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Collaboration and Convergence of Libraries, Archives and Museums

Nanna Kann-Rasmussen, Hans Dam Christensen, Jamie Johnston and Isto Huvila

Libraries, archives and museums – the LAM sector – are institutions that have seemingly emerged from different contexts and different cultural policy objectives; however, the seemingly clear distinctions between the origins of the respective institutions become muddled at closer inspection. This lack of clarity is due in part to changing definitions and practices of the institutions throughout history. Nowadays, each of the institutions appear to have sufficiently unique activities that clearly differentiate them from the others, yet we are simultaneously witnessing parallel developments within these institutions concerning the challenges they face and their responses to those challenges.

The LAM institutions have been challenged since the shift of the millennium by developments and changes in technology, cultural policy requirements, funding and shifting patterns of use. An example of these changes is the shift by LAM institutions from a collection-driven approach towards a more user-driven approach. This shift has caused LAM institutions to redefine their missions and has led to new opportunities for collaboration and convergence. The majority of articles in this thematic issue regard the paradoxes, trade-offs and changing balances that these new opportunities bring. This shows us that LAM institutions are in a new situation where old and new ways sometimes co-exist, sometimes collide, and that the institutions are subjected to conflicting and changing expectations.

With this thematic issue we want to explore what currently appears as a new wave of convergence and collaboration between LAM institutions. The articles show that two themes stand out as particularly important in this regard. The first theme regards digitalization and the development of technology, which are reflected in cultural policies and in the way the institutions react to these policies. The second theme regards the shift in focus away from the collections and towards user participation and alternative dissemination practices. As a whole, this issue shows us that Nordic LAM institutions show more similarities than (ever) before as they adapt to a new digital climate, new cultural policy requirements and adjust to new expectations from the surrounding world.

The first article *Autonomiparadokset i ABM: En analyse af ABM-institutionernes ændrede omverdensrelationer og deres implikationer* written by Nanna Kann-Rasmussen and Casper Hvenegaard Rasmussen concerns the

changing relation between society and the LAMs. The authors characterize this relation as paradoxical. The LAMs have experienced the growing focus on users and performance indicators, such as number of visits or loans, as a decrease in their autonomy. At the same time, the institutions have been able to pursue new ways of fulfilling their purpose as well as to find new problems to which they themselves can be a solution.

The following two articles concern the rise and fall of the Norwegian government's administrative body *ABM-utvikling – Statens senter for arkiv, bibliotek og museum* [ALM Development – The Norwegian Centre for Archives, Libraries and Museums], which was established in 2003 and then terminated in 2010. The purpose of the Centre was to create a cultural-political synergy between the different sectors, which it ultimately failed to achieve. The articles' main conclusions pertaining to its demise are very much related, yet the theoretical approaches differ and thereby offer a complementary understanding of the outcome.

The co-authored article titled *ABM-utvikling og avvikling: institusjonell konvergens og divergens i kulturpolitikken* by Sigrid Stokstad, Andreas Vårheim and Roswitha Skare analyzes the policy documents related to the development of the Centre; from its establishment in 2003, through its multiple reorganizations and, finally, its closure. The analysis employs historical institutionalism as a theoretical approach and draws upon international parallels for exploring and gaining insight into the Centre's ultimate failure in achieving the synergy between the ALM sectors. The authors conclude that the Ministry of Culture did not support the Centre to a sufficient degree as both the Nationalbiblioteket and Arkivverket, two organizations with a strong institutional anchorage, were able to keep and even expand their administrative responsibilities.

Ole Marius Hylland also investigates the developments from 2003 to 2010 in his article titled *ABM-utviklings vekst og fall: Historien om hvordan en kulturpolitisk institusjon ble født og døde*. In contrast to the outside perspective taken in the previous article, Hylland supplements his analysis of policy documents with an inside perspective encompassing both his own experiences as an employee in the Centre and a series of interviews conducted with former colleagues, representatives from the Ministry of Culture and the Centre's board members. Hylland uses Cohen, March and Olsen's *Garbage can* theory to analyze the reasoning and logic in the decision-making processes of the Centre.

The following article addresses one of the great challenges LAM institutions face today, a challenge – one might speculate – that an organization such as the Centre for ALM Development could have dealt with. Bodil Axelson's text *Property, Licenses and Labour when Memory institutions converge with Informational Capitalism* critically interrogates the trade-offs memory institutions are facing when they rely on communication infrastructures provided by informational capitalism. Axelson argues that incentives for sharing and participating prompt memory institutions to deal with their holdings in terms of prop-

erty, which necessitates that they invest time and resources into rights clearances, licensing procedures and the marking of works in the public domain. Axelsson's article elucidates how LAM-institutions trade with information capitalists in order to gain visibility and reputations in the communication infrastructures as well as to fulfill their democratic missions.

The next two articles also concern how the LAM-institutions must balance the old and the new in a society where user participation and digitization are imperatives.

Sara Nyhlén and Katarina Gidlund are the authors of the article *Lost in translation – How policy enactments get stuck in the digital fix*. They combine a policy enactment framework with a critical analytical framework of digitalization to create a method for addressing the institutional power aspects of digitalization in a specific setting i.e., cultural heritage. They show how policy enactment affects the construction of cultural heritage by using a Swedish cultural heritage portal as an example. This article suggests that the expectations different actors have regarding the potential of digitalization to deconstruct existing power structures and increase participation and democracy in society must be abandoned.

The article *Deltagelsens paradoks: Samlingens rolle i den brugerinddragende formidling* by Rasmus Grøn and Lise Kloster Gram discusses the relation between collection and participatory dissemination practices. The case used is the literary collection in a Danish public library. The analysis shows that different degrees of participation affect the status of the collection and furthermore it nuances our conceptions of both collections and dissemination practices. Lastly, and this is the case for a number of the articles in this thematic issue, it shows that theories of cultural policy, participation, cultural dissemination and digitalization can be utilized in order to analyze cases originating in the respective LAMs.

Just as digitalization and participatory practices have become imperatives for the LAMs so has collaboration. The last paper in the thematic issue is written by Patrick Prax, Lina Eklund, Björn Sjöblom, Niklas Nylund, Olle Sköld. The article *Drawing Things Together: Understanding the Challenges and Opportunities of a Cross-LAM Approach to Digital Game Preservation* aims to show how the LAM sector can cooperate with outside actors like game makers, players, and player-curated game collections ("rogue archives") to overcome the challenges that are inherent to the preservation of digital games and point out how the lessons learned can be useful to the LAM sector outside of game preservation in museums. The article argues for collaboration and participation with outside stakeholders as well as for a cross-sector convergence, as digital games by their very nature transcend the traditional borders of LAM institutions.

An additional refereed article from the general call for submissions has been included as it complements the articles originally selected for the thematic

issue. *Breaking new ground* by Staffan Albinsson concerns intrapreneurship in Swedish cultural institutions. Intrapreneurship is a mind-set that can be applied in various contexts, including that of public institutions, and offers an interesting new conceptual tool for reflecting on how LAM institutions function.

Two book reviews are also included in this issue: Maria Hirvi-Ijäs review of *Arts and Cultural Management – Sense and Sensibilities in the State of the Field* and Pasi Saukkonen review of *Global migration – orsaker och konsekvenser*. Both books were published in 2019.

It is with great pleasure that we as editors invite you to read the interesting and insightful articles in this thematic issue.