

Summery from meeting in Nordic Library Network October 25 at Mångkulturellt centrum, Stockholm

There was 20 participants from the Nordic countries at the meeting, and they started the day with presentations in plenum and thereafter in groups.

Iwona Preis from INTERCULT attended the meeting and told briefly about the work to provide support to Nordic cultural institutions including libraries. All who want and need assistance may contact Iwona:

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Sunniva Drake, Carola Snell and Abdulkareem Qasim Hussein from Esbo Library in Finland gave a presentation of their work.

The service started in 2016. Experience quickly showed that asylum seekers could not afford to come to the library so the library gave them bus tickets. Recruitment of volunteers take place among asylum seekers so they can help each other. Facebook is good for recruitment.

The library help with many different things, including job applications, booking time at the doctor, application for housing etc. Sometimes the library cannot help but then they can tell where to get help. 8-10 people are involved in the service. The group examines how to solve different issues, and they constantly ensure knowledge sharing in the group. Other offices in the municipality also send asylum seekers to the library, which has become the municipality's knowledge center. In the 3 first weeks of October the library have helped 200 persons. The service is open 20 hours a week.

One of the biggest problems for immigrants and asylum seekers is to get work. Every month they have a "headhunting" day. 100 people came to find work the first time. Even though they don't get the job, they come to job interviews and get that experience.

Visits from the Afghan embassy in Sweden are the most important things the library has made. It is necessary for the Afghans to get papers.

The library has allocated funds in the budget to unexpected events, for example makerspace and help to asylum seekers.

Focus at the library has changed since 2016

- Occupation
- Education
- Entrepreneurship

Workshop part 1

Red Cross began to tell about their work in Fittja. They run a homework café at the library. They are 2 volunteers and approx. 6 students. The library offers premises and provides information about opening hours, holiday closed, etc. It is not always possible to help the students if the volunteers do not have the required skills.

Red Cross helps the recruitment of volunteers to local initiatives, and it is quite easy to recruit. Volunteers want to contribute to society and they live in the area or are students in the area. The presentation gave a very good discussion in plenary.

Participants discussed different questions in the same groups as during the presentation. Gathering in plenary:

What can a staff member do when a volunteer doesn't act as you expected in the library. One can try to talk to the volunteer, and if that fails, the volunteer must stop. Libraries are so grateful to volunteers that we do not make enough demands. It is important to tell about the library's expectations. Volunteers want more feedback than the libraries immediately believe. It is important to ask the volunteers, communicate with them, and share information internally at the library as well. A library in Denmark arranges a Friday bar once a month for both employees and volunteers.

After lunch gave Mikael Morberg and Tal Lewinski a guided tour at the library and in the exhibition.

Workshop part 2

We continued to talk about answers to the questions in plenary. An option could be a fair play guideline between volunteers and employees who can provide a more constructive dialogue. A document with a volunteer task - it will also give a better opportunity to reject volunteers who do not comply with the agreement. Many volunteers only use the library as a place - not the skills and opportunities available at a library.

Tips for language cafes:

- It is a good idea to provide some topics for discussion.
- If people without a fair amount of reading skills participate in language cafes, then you can use images instead of text for the chosen topics.
- It is also important to find out what volunteers expect of the library.
- Shared reading can be used for discussion, but it is important that everyone is on the same level and can understand the text. The text should not take more than 20 minutes to read.
- The library's website can be used to recruit volunteers
- It is a problem that you do not know who comes from the volunteers from time to time. Make an excel sheet where the volunteers can write when they can't come.
- An experienced teacher can teach the volunteers how to work best in a language cafe.
- Free tickets for the volunteers is a good way to recognize volunteers.
- Evaluate the service with the volunteers - what has worked – what has not? Volunteers will also evaluate the library.

The next meeting will be held in Copenhagen in May 2019.

Suggested topics: experiences from Norway, digital materials, children

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