

# Websites and Internationalization: A Survey of Norwegian Academic, Research and Special Libraries

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Norway currently has 362 academic, research and special libraries, most of which have developed websites to provide a variety of online services to users, including a growing number of part-time and distance education users. While most websites and services are provided in Norwegian only, forces of globalization are pushing institutions to provide

an increasing range of services also in English. Based on an analysis of all 362 library websites, including a typical case sampling of three case studies, the article argues that an increasing amount of information will be made available in English on library websites, but that the process will stop short of full bilingual provision.

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## Introduction

Digitization and electronic media are quickly increasing their impact on Norway's 362 academic, research and special libraries (1), and consequently on Norwegian R&D. In 2003 these libraries held 11.2 million electronic documents, which was an increase of 30% compared with 2002. In 2003, 17 million searches in the libraries' own catalogue or other databases were registered (Statistics Norway 2005). The journal crisis and spiralling costs of electronic journals have led to initiatives like SPARC, the Open Access and Open Archives Initiative. The electronic self-archiving system recently introduced by many Norwegian tertiary education institutions (e.g. the Bergen Open Research Archive at the University of Bergen or DUO at Oslo University), combined with enhanced inter-OA search possibilities like OAIster, is set to increase the reliance on non-proprietary electronic

media in the tertiary education sector (Vaagan 2005).

Most of the 362 libraries have developed websites. Our definition of website is deliberately broad. The institutions are at different stages in the process of internationalization, and their websites show considerable variety in content, design and sophistication, ranging from simple hypertext factsheets in English to more complex Web architectures with multiple hierarchies. Follow-up studies of these libraries and their websites and will no doubt use more specific categories and look in greater depth at the various groups.

Bibsys, which is a shared library system currently comprising 110 member libraries, including all Norwegian university libraries, the National Library and a number of college and research libraries, has recently introduced a new reference service (Bibsys Ask) available in Standard Norwegian, New Norwegian, Sami and English (2). This

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Table 1. Norwegian academic, research and special libraries: Language of websites

Academic, research and special libraries	Units	With	Without	Websites		
				English	Sami	Other
National library and university libraries	67	61	6	48	0	0
University college libraries (public and private)	116	115	1	60	1	6
Scientific libraries (public and private)	13	13	0	8	0	0
Libraries in health institutions (public and private)	30	20	10	2	0	1
Ministerial and parliamentary libraries	11	2	9	2	2	0
Museum libraries (public and private)	21	14	7	6	0	0
Archives with libraries (public and private)	7	7	0	2	1	0
Other public special libraries	61	44	17	20	1	0
Other private special libraries	27	18	9	6	0	0
Total	353	294	59	154	5	7

trend reflects the processes of globalization and internationalization of R&D. Despite not being a member of the EU, Norway is playing a key role in the Bologna process, e.g. in the Bologna Follow-Up Group, and hosted a ministerial convention in May 2005 in Bergen which gathered all 40 members of the Bologna process.

A key issue in the recent "Quality Reform" in tertiary education, introduced by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2003, has been a new degree structure (BA and MA), closer dialogue with students, improved financing schemes, new exam and evaluation methods, increased internationalization and also increased use of ICT in tertiary education (Norwegian Reform of Higher Education 2005).

Another important element has been the creation of The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, NOKUT. This independent government body was set up in 2003. Through evaluation, accreditation and recognition of quality systems, institutions and course provisions, the purpose of NOKUT is to supervise and help to develop the quality of higher education in Norway. In addition, NOKUT assesses individual applications for general recognition of foreign qualifications.

The Norwegian Parliament passed a new law on Higher Education in Norway effective from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2005 (Ministry of Education and Research 2005). The new law is positive for libraries and is expected to accord the library or learning resource centre a key role as the provider and repository of information and knowledge.

Against this background, we are generally concerned with the extent to which Norwegian academic, research and special libraries are adapting to these developments. More specifically, we aim

to investigate how their websites reflect the processes of globalization and internationalization.

### *Research questions and methodology*

In the present paper, we provide a summary of web-sites of 362 Norwegian academic, research and special libraries, in order to clarify the degree of internationalization and involvement in the process of globalization, including distance learning and online services to non-Norwegian speaking users in and outside Norway. Specifically, we are interested in the following research questions:

- Which type of academic, research and special libraries provide websites in languages other than Norwegian? Are there systematic variations between library type and the provision of international websites and content?
- To what extent do the library websites provide information in English about their range of services (as distinct from services provided in English)?
- If user education is taken as an indicator of internationalization, to what extent do the websites provide information in English about their user education (as distinct from instruction/courses in English)? What kind of user education do they inform about?

### *Overview of Norwegian academic, research and special library websites*

In 2003, Norway had a total of 362 registered academic and research libraries, including special libraries (3). A complete alphabetical list of these libraries is maintained by the Norwegian Archive Library and Museum Authority on its website (Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority 2005). The number includes branches, faculties and other subunits of the same mother institution.

Table 2. Type of Norwegian library and web information in English regarding services

Academic, research and special libraries	No. of libraries	Collections	Online database access 1)	ILL/ DDS	Reference services	User education 2)	
						Bibliographic instruction	Information literacy courses
National library and university libraries	67	41	49	31	18	12	1
University college libraries (public and private)	116	49	55	24	41	19	12
Scientific libraries (public and private)	13	8	8	6	5	5	2
Libraries in health institutions (public and private)	30	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ministerial and parliamentary libraries	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Museum libraries (public and private)	21	4	1	0	0	0	0
Archives with libraries (public and private)	7	1	0	1	0	0	0
Other public special libraries	61	9	6	6	2	1	1
Other private special libraries	27	5	4	2	1	1	0
Total	353	117	123	70	67	38	16

1) 'Online database access' includes both libraries which give a fully-fledged English description of their databases and those which simply link to the English version of Bibsys.

2) 'User education' consists of two subcategories: bibliographic instruction and information literacy courses. The former refers to information in English about library courses which focus on traditional bibliographical instruction, that is on a presentation of library resources and how to use them for information search and retrieval (e.g. what Bibsys presently is also how to use the different fields of the database). The latter signifies information in English about library courses which focus on one or several components of information literacy (see Section "User education on the websites" for a definition) other than decontextualised teaching of information search and retrieval. In other words, these are courses whose goal is to help students to formulate their information needs, to prepare their information search based on these needs, to evaluate critically the information found, and to use this information in a creative and ethical way in their academic production.

These, in turn, may have only one common website, which means that the number of total websites is in fact lower than 362.

An examination of the 362 libraries revealed that nine units had to be eliminated from the study, as they had ceased to exist. As Table 1 shows, of the remaining 353 units, a total of 294 had websites, whereas 59 did not. Among the 294 websites, half (154) provided information in English (ranging from websites only in English to websites with only some basic facts in English). Very few provided information in Sami or another language (e.g. German, French, Spanish).

The vast majority of national libraries, university libraries, university college libraries and scientific libraries have websites. Libraries at health institutions do not follow this pattern. Only one

third of these have websites and only two of these provide information in English.

The majority of national libraries and university libraries provide information in English on their websites. Around half of the university college libraries provide information in English. The following pattern emerges from the data: larger university college libraries (with a number of branch libraries) tend to provide information in English, whereas smaller university college libraries might not have any English information at all. Likewise, around half of the scientific libraries provide information in English.

Surprisingly, few ministerial and parliamentary libraries have websites. A majority of museum libraries have websites, but relatively few provide information in English. Archives with libraries all

have websites, though only a few provide information in English. A clear majority of other public special libraries have websites, but of these only half provide information in English. Many private special libraries have websites, but only one third provide information in English.

### *Range of website services in English*

Table 2 describes the main kinds of information in English that the library websites provide about their services.

A first look at the data shows that the English websites provide different amounts of information when compared to their Norwegian counterparts. Whereas some libraries virtually provide the same information on their English and Norwegian websites, others provide considerably less information on the English websites. Amongst the latter, some have written the links in English, but when one clicks on them, one comes to a Norwegian site. In such cases, the user may be warned by phrases such as "only Norwegian", "in Norwegian" and "N", written next to the link.

Of the 353 libraries examined, information in English is provided by 33% (117) on collections, by 35% (123) on online database access, by 19.8% (70) on interlibrary loan/document delivery service, by 19% (67) on reference services, by 10.8% (38) on bibliographic instruction and 4.5% (16) on information literacy courses. The national libraries and university libraries followed by university colleges are clearly ahead in providing the selected range of services in English.

### *User education on the websites: Bibliographic instruction and information literacy*

This section is concerned with user education at academic, scientific and special libraries. More specifically, it considers (a) the extent to which international users have access to information on user education and (b) the approach to user education reflected on the libraries' English websites.

As Sundin (2005) points out, libraries have gradually moved away from a resource-centred to a more user-centred approach to user education. Institutions worldwide are in the process of developing user education programmes with the ultimate goal of improving their users' information literacy (hereafter IL). IL can be defined as

"[...] knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner" (CILIP Information Literacy Group 2005).

The United States, Australia and the United Kingdom have worked on their own definition of information literacy and have developed a set of standards for information literacy (e.g. American Library Association 2000). IL is regarded as an essential literacy for lifelong independent learning in our current knowledge-based society both by UNESCO (UNESCO Information Literacy Program *Information for All* 2005–2006) and other key stakeholders (Prague Declaration on Information Literacy 2005). Moreover, IL is seen as a powerful tool to fight the digital divide. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has also acknowledged the key role libraries can play in developing their users' IL (4).

The question to be addressed here is whether these international impulses have had any effect on Norwegian library websites. A look at the totality of Norwegian academic, scientific and special libraries in Table 2 above shows that very few of them provide information in English about their user education. This minority mainly consists of academic and scientific libraries.

That user education is more present in academic library websites may be related to the fact that academic libraries look upon themselves as an integrating part of the higher education (hereafter HE) learning arena (Pemmer Sætre 2002; Arnesen et al. 2004). The Norwegian Reform of Higher Education, referred to earlier, encourages problem-based learning and a task-based approach to teaching. Consequently, students are expected to write assignments and projects earlier and more often than they used to do. Students, as independent learners, need to be able to navigate in the information sea, which includes an ever-increasing number of electronic resources. For this reason, academic libraries have acknowledged that their goal is not only to make electronic resources available for students, but also to assist them in the learning process so that they can intellectually access the information they need and use it critically, creatively and ethically. The latter goal is explicitly mentioned in a number of academic libraries' strategic plans.

The information available on the English websites consists of the course program arranged by

the library and/or online tutorials and learning objects. It shows a resource-centred approach to user education: 38 libraries provide information related to bibliographical instruction, whereas only 16 provide information related to IL aspects other than the search and location of information (e.g. critical evaluation of sources, referencing).

It is important to note that the library's approach to user education cannot be defined on the basis of the contents of its English website. In many cases, the Norwegian website and its English counterpart do not provide the same information. The English version is often a short restatement of the Norwegian one and the hypertext may often link to Norwegian pages. For example, the Norwegian websites of Trondheim University Library, Bergen University Library and the University College Libraries in Stord/Haugesund and Telemark have online information literacy tutorials. These tutorials are available only in Norwegian. These institutions are currently working on a user education programme for information literacy and Bergen and Trondheim have plans to translate the tutorials into English (personal communication). However, this work is not reflected on their English websites as yet.

The mismatch between the Norwegian and English versions raises a Web quality issue. The quality of the Web portals is diminished by the fact that home and international students are not given access to the same user education information and materials. The Norwegian Reform of HE, which came into force in 2003, has been regarded as a key factor in the internationalization of Norwegian HE. The reform adopts the European HE degree system (i.e. BA, MA). As a consequence, Norwegian HE institutions are expected to have an increasing number of international students. These students, who do not necessarily have any command of Norwegian when they arrive in the country, are often entirely dependent on the use of English as an academic *lingua franca*. English is widely used in the Norwegian academic context (Simonsen 2004).

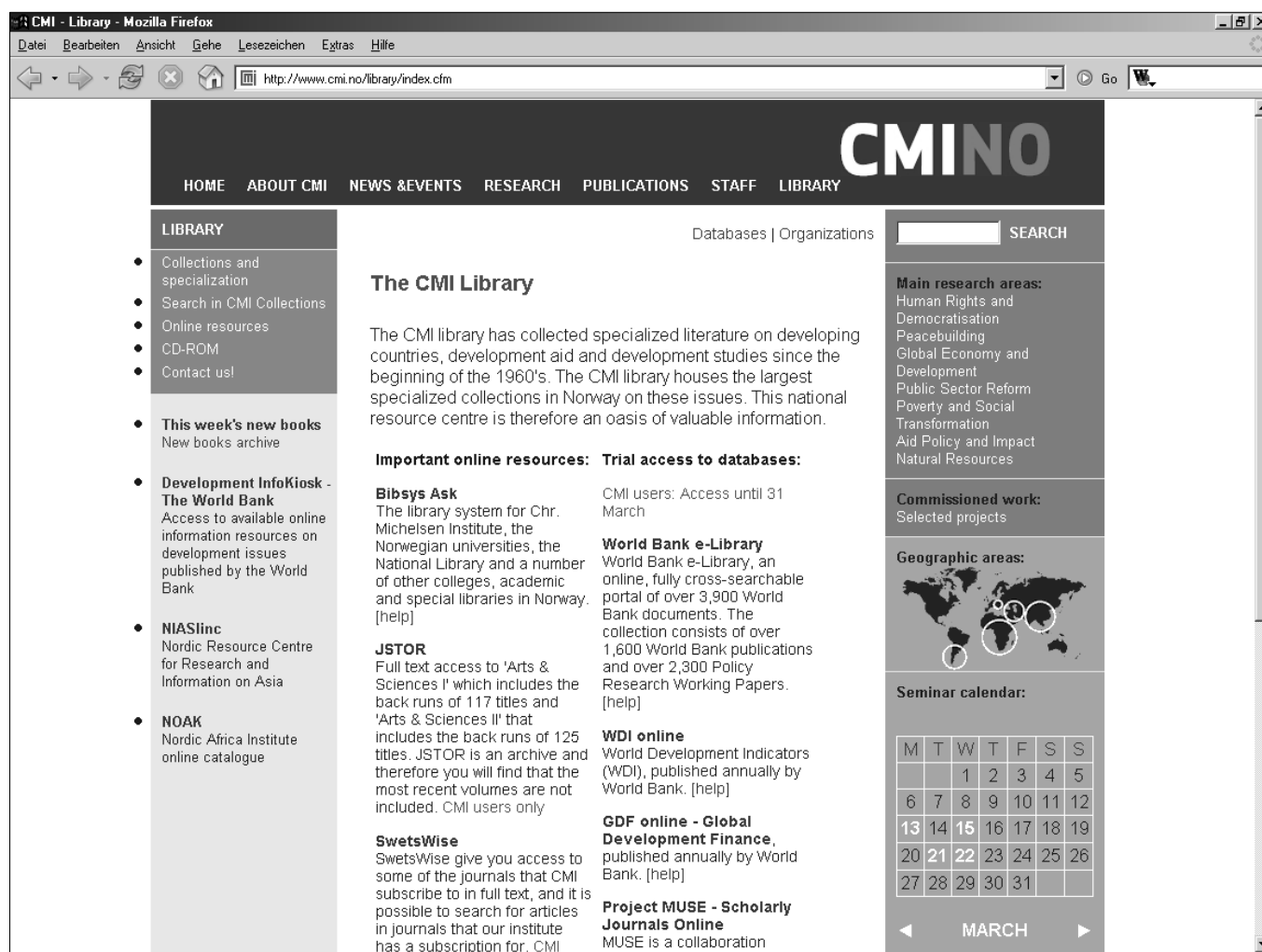
Summing up, our survey shows that only a minority of libraries include user education on their English websites. These are mainly academic and scientific libraries. The current scarcity of English information on the websites shows a weak response on the part of the libraries to the increasing internationalization of Norwegian HE. However, a

better understanding of this issue could be gained if library websites were looked at in relation to the website of their mother institution. In other words, further research should consider to which extent the mother institution website is sensitive to internationalization. In terms of user education, further research should examine in more detail the kind of information and materials that the English websites contain as compared with their Norwegian counterparts. This would provide us with more insights into how libraries, as part of the increasingly international HE arena, understand their role in user education, and how this is conveyed in an ever increasingly popular meeting point with their users, namely the virtual library.

### *The issue of Web quality*

A discussion of web quality raises the wider issue of the concept of quality in librarianship and in library and information science. Brophy (2004) draws on the ISO 8402:1994 *Quality management and quality assurance vocabulary*, and discusses quality in terms of a totality of features such as language, structure, design, navigation etc. He argues that language should be free of jargon but does not consider choice among different languages as a quality issue, which is central to our discussion. A number of website quality assessment and evaluation techniques exist, such as the Danish *Bedst på Nettet* (Bedst på nettet 2005). However, the technique used by the Norwegian state consultancy Statskonsult involves 21 parameters which exclude information in languages other than Norwegian (Statskonsult 2004). Web quality has so far not become an issue in the performance and quality indicators advocated by The Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority, which are derived from the ISO standards and also influenced by the Association of Research Libraries' (U.S.) LibQUAL project. A preliminary impression is therefore that the issue of Web quality is dealt with individually, in a fragmented way, partly as a result of insufficient guidance both from government agencies such as The Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority but also from the profession itself.

The Norwegian Association of Special Libraries was established in 1948, is member of The Norwegian Library Association and has over 500 individual members and 28 institutional members.

Figure 1. Christian Michelsens Institute, Bergen. The Library (<http://www.cmi.no/library/index.cfm>)

However, over the last years it has experienced a decline in activity and there are few signs that it will adopt an active policy regarding the issues addressed in this article. This inactivity is partly an organizational consequence of the setting up in 2003 of the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority under the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs. Prior to 2003, academic, research and special libraries had been the responsibility of The Ministry of Education and Research, and they perceived the reorganization in 2003 as disadvantageous, more so when their specialized journal *Synopsis* was discontinued.

In October 2005, coinciding with a change of government in Norway, the Ministry of Education and Research launched a new national website in English (<http://www.StudyinNorway.no>) to promote Norwegian higher education and research internationally. Available services include a search-

able catalogue of MA programmes taught in English and information regarding scholarships. This reflects the new government's ambition to follow up the "Quality Reform" in tertiary education and pursue an active policy of internationalization. This policy will of course eventually have an impact on academic, research and special library websites.

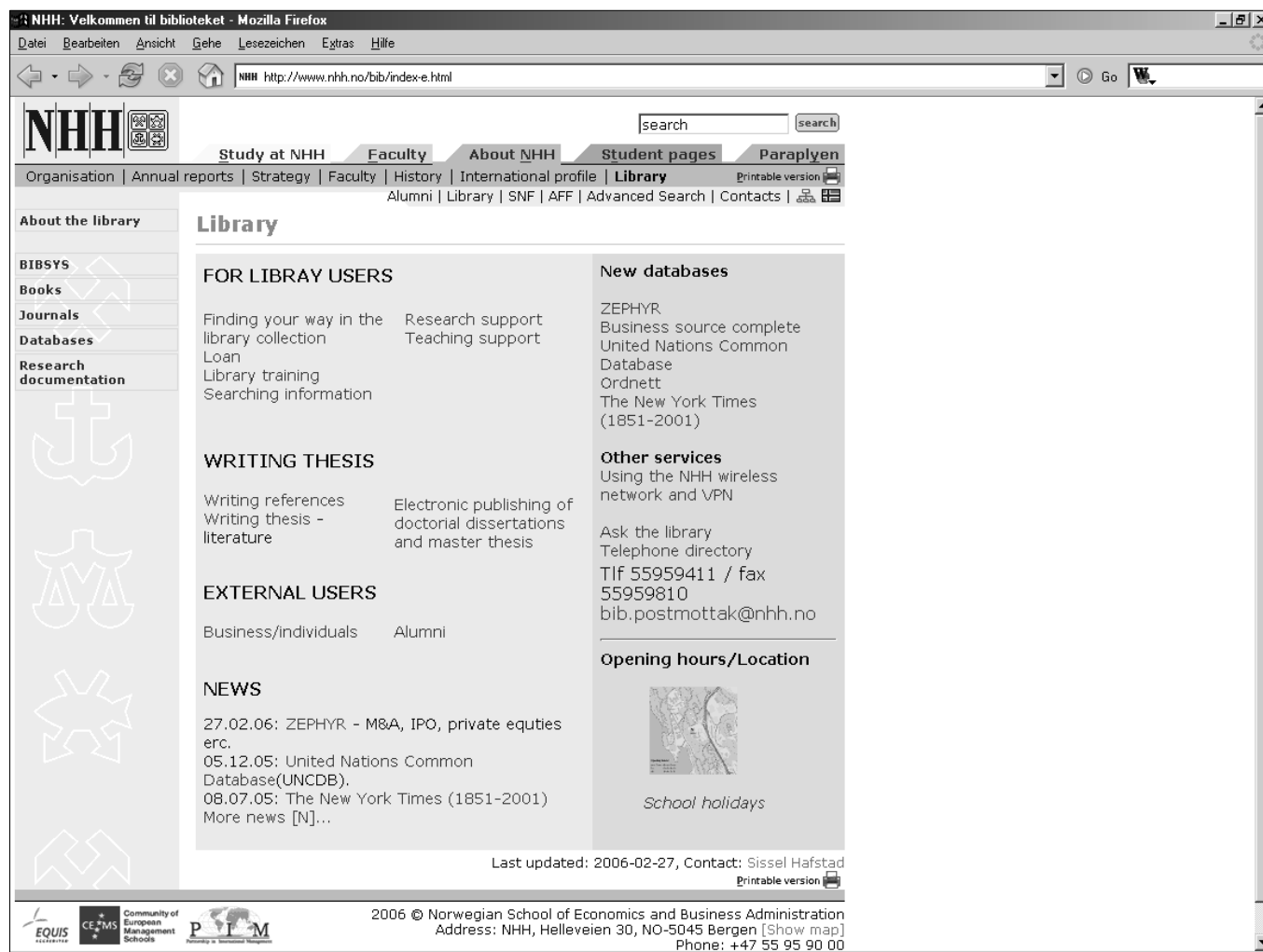
### *Some typical cases*

Below, three illustrative case studies, based on typical case sampling (Patton 2002), are briefly discussed.

#### *Websites in English only (n=3):*

The Christian Michelsen Institute (CMI) is a private foundation located in Bergen on the west coast of Norway. It is a research institute specializing

Figure 2. Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration. The Library (<http://www.nhh.no/bib/index-e.html>)

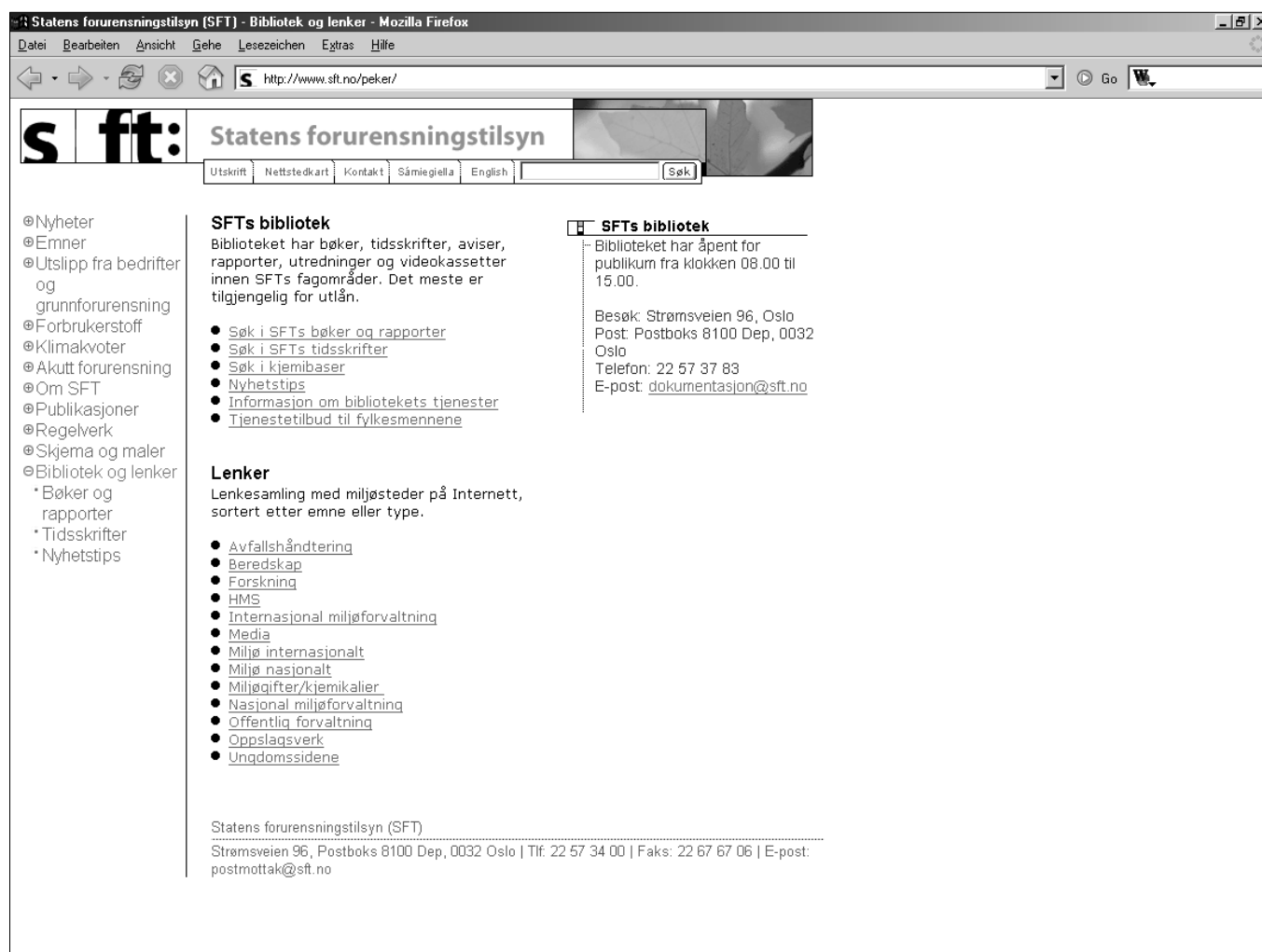


in development issues and has a staff of around 60. Its very international profile is reflected in its English-only website, which includes the library. This is quite unusual; only three of the 353 libraries examined have reached this level of internationalization. Library services include information on collections, online database access, interlibrary loan/document delivery service (hereafter ILL/DDS) and reference services. User education includes bibliographic instruction but not information literacy courses.

*Websites partly in English (n=116):*

The Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration (NHH) is also located in Bergen; it is state-owned and has an enrolment of 2,700 students and a staff of 270. Similar to many other higher education institutions in this very com-

petitive field, NHH has formulated an ambitious marketing strategy, claiming on its website that it is part of "the largest, concentrated centre for research and study in the fields of economics and business administration in Norway. NHH strives to be amongst the foremost in Europe in its fields, and EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System) accreditation reinforces a strongly held belief that excellence in research is a prerequisite for excellence in teaching" (Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration 2005). This ambitious strategy also involves the library which – and this is an exception in this group of 116 libraries – has parallel pages in Norwegian and English, including user education. Many other libraries in this group only provide rudimentary information about services in English. At NHH, library service information, in Norwegian and English, includes collections, online database access, ILL/DDS and

Figure 3. Norwegian Pollution Control Authority. The Library (<http://www.sft.no/peker/>)

reference services. User education (also in Norwegian and English) includes bibliographic instruction and courses in information literacy, which is also an exception.

#### *Websites in Norwegian only (n=196):*

The Norwegian Pollution Control Authority (SFT) is located in the capital Oslo, with a branch in Skien, south of the capital. SFT has a total staff of 270. It is a state-owned directorate under the Ministry of the Environment, and its main goal is to promote sustainable development. SFT has developed a website in English with brief factual information but the library has Web pages only in Norwegian. This is the most typical situation in Norway and characterizes no less than 196 of the 353 libraries examined in the present study. This is surprising since Norway maintains a high and

visible profile internationally on pollution control and environmental issues. This applies also to our neighbour Russia and the threat of toxic and atomic contaminants in the rich fishing grounds of the Barents Sea in the north. Library services (in Norwegian) include information on collections, online database access, ILL/DDS and reference services. User education includes bibliographic instruction but not information literacy courses.

#### *Conclusion*

Norway's academic, research and special libraries are adapting to the forces of globalization and internationalisation. Our research on 353 libraries, including typical case sampling of 3 illustrative case studies, shows that 154 out of a total of 353 libraries have developed websites with information

in English. Only 3 have become so international that all information is in English, while 116 have partial solutions with Norwegian and some information in English. There are still 196 libraries with no information at all in English. Language choice is nonetheless seen as part of Web quality, yet the general issue of Web quality is addressed on an individual and fragmentary way, and there is still insufficient guidance from appropriate government agencies and professional bodies. This state of affairs will, though, in all probability change given the present government's commitment to internationalization of tertiary education.

Depending on library type, the scope and type of information varies with respect to services such as collections, online database access, ILL/DDS, reference services and user education (bibliographic instruction and information literacy courses). In terms of user education, only a minority of libraries provide information in English. These are mainly academic and scientific libraries. The information available on the English websites consists of the course programme arranged by the library and/or online tutorials and learning objects. The English websites show a resource-centred approach to user education: 38 libraries provide information related to bibliographical instruction, whereas only 16 provide information related to information literacy components other than the search and location of information. However, in order to be able to assess fully how international impulses on the information literacy front are affecting library websites, a thorough comparison of the Norwegian and English sites is needed. At this point, most libraries show a mismatch between the user education information provided on their Norwegian and English portals. The English ones provide less information, which raises a quality problem for these websites.

### Notes

1. The Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority (ABM-utvikling) lists 362 academic, research and special libraries, but due to lacks in statistical reporting from libraries, there are unfortunately conflicting figures regarding the total number of libraries.
2. Norway has 3 official languages, viz. Standard Norwegian, New Norwegian and Sami. Many libraries

therefore provide information in one or both of the minority languages.

3. The Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority (ABM-utvikling) 2005, 45–55. ABM-utvikling states that they received statistics only from 336 libraries out of a total of 362 libraries they approached. The tables presented, however, amount to 353 units as shown.
4. IFLA has had its own IL Section since 2002. The section existed previously as the User Education Roundtable, but due to increasing interest in information literacy activities worldwide, the roundtable in 2002 became the Information Literacy Section. *Caveats and context*

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