

Professional rationales of engaging with library users in the changing culture of reading and library use

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Abstract

The changes in the practices of reading and the role of books in the contemporary culture have a major impact on libraries and the work of library professionals. The reasons and situations when and why books are read has repercussions to how libraries are used and consequently, to professional practices and rationales of working towards and with library users. Based on the findings from a survey study conducted in 2018 as a part of the ALM-Field, Digitalization, and the Public Sphere (ALMPUB) project financed by the Norwegian Research Council in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Hungary, the presentation analyses librarians' views of the changing rationales of user participation and working with library users in the contemporary culture of reading and library use. The international comparison shows both country-wise differences, divergence of views between individual respondents and broader changes in the perception of the role of libraries and library use in the contemporary society. The findings have implications both to the understanding of how professionals perceive the on-going changes in reading culture and library use and their implications to library work, but provide also a basis for envisioning the role of library collections for readers in the future. The presentation suggests that a key issue is to understand the on-going shift in the practices of reading and the respective roles of books and other forms of media as carriers of information and culture in the contemporary everyday life.