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## Libraries and the literary long tail

Chris Anderson (2007, 36) means by the "long tail" all the articles in a product group. For example, in literature, the long tail contains "hit books" as well as the books that are sold a little but still live their own lives in the book market. Anderson's insight is that a long tail in the online world may be even more important than a hit industry and can create a hit-like market (ibid., 66). E-commerce users can browse through countless products, and while leaving the familiar paths, they realise that their taste is not as mainstream as they had thought or like marketing, hit-centred culture, and a lack of alternatives made them believe (ibid, 29–30).

The focus in the bookstores is on the current books and their selling. Libraries, on the other hand, have always represented the long tail. Library lending naturally emphasises the novelties and hit books, but one can make discoveries too. Similarly to the online bookstores' recommendations by the customers function the return shelves of the traditional libraries, for instance.

Books that practically have run out of life, but still in the long tail can regain demand because of a film version, for example. In the libraries, at least, one should find those books. The long tail is a vital part of the library institution. Gunnar Hansson (2012, 431) asks what the literary memory of a nation would be like if it were depicted in view of the readers or reading: what kind of literature was read at different times or was felt to be impressive and valuable in the past. Libraries' acquisition and lending statistics could answer such questions. By its collection, the library also manifests the diversity of reading.

## References:

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