

Collection Map for the Finnish University Libraries - An Introduction

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The article describes how the pursuit of collection mapping has been implemented for the Finnish University Libraries by the Collection Map Project. The project was launched in 2003 to develop a theme based map for the collections and services of the university libraries. To begin with, the practical goal of the project was to build a database containing collection descriptions. However, the importance and a variety of possible uses and benefits have been recognized during the project.

The university libraries in Finland have a long tradition of collaboration. The collaboration has largely been built on library automation, which has even resulted in internationally noticeable achievements in building modern library services. For example, a so called national "Triangle" is a system that combines traditional library system (database, union catalogue), national portal ("Nelli") and digital object management system.

The Finnish university and research libraries also have a long tradition of collaboration in collection development. The system of national resource libraries was created in the 1970s. The twenty participating libraries were responsible for building and maintaining a comprehensive collection of certain subject areas for national needs.

The national resource library system was discontinued officially in 2003 and replaced with a concept of collection profiles for every university library. Collection profiles are based on the research and teaching subjects areas of each university. The collection map is a tool to help libraries to modify these profiles.

The Collection Map Project

The Council for Finnish University Libraries was established in 1996. It is a formal network of all the university libraries (20), the National Library and the National Repository Library. The network develops its services with the aid of projects, strengthens the expertise of libraries, and supplies new approaches. The National Library of Finland supports the library network by producing and co-ordinating centralised services. The National Repository Library conserves and loans material transferred from libraries. (<http://www.lib.helsinki.fi/english/libraries/cfu.htm>)

One of Council's basic tasks is to develop and co-ordinate the availability and scope of information materials. All types of resources in the participating libraries are seen as shared national resources. In order to make the sharing of these

resources more effective the Council decided in 2003 that a map of the collections and services by subject theme should be compiled.

The project started after the Ministry of Education granted funding which allowed hiring a project co-ordinator. A Steering Group was set up, chaired by Vuokko Palonen, Director of the Tritonia Academic Library in Vaasa, and a contact librarian was nominated by every university library co-ordinate communication and collection descriptions done in the libraries.

The goal of the project is to give an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of information provision in the country by describing the information resources of university libraries as subject collections. All collections in all formats - printed, digital or other would be described to build the collection map. Collections included should be publicly available and accessible. Web resources included should be stable. Collections can be special collections or general collections. Practical result would be a database containing collection descriptions.

Related projects and plans as well as functioning services were identified around the world. The Australian Libraries Gateway (<http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/libraries?action=LibSearch&subj=1>) and the Scottish Collections Network (<http://scone.strath.ac.uk/service/index.cfm>) proved to be useful in planning the contents of Finnish mapping project.

The expected use of the Map is planned to be manifold. Libraries could have quantitative and qualitative information about their own and other libraries' collections. This could be used in planning acquisition needs and discarding. It could provide background information for strategies and enhance quality work. It could give possibilities for better collection development by subject, regionally and nation-wide. Also, it could give Finnish libraries international visibility - provided that descriptions are multilingual. It might also serve as a tool for knowledge management for library staff; much of the experience

and knowledge of senior staff can be transferred to the Map.

The map will help library users to locate relevant resources. This is important in portal environment where a great number of databases and collections can be searched. Standard form collection descriptions will provide metadata for this.

For academic community, it will be useful as it provides information about the level of collections in relation to a branch of science. This and other information can be used in budget planning and discussions with funding organisations. For publishers and booksellers, it would provide information for many purposes, e.g. for approval plans.

Collection descriptions

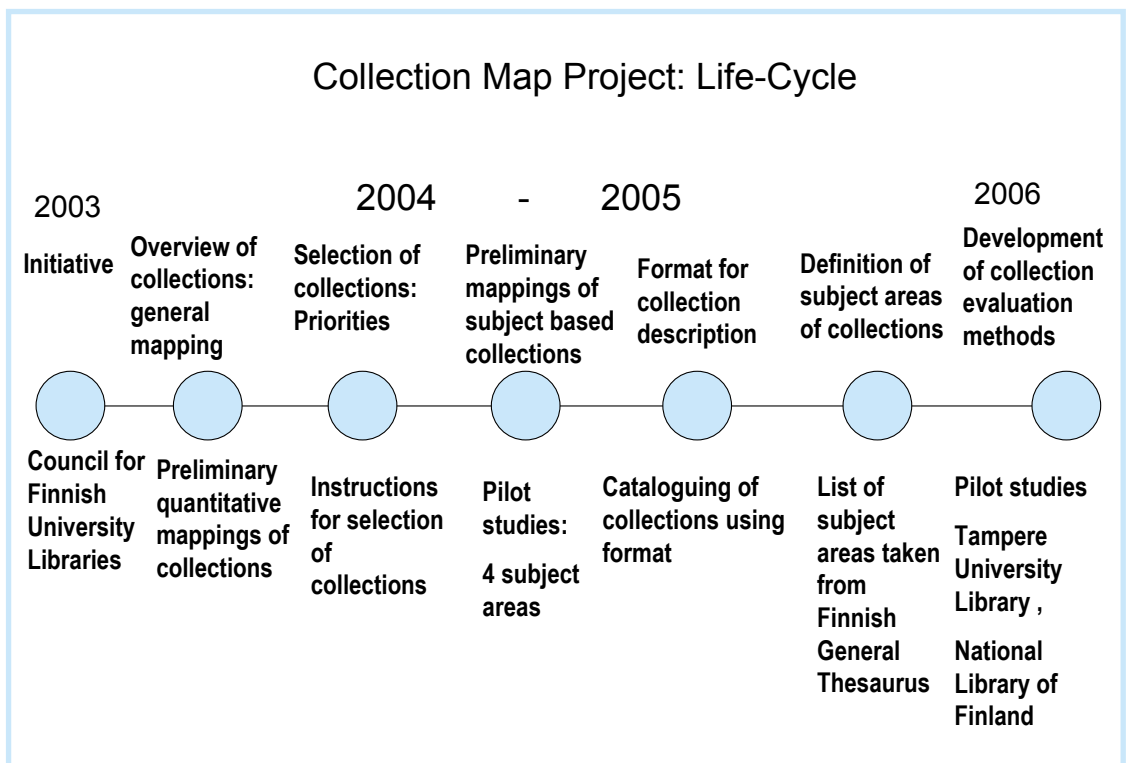
The project has several phases. The first is the description of collection to the collection map. For this we need to determine collection identification, description format and description rules.

Collections are identified by a collection code given according to a draft for an international standard: ISCI (International Standard Collection Identifier, <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/iso/tc46sc9/docs/sc9n431.pdf>). The description format is built on the NISO Collection Description Specification (Z39.91-200X), based on the NISO Metasearch Initiative. (http://www.niso.org/committees/MS_initiative.html). It is a draft, but it looks very promising and can be used.

The problematic part of this phase is that there are no internationally accepted collection description rules. To some extent we can use cataloguing rules for library materials - but there remain lots of issues that have to be discussed and determined. It probably would be IFLA's duty to create such rules.

Collection descriptions have to be multilingual to allow data exchange. This applies especially to thesauri and classifications that are used to describe collections. And finally the descrip-

Figure 1 (Raine Wilen)



tion must include information about availability of collections and management of rights to use collections.

The second phase includes the description of acquisition profiles of individual libraries, as well as the description of special collections.

The final phase is the evaluation of collections. Methods used for this must produce both qualitative and quantitative information. The Conspectus method will be used to describe the depth and research quality of collections. A quantitative analysis of the collection will be made by subject. The criteria are age, language structure and completeness.

Special subject index will be added to new monograph acquisitions - and this will later provide automatically information about acquisition and collection development profiles.

The tools for the map exist already. Collected data will be stored in a digital object management system Doria (ENCompass). The national portal "Nelli" (Exlibris) can be used for information retrieval - there is no need for a separate portal.

When all this background work is done there are facilities for libraries to maintain collabora-

tively the collection map. The description platform and other joint facilities will be arranged by the National Library.

In November 2005, the Collection Map Project organised an international seminar in co-operation with the International Relations Group of the Finnish Research Library Association, the National Library and the IFLA Acquisition and Collection Development Section. Specialists from the USA, Scotland and Czech Republic talked about collection mapping theory and experiences as well as the use of Conspectus in collection description. (<http://pro.tsv.fi/stks/>) (<http://www.nrl.fi/Tietokartta/about.htm>) .

So far the project has been developed for university libraries. The next stage is to broaden it to be a national level service, including the collection descriptions of all library sectors: special, polytechnic and public.

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