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Organizing for change at Uppsala University Library

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Abstract:

Uppsala University library is one of the largest in Sweden with a wide range of specialties and subjects. In the last 18 month the library has gone through a re-organization with the aim to make the library more united. The re-organization meant that eleven library units were merged into five, and three processes were introduced; Media and Collections, Study- and Research Support and Information Services. The change is among the most comprehensive that the 400-year-old library has undergone.

The re-organization and the three processes have started a chain reaction of changes, both in the day-to-day work, in collaboration and in decision making. Within the processes, three organizational development projects: the digitization workflow, new working methods in library instruction and management of the virtual reference desk has been finished. Large working groups with representatives from concerned departments worked with the mapping and development of new solutions and ways to work. The groups used scenarios, process modeling, pilot studies and other methods to create a creative and open discussion.

One important objective has been to include concerned groups in the process and to take time to gain acceptance for the change. This has meant a slower pace of change, but has also been a part of the success. The use of different methods and active working groups has sparked a new energy into the organization.

This paper will describe the methods used for change management in the organization and in developing new solutions to meet the needs of library users.

Keywords: Change management, processes, process mapping, organizational development, libraries

1 INTRODUCTION

Uppsala University Library is one of the largest in Sweden, with a wide range of specialties – rare collections, digital repositories and current support to faculty and students. There are 11 subject libraries and about 190 staff within the library that serve about 24 000 students and 6 000 staff.

In the last 18 months the library has gone through a re-organization with the aim to make the library more united. The change is among the most comprehensive that the 400-year-old library has undergone.

The problem of the previous organization was that strong library units had for years developed their own routines and working methods which didn't support collaboration and efficient use of resources. Working methods were occasionally based on the needs of library staff rather than the users' way of working. A strong driving force for change was thus the idea of working as *one* university library and that library services should be based on the user's needs. The reasons for the reorganization can be summed up in four major points: stronger branding of the library, better service to users, better use of employee skills and adapting to doing the same amount of work on a smaller budget. With the new organization the library would work more effectively and use the resources in a better way.

The re-organization was done in several steps and has included new roles and new ways of working. Within the re-organization four major areas were identified by the management as important areas to focus on for a successful implementation of the new organization: management, employee engagement, merging of library units and introduction of processes and a matrix organization. These areas were initially coordinated by a program manager and a project group.

Eleven library organizational units were merged into five and three processes were introduced; Media and Collections, Study- and Research Support and Information Services.

Management of the new matrix organization has offered challenges. Different approaches have been tested to find the best ways for collaboration and communication.

2 THREE ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Three organizational development projects were done: the digitization workflow, new working methods in library instruction and management of the virtual reference desk.

2.1 Digitization

Uppsala University Library has extensive rare collections with a global interest. Therefore, the library has modernized and developed its digitization during the last few years, to meet the need for digitized materials. However, it's been difficult to develop an efficient and unified workflow. The digitization workflow is a process where many different units and competencies within the library must work together (material specialists, book restorers, photographers and platform developers). In the past these has worked quite separate from each other with poor communication and collaboration. Often ad hoc solutions had to be invented for larger digitization projects.

The mapping process focused on easing the collaboration by creating clearer steps and responsibilities for the workflow. The major problem was to create a new workflow that was better for all involved – without anyone feeling that it had become worse for them. One way to simplify the process was to create a standardized digitization offer, so that customers and staff knew what could be offered by the service and not. With a simplified service it was possible to create an ordering template and understand the need for system support.

The mapping also identified areas where completely new roles were needed; in receiving and setting up larger digitization projects and in coordinating the incoming work from different projects. The result of the mapping was a new Digitization coordinator. The new workflow also offers better support for making pilot studies before accepting new projects. All parts of the digitization chain must now analyze their input and approve the effort for a new project. If one part won't or can't deliver, the project cannot be accepted.

Besides a clearer workflow and better coordination, the mapping resulted in a readiness for higher capacity in digitization. This is of great importance as this service is in high demand from both university faculty and the public.

2.2 Library instruction

Another area chosen by the management for process mapping was library instruction. Workshops and lectures are offered by all eleven subject libraries and also by the Library Support Department and the Cultural Heritage Department. The mapping process offered several challenges. One challenge was to understand library teaching as a process rather than a scope of practices ranging from educational development to individual supervision. Therefore, the process modeling concentrated primarily on activities within the process of administration before and after a lecture or a workshop in order to identify improvement areas. Activities included in the workflow were e.g. to receive bookings, to send confirmation to participants, room reservations and classroom assessment. Previously this work had been made in a range of different ways, using different IT-systems, mostly free software such as Google forms.

One challenge of mapping the teaching administration was to identify firstly the current workflow – or rather workflows - secondly to find out what the most efficient shared workflow would be. Different practices for teaching administration had developed through the years and the group needed to identify a workflow that could be applied across the whole organization. Process mapping and modeling of the administrative parts was, however, somewhat rather uncontroversial. Many teaching librarians looked forward to a reduced administrative burden by e.g. implementing better IT-support. One problem for the library management and librarians that the group pointed out was time for preparation and cooperation between units. The group therefore focused on finding working methods for reducing preparation time as well as methods for more coordination and cooperation between units.

Also, in the past library instruction had been developed by individuals or by smaller teams on each unit and department. This meant that teaching materials often existed only in individual teachers' computers, but also that a strong subject-oriented way of teaching had developed. We suggested that quality in library instruction wasn't primarily depending on subject skilled librarians, rather librarians with competencies in information literacy and pedagogy. This encountered resistance at first both in the group and among teaching librarians in general.

A result of the mapping process was the creation of shared educational modules as a way of reducing the preparation time for teaching. We identified generic parts of library instruction for the modules, such as critical scientific thinking, search strategies, reference management systems and plagiarism. The creation of educational modules has proved to contribute to a consensus on the content of library

instruction as well as more cooperation. It has also led to a broader discussion about learning outcomes related to information literacy sessions.

2.3 Virtual reference desk

Previously, the library offered a large number of question-specific e-mail addresses, which required the user to find the right contact information for get in touch. As a complimentary service the library had a virtual reference desk-service with e-mail and chat-service. The staff had to deal with a large amount of e-mail boxes and telephone numbers. To do follow-ups of quality and to count the numbers of questions was almost impossible.

The mapping process led to the creation of a central virtual reference desk and a re-organization of the work. The single-point entry retained the name “Ask the Library” and extended the service with a phone number. The old version of ask the library had about thirty operators but the new version had eight operators led by a team manager. During the opening hours of the service two operators man the service at the same time. The opening hours increased with two hours a day. A joint request management system was introduced for almost all part of the library.

The goal for the team is to answer 70 – 80 per cent of the incoming questions. The rest are forwarded to the right specialist unit. Since the team and the specialist unit use the same reference service platform it is easy to do follow-ups and evaluations of the service. An important part of the project was to develop the skills of the team to make them “specialists of general questions”.

3 ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT METHODS

In the organizational development using process mapping and modeling at Uppsala University Library different methods were used.

3.1 Change management model

To support sustainable change in the whole organization the library used the following model. The model describes how decisions evolve and how important it is to enable the coworkers to do the same journey. This is a way to avoid lot of resistance and the feeling of top down management.

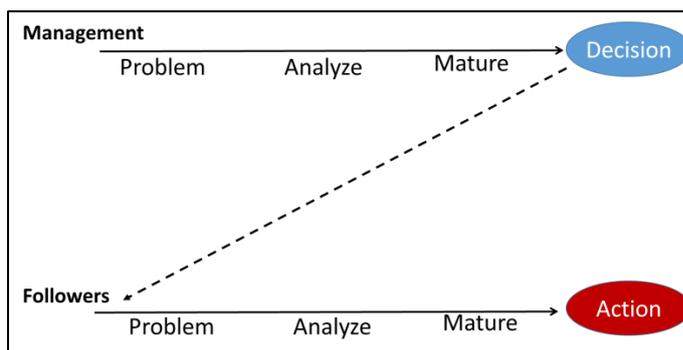


Image 1: Change management model

3.2 Broad working groups with high level of freedom

The mapping process began by setting up broad working groups that represented different parts of the process and that could capture different experiences from the library. About 10 persons were chosen by the management to be a part of each process mapping.

For the digitization mapping, it was important to gather all the different parts of the process: metadata, conservation, imaging and publishing. In the library instruction mapping group, both experienced and new teaching librarians were included. In the virtual reference working group persons that work with end-users at physical and virtual reference desks were chosen. In all groups representatives from the IT department were included – that was very valuable when systems and system support was discussed.

The broad groups fulfilled their purpose in giving a broad viewpoint. However, in the case of digitization, the group was almost too broad – all members didn't feel involved in all issues. For example, the conservationist didn't have a lot of input to the publication system workflow. This was solved by creating sub-groups that came up with the detailed solutions and reported back to the whole group.



Image 2: Mapping in a working group

The task of the groups was to present a suggestion for a new service or workflow and they had a high level of freedom in creating the solution. This kind of freedom meant a new way of working for the groups and it was quite difficult at first to find a clear direction. Many groups were hesitant since there was no clear goal. At the same time, the freedom opened up for creative solutions and thinking outside of the box. A difficulty for the groups was that the management did not clearly point out in which direction each area should be developed, this was to a large extent left to the group to decide. The lack of direction created uncertainty for the groups and consequences were that the work took longer than initially planned.

3.3 Snapshot of current situation

The groups started by describing the area to get a common understanding. They created a snapshot of how the area is organized within the library, the number of staff involved or affected and which IT systems support the area. The groups also identified stakeholders and problems or needs that the stakeholders may have. That gave the group a way to identify problems that needed to be solved and a starting point in finding new workflows.

3.4 Developing a proposal for change

The groups explored different solutions and used different methods to create a proposal for change.

3.4.1 Scenarios

When discussing how to work more efficient and/or bring more value there are often multiple variables that interact with each other. Therefore it is complicated to have a discussion and to understand and communicate how different changes would affect the overall value and/or efficiency. One way to handle this is to describe different scenarios. Scenarios are often used to investigate possibilities “outside the box”. What if we did this in a completely different way?

Scenarios should be described and visualized in different ways to fit different target groups. We described our scenarios graphically (image 3), in an essay (written in present tense describing a fictive future, with fictive people, like a novel) and with tables where you could see which variables that differ between the different scenarios.

The process mapping of the virtual reference desk used scenarios as a tool to explore extreme solutions and clarify the different options. It was also a good method to get the group to see a future workflow with a common understanding – the story makes it real and it is easier to discuss options. Using extreme solutions helped the group to narrow it down to few reasonable options. After analyzing pros and cons with the scenarios, the group could present two options to the management.

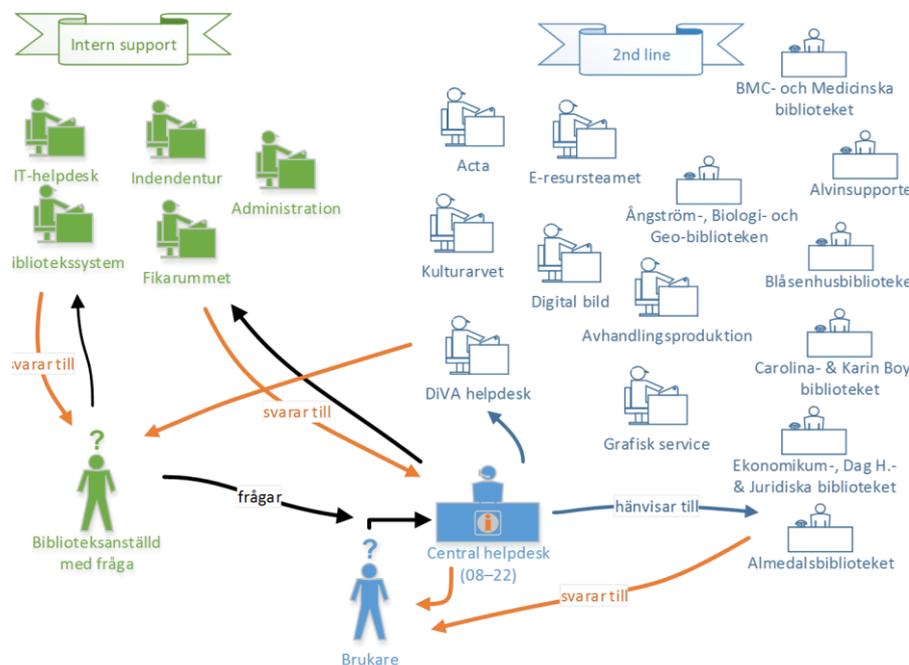


Image 3. Visualized scenario of the suggested virtual reference desk

In library instruction an educational module, a joint library introduction for first-year students, was prepared by a subgroup. The module was tested in different libraries with the aim to find out what improvements we still had to make so that the module would be usable in library introductions at all subject libraries.

In digitization the new workflow for receiving and planning new projects was tested in a smaller scale. It became clear that the new solution with a meeting for all involved departments and experts was a good and efficient way to work. This gave an early confirmation that the new process fitted into the organization and fulfilled a real need. It also clarified where the workflow had to be adjusted and the separate steps that had to be defined.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Acceptance for change

The broad working groups wasn't only a way to bring in different experiences into the development of new solutions, it was also a way to open up for acceptance for the change. The groups spent a lot of time discussing different problems, options and solutions, and during the discussions they developed a joint understanding of the need for change and for the chosen solution.

The group members, in turn, became ambassadors for the changes in their departments and units and could help spread the word. In some cases it became evident that all employees had not reached the same level of understanding the change, and this could be a problem for those who participated in the working groups. The change management model helped the process managers and library management to understand what was happening - the group members had gone through the process of understanding and analyzing the problem and reached the maturity level. To understand processes of change made it easier to support all employees in their own journey.

To gain approval for the changes in the whole organization, all processes also had reference groups where new ideas and proposals were discussed. A total of 60 staff was involved in the reference groups. Information meetings for all staff were also arranged. The reference groups played an important role. By continuously receiving information about the work and having the opportunity to comment, the process work was integrated into the organization. The open information meetings filled the same function - giving all employees the opportunity to start their own change process.

Since this was the first time the organization had worked in this way - with broad working groups and high level of freedom - it took extra time. This way of working was new and unfamiliar for the group members, for the process managers and also for the library management. The learning curve was steep for all involved, but looking back it was a good investment. It meant that the change management started very early. When the implementation started for the new solutions, many hinders were already solved. The pilot study of modules in library teaching was an example of how the resistance changed to support during the test period.

The change and implementation of new solutions was made in a slower pace than originally planned, but it has been a part of the success.

4.2 Use of different methods

Although the three process mappings were quite different and had different preconditions and results, there were also many similarities. Many of the methods were successfully used in all three mappings and could easily be adapted to different situations. Other methods were better suited for certain needs in a specific mapping.

Overall, the introduction of new methods and ways of working together has given the organization new energy. From seeing meetings as mostly passive time for receiving information, the working groups have proven that meetings can be active and creative. This has sparked an interest in new meeting forms in all parts of the library.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The re-organization and the three processes have started a chain reaction of changes, both in the direct work and in collaboration and decision making. The establishment of the changes made at different levels has been made in small steps with continuous adjustments.

The processes have given the library an opportunity to come together around larger areas of work that was difficult before. At the same time it has meant a new way of leading change in the library. The investment in broad working groups turned out to be a good way to use the expertise and experience within the library in creating new solutions, but also as a way to anchor the change.

Mapping and modeling processes has created an awareness of our workflows and laid the foundation for continued quality work in the future. When the whole is mapped, it is easier to work with continuous improvements. A lesson from work is also that we get better quality of service and services by thinking together and by focusing on the benefit of the user. We have just begun to chart our business but the areas we have encountered so far are major areas that greatly affect the quality of our services and services.

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