New public management and libraries – a success story or just an excuse for cost-reduction?

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Abstract
From the 1980’s – in some parts of Europe from the 1990’s – onward the new public management (NPM) has been emerging in public organizations including libraries. Since then there has been a need to develop strategies, to plan budgets, and to implement cost and activity accounting as well as benchmarking to compare the library’s processes, costs and activities with those of other libraries.

One basic idea of the NPM was to make a transition from focusing on how institutions function to a product-orientation, to improve the quality of the library services, to develop output-orientation, and to act market and consumer-oriented. There also was a need to change from the bureaucratic and hierarchically acting organizations to a more modern flexible and lean form of management.

The aim of this paper is in the first part to describe the basic ideas of NPM, their realization in libraries, and how libraries have to handle constantly reduced budgets and the risk of being closed down (especially in the “age of austerity”); the second part will show how the University of Eastern Finland Library has managed to improve its services with the new public management approach.

Many libraries are faced with serious financial cutbacks on the one hand and with emergent needs to (re)invest in neglected public infrastructure on the other hand. At the same time, they have to develop modern digital library services. Thus there is a need for efficiency, which is put in action via major budget cutbacks. Also many libraries have been closed down since the implementation of NPM ideas.

Keywords
Academic library, financial cutbacks, New public management, NPM, Public library, University of Eastern Finland

1. New public management and its significance for libraries

From the 1980’s – in some parts of Europe not before the 1990’s – onward the new public management (NPM) has emerged in public organizations (Hood 1991, P. 1; Werner 2001, pp. 82, 85) including public and academic libraries. NPM entails a need to develop strategies, to plan budgets based on these strategies and control that the goals – especially the customer satisfaction as most important goal – are met. Also, libraries had to implement cost and activity accounting and performance-measurement with an emphasis on output and outcome instead of input, as well as benchmarking to compare the library’s processes, costs and activities with those of other libraries (Düren 2009, p. 163). Or as Pors and Johannsen (2003, p. 52) summarize it: “NPM is a movement that tries to transfer principles from private sector into the public sphere” and with this into libraries.
The basic idea of the NPM was to make a transition towards product-orientation, to improve the quality of the library service delivery, to develop output-orientation, and to act market and consumer-oriented. There also was a need or at least an attempt to change from bureaucratic and hierarchically acting organizations (Pors/Johannsen 2003, p. 52) to a more modern flexible and lean form of management.

To fulfil these requirements new type of management tools have been implemented in public as well as academic libraries. “Most common and frequently used NPM tools and instruments […] are the use of performance measurement, the emphasis on output and controls that objectives are met […], the contracting and outsourcing, the disaggregation of and competition within the public sector, the emphasis on the quality of service delivery, e-government tools. In many cases private sector management styles are copied by public organizations – hands-on management, input discipline, more product instead of function-oriented management, careers organized on a professional instead of formal-legal basis, mobility increases and flexible work contracts” (De Vries/Nemec 2013, p. 7).

Thus NPM means that libraries need to transform their organizational identity as a public service organization into a more business-like identity (Skålén 2004, p. 251).

Besides this “[…] NPM-like reforms […] have resulted in leadership approaches that are a mismatch for the unique organizational structure, the complexity in challenges […]” (Kellis/Ran 2015, p. 616).

All in all “the net result is a decrease in performance resulting from NPM-based performance-focus[ed] tactics compared to opportunities for improved organizational performance generated by a leadership-based focus on employees, values, and networks” (Kellis/Ran 2015, p. 616).

NPM at times also leads to an overemphasis on the financial instead of the societal added value, leaves less options for creative or innovative activities, which might be financially risky. It also gives sometimes less opportunities for a participative management style, as negotiations and agreements might lead to additional costs (Vallet 2015, p. 9).

Besides these missing leadership competences and possibilities library leaders need to improve especially their strategic management competences (Vallet 2015, p. 12) as “the management has to develop a strategy with vision, mission and strategic goals. It has to plan annual programme budgets based on cost and activity accounting to show how efficient and effective their work is” (Düren, 2009, p. 163). “Consequently, public [as well as academic] libraries have to leave their professional comfort-zone behind, or as a public library director said ‘… we have to leave familiar grounds’” (Vallet 2015, p. 14).

Summarized it can be said that strategic management in the public sector seems to be interpreted as management which is quite centralized, only fixated on short-term measurements and with this it seems to be focused only on operative matters (Höglund/Svärdsten 2015, p. 1, 27), which is not enough for securing the libraries’ existence.

This leads to our main research question: Is the NPM approach in libraries a success story or just an excuse for cost-reduction?
2. Research methods

The main research question „Is the NPM approach in libraries a success story or just an excuse for cost-reduction?” leads to further questions that need to be answered:
1. Do library leaders need new competences and are able to use the of the NPM required management tools?
2. What happened in libraries during the “age of austerity”?
3. How can libraries survive and use the NPM methods for this?

To find out more about NPM in academic and public libraries is the goal of this paper. To answer the first research question in chapter 3 studies relating the knowledge and use of management tools and methods are analyzed. The first study is about the library leaders’ knowledge concerning some management tools that are relevant for NPM. Also leadership roles of the future and the most important elements of NPM have been surveyed. The second study is about the significance of library leaders doing or being something and what knowledge they have of certain leadership tools. In chapter 4 examples of the loss of libraries and the negative effects of NPM and the “age of austerity”, based on a literature study, try to answer the second research question. In chapter 5 finally an example – the University of Eastern Finland (UEF) library – shows how libraries can survive the NPM (research question number 3). Finally in chapter 6 the main research question „Is the NPM approach in libraries a success story or just an excuse for cost-reduction?” will be tried to be answered and the need for further research pointed out.

3. NPM – library leader’s new competences and use of management tools

The above mentioned goals of NPM have consequences for the library leaders. They now have to gain new competences and they need to implement management tools in their library.

In a quantitative study in Denmark in which 411 managers of libraries completed the questionnaire (Pors/Johannsen 2003, p. 52) the degree of knowledge concerning some management tools that are relevant for NPM was analyzed. Table 1 shows the results. Interesting is that e. g. at least 50 % have comprehensive knowledge regarding annual plans and accounts, but only 21 % of the leaders have comprehensive knowledge of strategic planning and 10 % of quality systems. And also the knowledge in the area of user surveys is with 35 % comprehensive knowledge not very high.

This is especially interesting when analyzing what these leaders think are the leadership roles that will have the greatest importance in the future, which are

- being a strategic leader and vision shaper,
- being a creator of results,
- being a value creator and carrier of culture, and
- being a good network builder (Pors/Johannsen 2003, p. 58).

And this also against the background that very important elements of the NPM are

- the orientation towards the market,
- the requirements for effectiveness and efficiency as well as
With this divergence between the needed and the really existing competences needed to fulfil the requirements of the NPM approach “it appears that the tendency to employ management tools to a certain degree is [only] a response to demands from outside the library” (Pors/Johannsen (2003, p. 58), which shows that NPM is more a duty library leaders have to fulfil than a successful management approach that leaders feel a need to use.

A similar study to the one conducted by Pors and Johannsen in Denmark was done in Norway in 2011 in the form of a survey, which was sent to all municipalities and to all publically funded academic libraries. The addressees were asked to forward the survey to anyone they deemed a library leader in their organization. The survey consisted of 40 main questions (250 questions all told), and 244 library leaders responded. Also in 2013 interviews with 11 library leaders from public and academic libraries were conducted. The library leaders were carefully selected to include both smaller and larger libraries.

From the replies to questions about the significance of the leader doing or being different things in the survey (see table 2), the library leaders have more focus on strategic tasks, and also more on the softer forms of leadership than on administration and creating rules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management tool</th>
<th>Comprehensive knowledge</th>
<th>Some knowledge</th>
<th>No knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual plans and accounting</td>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>46 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by objectives</td>
<td>36 %</td>
<td>51 %</td>
<td>13 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User survey</td>
<td>35 %</td>
<td>60 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
<td>21 %</td>
<td>62 %</td>
<td>17 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract management</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>48 %</td>
<td>33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance related salary</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>65 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality systems</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>51 %</td>
<td>39 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 1 Leaders’ of Danish libraries degree of knowledge concerning selected management tools (Pors/Johannsen 2003, p. 55)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance of the leader</th>
<th>Total agreement</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>as a strategist and creator of visions</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in building networks</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developing quality</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a creator of values and culture</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a change agent and innovator</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goal-oriented, conductor and creator of results</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as an ambassador</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a coordinator, integrator and conveyor</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managing resources</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being an administrator</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a problem solver</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solving conflicts</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a specialist and professional</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a coach</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controlling and making the rules</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tab. 2 Norwegian library leaders’ “total agreement” to statements about “Significance of the leader…” doing or being different things (score 5 is “total agreement” on a scale from 1 to 5)

Another question in the questionnaire was formulated: “What knowledge do you have of the following leadership tool?” followed by the name of the tool or app. The question was not about usage, but about knowledge (see table 3). Still, it is conceivable that the knowledge is larger for the tools that are actually used, and vice versa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of…</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>communications</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity plans and accountancy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>using statistics/indicators</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>user surveys</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management by objectives</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work environment surveys</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategic planning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge based/ evidence based praxis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education plans</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>value based management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>image and branding</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relational leadership</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innovation management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benchmarking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workplace evaluation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of performance pay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of contract leadership</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of knowledge accountancy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Balanced Scorecard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 3 Norwegian library leaders’ self-reported degree of knowledge of leadership tools and approaches (median on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is very high knowledge)

In the survey, the percentage of respondents that replied “high level of knowledge” to any of these tools is quite small, for most of them less than 10%. Through the interviews it became clear that there was considerable confusion about the different tools, the definitions, content and usage. It should also be noted that the number of respondents who report a higher or lower degree of knowledge is reduced for the least known tools, meaning that there are a number of respondents to the questionnaire that either skipped the question or replied “Don’t know/Not applicable”.

However; when looking at the eleven best known tools and approaches: Communication, activity plans and accountancy, use of statistics/indicators, user surveys, management by objectives, work environment surveys, strategic planning, project management, knowledge based/evidence based praxis, education plans and value based management, there is a clear majority of tools that point to Norwegian library leaders as knowledgeable about NPM.

Both the Danish and Norwegian data, while having slightly different approaches and collected in more or less similar ways, find that the library leaders are knowledgeable about management tools and approaches connected with NPM. However, none of the surveys used the expression “NPM”, or had NPM as an initial focus.
The first research question is “Do library leaders need new competences and are able to use the
of the NPM required management tools?”. As can be seen in the studies above library leaders
are aware of the importance of their leadership roles and with this their required knowledge of
management tools, but they don’t have high knowledge in all of the required management tools,
especially the knowledge of strategic planning and of quality management isn’t high enough.

4. NPM in the “age of austerity”

In 2010 “[…] a […] wave of the global economic crisis began to sweep across countries […];
fiscal adjustment. It was the beginning of an age of austerity that is forecasted to continue at
least through 2016, in both high-income and developing countries” (Ortiz/Cummins 2013, p. 1).

Representative for libraries in all countries some examples of the loss of libraries and the
negative effects of NPM and the “age of austerity” are shown in the following.

“In Canada […] NPM is currently considered as one of the main causes of the ongoing
legitimacy crisis and fall in popular support for governmental institutions” (Steane/Dufour/Gates 2015, p. 264) and with this for libraries.

In the UK e. g. there are currently 3,917 public libraries, 705 public libraries have been closed
down since 2003/04; thereof 565 since 2009/10 (Anstice 2016a; BBC News 2015). The Mirror
revealed that two public libraries are closing every week under the cuts in the last two years
(Ellis 2013). Since 2007/08 staff in public libraries has been reduced around 16 % till
2011/2012, which comes up to 3,989 full time equivalents (CIPFA 2012).

In Germany from 2006 to 2013 1,429 libraries have been closed down or merged with other
libraries, which means a reduction of public as well as academic libraries of 10.4 % (hbz 2014,
p. 76; hbz 2007, p. 15). Alone in Berlin 132 of 217 public libraries in 1997 have been closed
down until 2012 (minus 60.8 %) (Dobberke/Schönball 2014). And the closing of libraries
continues. 25.7 % of all German libraries are affected by budget consolidation, 44.3 % in cities
with more than 100,000 residents and 68.8 % in cities with over 400.000 residents (Deutscher
Bibliotheksverband 2014, p. 10).

“When considering their strategic partnership with [Flemish] public libraries, local
governments tend to (over)emphasize the need for efficiency. This is realized by serious
financial cutbacks […] and by freezing budgets for new, especially prestigious and ambitious
library projects […]. Consequently, investments and reinvestments in the public library are kept
to a minimum” (Vallet 2015, p. 7).

According to the National Library of Norway and their published statistics over public libraries,
the number of libraries (main libraries and branches) have decreased with 92 from 2010 (768)
to 2015 (676) – a reduction of 12 % (National library of Norway 2016; National library of
Norway 2011). By law all municipalities must have a public library, and the number of main
libraries are constant and in accordance with the number of municipalities, but the number of
branches have been reduced. The library statistics does not say why there has been a decrease,
although Norway has been relatively un-affected by the global economic recession that in other
European countries has led to reduced public expenditure.
The decrease of the number of the main public libraries in Finland from 2005 (412) to 2015 (288) is about 30% (Finnish public libraries statistics 2016).

“NPM became the heading of two related but simultaneously rather different streams of reform: on the one hand aimed to improve the quality of the public service delivery on behalf of its customers and on the other hand with an emphasis on the need to downsize the public service, because [...] there is no way out for the public sector but to leave everything to the private sector” (De Vries/Nemec 2013, p. 6).

These examples from different countries answer the second research question “What happened in libraries during the ‘age of austerity’?” and show the significance of the second stream of reform, the downsizing of public services, through the NPM.

The ongoing public funding cuts resulting from NPM and the “age of austerity” have brought library leaders to find new ways to generate additional income, such as printing/copying fees, fines, extra charges for CDs, DVDs and computer games, merchandise sale (e.g. bags, badges and postcards), fees for reservation, room hire, cultural events with admission charges, vending machines for drinks etc. (Pautz/Poulter 2014, pp. 20-21, 27). This has consequently led to a discussion about income generation methods to generate additional income and its implications for library ethos and the general nature of libraries as public service providers (Pautz/Poulter 2014, p. 33). For example in the UK the idea of volunteers replacing paid staff in smaller libraries is being strongly encouraged (Ansticce 2016b).

5. Example: NPM tools used in the restructing of the UEF Library

The new Finnish University act that was passed in the summer 2009 and came into effect at the beginning of 2010 meant a paradigm shift to the management of the universities and their departments. The previous State owned universities became more independent, they now have a juridical status on their own and thus they became autonomous economic actors (Yliopistolaki 2009, 5§). This change can be seen as a part of the new public management (NPM) policy that was introduced also to the Finnish public sector from the 1990’s. This movement introduced business practices to the private sector and also emphasised the need to build the services based on the users’ needs.

Dunleavy et al. (2005, p. 470) highlight the most important integrating themes of the NPM as follows:

- disaggregation, flattening hierarchies and building information and managerial system that enable the controlling,
- competition, introducing purchaser-provider separation into public structures and
- incentivization, moving from public sector ethos based towards a pecuniary-based, specific performance initiatives.

These all were implemented in the Finnish higher education policy renewal. Competition was introduced both in the rhetoric and the daily policies. The Ministry of Education and Culture stressed the importance of the international competition and the need for the Finnish universities to be among the top. Maybe the most important of the precious themes was the pecuniary-based incentivization. This was even more emphasized by the economic recession that resulted in budgetary cutbacks for the Finnish higher education institutions. This of course meant also for the academic libraries a need to reconsider and restructure their services and especially their collection policies.
The University of Eastern Finland (UEF) was established in 2010 as the result of the merger of the University of Joensuu and the University of Kuopio. With approximately 15,000 students and 2,800 members of staff, the University of Eastern Finland is one of the largest universities in Finland. The university's campuses are located in Joensuu, Kuopio and Savonlinna, about 100 km apart from each other. The library has three campus libraries and a joint library with the university hospital. It has 75 staff members (see Saarti/Juntunen 2011; Muhonen/Nygrén/Saarti 2012).

The rapid structural development of the library began in 2010, due to the university merger caused by the renovations of the Finnish university act. At that time, the University Board stated that the aim of the merger is to reorganize the university management and supporting services, and to transfer resources saved by this for academic research and teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>m€</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library costs (total)</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisitions</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 4 Library costs of the UEF

The most significant expenses at the library are the human, material, and space costs (see table 4). According to the University Board's policy, the library's fiscal resources are reallocated and directed to library material costs, both inside the library and at the university level. The university’s and the Finnish Government's basic policy has been that the costs relating to the services must be reduced and at the same time the level of research must be heightened. Thus the University of Eastern Finland has granted additional funds to purchase library materials – other costs (facilities and staff) have been adjusted according to the principle of zero budget growth. The rate of acquisition cost growth – more than 750,000 euros over the period considered – means that the library has had to significantly prune other expenditure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total library expenses (€) / target population</td>
<td>383.48</td>
<td>391.48</td>
<td>421.12</td>
<td>422.70</td>
<td>407.11</td>
<td>412.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library acquisition cost / library costs in total %</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>31.91</td>
<td>33.59</td>
<td>35.67</td>
<td>34.25</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 5 The allocation of the library budget and costs

Functionally, the most significant change in the operating environment of the library has been the digitalisation of the science and the fact that the University has been focusing its teaching and research towards its selected strategic focus areas. This has meant for the library a transition from the printed resources and services created for managing a print collection library towards the online digital library and automatizing the processed needed in managing the printed library collections, e.g. an increase in self-service (see table 5 and 6). This has enabled to reduce the workload, particularly in the handwork. At the same time the library has recruited new staff for special expertise tasks and library information systems management.
The shift from the printed materials towards the digital materials has also led to a reduction in the number of traditional library work, either in such a way that the tasks are genuinely reduced or so that the library has been able to automate these tasks (see table 7).

### Tab. 6 The digital change of the UEF collections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed books (volumes)</td>
<td>739,594</td>
<td>732,770</td>
<td>712,608</td>
<td>702,612</td>
<td>696,222</td>
<td>671,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-books (titles)</td>
<td>308,862</td>
<td>346,329</td>
<td>369,606</td>
<td>379,835</td>
<td>418,377</td>
<td>525,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed journals (titles)</td>
<td>137,000</td>
<td>131,200</td>
<td>127,330</td>
<td>128,058</td>
<td>110,166</td>
<td>109,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-journals (titles)</td>
<td>17,153</td>
<td>21,253</td>
<td>23,795</td>
<td>23,309</td>
<td>27,082</td>
<td>30,792</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tab. 7 Self-service at the UEF Library

The information literacy and other library related instruction has utilized online education, which has helped to increase efficiency in the use of teaching resources (see table 8).

### Tab. 8 Efficiency in teaching

The tightening of the economy and especially the new methods of producing library services has reduced the amount of the library staff (see table 9).

### Tab. 9 The amount of person-years at the UEF

The modern management, based on the strategic decisions and measuring the efficiency of the service production including the needed resource allocations has definitely helped the UEF
library to reorganize its services. What is more, it also has enabled the library to actually provide better resources and services for its users.

This example gives a good answer to research question number three “How can libraries survive and use the NPM methods for this?”.

6. Conclusions and further research

The NPM approach causes several problems that are neither clear nor definable or separable or easily solvable (Steane/Dufour/Gates 2015, p. 267) and e. g. “New Zealand’s acceptance and then shift away from NPM suggests a diminishing of its lustre in public management theory and practice” (Steane/Dufour/Gates 2015, p. 264). The challenge to implement business-like tools without carefully considering how to maintain the duties and tasks of the public organizations must be examined in the strategic work.

There is definitely a need for both the public and the academic libraries to implement NPM-methods. Especially efficiency and effectiveness are important goals of the NPM approach, as could be seen at the example of the UEF library. But as Skålén (2004, p. 262) found out “[…] that the introduction of NPM reform initiatives creates heterogeneous, conflicting and fluid organizational identities rather than a homogenous and stable business identity. This is an impediment to improving efficiency and effectiveness, which is a fundamental goal with NPM.”

Norwegian and Danish surveys of library leaders reveal that they to a certain degree have knowledge of NPM-related tools, first and foremost activity plans and accountancy, management by objectives and user surveys.

One important way to save the libraries can be “[…] to gain acceptance through the public opinion expressed by different stakeholders” (Pors/Johannsen 2003, p. 57). This can be gained through a good strategy and annual reports with excellent key figures. All in all, what libraries have to do is “to tell and sell” (Vallet 2015, p. 15).

The emerging digital science and requirement for opening the science for the public on the other hand open totally new tasks and challenges especially for the academic libraries. Here the strategic work is important and the NPM management methods must be only used in creating excellent services not defining their contents.

The main research question “Is the NPM approach in libraries a success story or just an excuse for cost-reduction?” cannot be answered that easily. On the one hand it is an excuse for cost-reduction as can be seen in chapter 4 where examples for the closing of libraries are enlisted. But on the other hand NPM can be a success story when management tools are used, as can be seen in the UEF library (chapter 5).

Beyond that there is more research required, to answer this question in more detail. For this the authors of this paper are currently conducting a qualitative pre-study, interviewing leaders of academic as well as public libraries how they can ensure and increase the quality of their libraries’ services with the ongoing financial cutbacks. This needs to be followed by an extensive quantitative research.

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