Tallerås, K. (2022). En norsk bokbransje i endring og interesseorganisasjonenes politiske påvirkningsarbeid [A Norwegian book market in change and the political influence of interest organizations]. *Nordisk Kulturpolitisk Tidsskrift*, 25(1), 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.18261/nkt.25.1.4>
- Liguzinski, M. (2023). Forging a friction: The development of e-lending models and policy across Scandinavian public libraries. *Nordic Journal of Library and Information Studies*, 4(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.7146/njlis.v4i2.134039>
- Lindell, J., & Hovden, J. F. (2018). Distinctions in the media welfare state: Audience fragmentation in post-egalitarian Sweden. *Media, Culture & Society*, 40(5), 639–655. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717746230>
- Lindsköld, L., Hedemark, Å., & Lundh, A. (2020). Constructing the desirable reader in Swedish contemporary literature policy. *Culture Unbound*, 12(2), 256–274. <http://doi.org/10.3384/cu.2000.1525.20200527c>
- Lovdata. (1814, May 17). *The constitution of the Kingdom of Norway* (LOV-1814-05-17).
- Lovdata. (1985). *Lov om folkebibliotek* [The public library act] (LOV-1985-12-20-108). <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1985-12-20-108>
- Mangset, P. (2013). *Armlengdes avstand eller statens forlengede arm?* [Arm's length distance or the extended arm of the state?] Telemarksforskning.

- Mangset, P. (2020). The end of cultural policy? *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 26(3), 398–411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2018.1500560>
- Mangset, P., Kangas, A., Skot-Hansen, D., & Vestheim, G. (2008). Editors' introduction: Nordic cultural policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 14(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630701856435>
- Marcum, D. B., & Schonfeld, R. C. (2021). *Along came Google: A history of library digitization*. Princeton University Press.
- Mathiasson, M. H., & Jochumsen, H. (2020). Between collections and connections: Analyzing Public library programs in terms of format, content, and role and function. *The Library Quarterly*, 90(3), 364–379. <https://doi.org/10.1086/708963>
- Moe, H., & Mjøs, O. J. (2013). The arm's length principle in Nordic public broadcasting regulation. In U. Carlsson (Ed.), *Public service media from a Nordic horizon: Politics, markets, programming and users* (pp. 75–92). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:norden:org:diva-10089>
- Mousaviyan, H. (2021, July 16). Biblioteket bryter med Cineasterna: “Äter upp för stor del av budgeten” [Library parts with Cineasterna: “Eats up too much of budget”]. *Sydsvenskan*. <https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2021-07-16/biblioteket-bryter-med-cineasterna-ater-upp-for-stor-del-av-budgeten>
- Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education. (1981). NOU 1981: 26. *Videogram*. https://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-nb_digibok_2013080806036
- Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education. (2019). *Rom for demokrati og dannelse: Nasjonal bibliotekstrategi 2020–2023* [Space for democracy and education: National library strategy 2020–2023]. <http://tinyurl.com/ye9rvzbv>
- Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security. (1999). «Ytringsfrihed bør finde Sted» – Forslag til ny Grunnlov § 100 [“Freedom of expression should take place” – Proposal for a new basic law § 100] (NOU 1999:27). <http://tinyurl.com/32ewb9jf>
- Parker, J. (2018, June). The public lending right and what it does. *WIPO Magazine*, (3). https://www.wipo.int/wipo_magazine/en/2018/03/article_0007.html
- Perzanowski, A., & Schultz, J. (2016). *The end of ownership: Personal property in the digital economy*. MIT Press.
- Rambøll. (2015). *Utredning om e-bøker og utlån i bibliotek* [Report on ebooks and library lending]. Rambøll consulting/Kulturdepartementet. <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/0d8914e29293412d976bde28732/rapport-om-utlan-av-e-boker-i-folkebibliotek.pdf>
- Kulturministeriet. (2000, May 17). *Lov om biblioteksvirksomhed* [Act on library services]. <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2000/340>
- Riksdagen. (2013, October 31). *Bibliotekslag* (2013:801) [Library act]. https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/bibliotekslag-2013801_sfs-2013-801
- Roberge, J., & Chantepie, P. (2017). The promised land of comparative digital cultural policy studies. *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 47(5), 295–299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632921.2017.1398584>
- Rubin, R. E. (2020). *Foundations of library and information science* (5th ed.). ALA Neal-Schuman.
- Rydbeck, K., & Johnston, J. (2020). LAM institutions: A cross-country comparison of legislation and statistics on services and use. In R. Audunson, H. Andresen, C. Fagerlid, E. Henningsen, H.-C. Hobohm, H. Jochumsen, H. Larsen, & T. Vold (Eds.), *Libraries, archives and museums as democratic spaces in a digital age* (pp. 25–52). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110636628-002>
- Stave, T. (1981). Public lending right: A history of the idea. *Library Trends*, 29(4), 569–582.
- Swedish Government Offices. (2022). *Strategi för ett starkt biblioteksväsende 2022–2025* [Strategy for a strong library sector 2022–2025]. <https://www.kb.se/download/18.2dd50321183eebadf40832/1666677483654/strategi-for-ett-starkt-biblioteksvasende-20222025.pdf>
- Syvtersen, T., Enli, G., Mjøs, O. J., & Moe, H. (2014). *The media welfare state: Nordic media in the digital era*. University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/nmw.12367206.0001.001>

- Söderholm, J., & Nolin, J. (2015). Collections redux: The public library as a place of community borrowing. *The Library Quarterly*, 85(3), 244–260. <https://doi.org/10.1086/681608>
- Sørensen, Ø., & Stråth, B. (1997). *The cultural construction of Norden*. Universitetsforlaget.
- Tallerås, K., Colbjørnsen, T., & Steiner, A. (2022). Talking about audio: Analysing book industry trade talk on audiobooks and streaming in Sweden and Norway. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 39, 17–33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-023-09941-5>
- Valtysson, B. (2020). *Digital cultural politics: From policy to practice*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35234-9>
- Worsøe-Schmidt, L. (2019). The e-book war in Denmark. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 51(1), 95–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000616685641>
- Yle. (n.d.). *What is Yle's public service?* Retrieved November 29, 2023, from <https://yle.fi/aihe/s/about-yle/public-service>

Endnotes

- ¹ We collected these data from the national library statistics, respectively.
- ² Outside of the Nordics, companies such as Kanopy, Hoopla, and Alexander Street provide media streaming services for libraries on a large scale (Cooper et al., 2022).
- ³ Named Cineasterna in Sweden and Finland, Cineast in Norway.