

AMKIT Consortium: Innovation, Collaboration and Ability to Transform

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Emotions, new skills and peer pressure – 15 years of the AMKIT Consortium has been all that and more. The Consortium coordinates cooperation among the Universities of the Applied Sciences (UAS) in Finland. Libraries of Universities of the Applied Sciences joined to a Consortium in 2001 around a library system project. Successful co-operation led to further joint efforts, while the role of the consortium has been extended to encompass co-ordination and advocacy of UAS libraries in different contexts. Joint contributions of the AMKIT Consortium include The Open Repository Theseus for the publications of the universities of applied sciences. Future prospects include potential extended partnerships and an open-minded approach to innovate and reshape working methods collaboratively.

A Short History

The Finnish higher education system consists of universities of applied sciences (UAS) and universities. These two sectors have different kinds of missions and profiles. Universities of applied sciences offer professionally-oriented higher education with a focus on regional development, while universities concentrate on academic studies and research. Both types of institutions have their own libraries which support studies and research.

The AMKIT Consortium was founded in November 2001. The foundation of the consortium was preceded by a lively debate about the role of the universities of applied sciences questioning whether libraries were necessary for these institutions. Some of the politicians suggested that the intricate network of public libraries in Finland could serve the needs of the universities of applied sciences. On the other hand, heads of the universities of applied sciences concluded that the UAS sector should provide their own library and information services to support research and development.

The treaty of the UAS for Consortium was signed by the rectors of the universities of applied sciences. The treaty was concerned with the founding the Consortium and its main purpose was to get a new library system for its members. All the universities of the applied sciences under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Culture became members of the treaty. At its peak, there were 29 universities of applied sciences in Finland, while the number of institutions has decreased to 24 by 2016. Some of the UAS libraries work in cooperation with university libraries.

Objectives of the AMKIT Consortium

The need for a consortium of *the UAS libraries* arose from the acquisition of a common library system. The Voyager library system was implemented between 2002 and 2005 in five phases. The AMKIT Consortium coordinated the cooperation and implementation projects amongst

the universities of applied sciences in Finland. Close co-operation between the members of the consortium and the benchmarking of practices has added value to the operation of the member libraries.



AMK Library Day.

Image: Linda Saareko-Ranta.

Nowadays, the administration of the AMKIT Consortium is rotated – the particular UAS holding the steering committee chairperson’s post also takes responsibility for the administration of the

Successful co-operation led to other joint efforts. Open Repository Theseus – the theses and publications of the Universities of Applied Sciences on the internet is a good example. The AMKIT Consortium was also recognized as a useful form of co-operation and coordination for other possible goals. It also works as a co-ordinating body of the UAS libraries for the Ministry of Education and Culture, the National Library of Finland and other library sectors. The Consortium also appoints representatives to national library-related working groups and gives statements about different issues concerning the library industry in Finland.

Administration of the AMKIT Consortium

The earlier AMKIT Consortium had its own office operating at the premises of the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. Development manager (Katri Vääntinen) had a key role in implementing the Voyager library system in UAS libraries, while she also laid a foundation for the expertise-based working culture in the Consortium.

The decision-making structure of the consortium consists of the general assembly and a steering committee. The general assembly is the ultimate decision-making body of the consortium, while a steering committee prepares development plans and proposals for the assembly. At first, many of the UAS rectors also participated at the AMKIT Consortium’s general assembly, but nowadays only the heads of the UAS libraries participate.

Consortium. The Humak University of Applied Sciences is presently taking care of the administration of the AMKIT consortium, and will end its period at the end of 2016. Writers of this article work as the steering committee chairperson (Kauko Maskulainen) and as the secretary of the Consortium (Virpi Kultanen). UAS Libraries have their own biannual conference called “AMKIT Library Day”. The most recent conference was organized in Jyväskylä.

Special Expertise in Working Groups

Working groups operate as the special expertise groups of the consortium. Members of the working groups are library and information services professionals working in the UAS Libraries. The library system development, pedagogy and communications working groups have operated throughout the existence of the AMKIT Consortium, although the names of the groups have changed. The metadata working group continues the work of the cataloging group. The e-resources group, together with the Theseus-steering group are developing models and practices to cope with the challenges of the ongoing digitalization.

Open Repository Theseus

The Open Repository Theseus was established in 2008-2009 and its development is among the AMKIT Consortium’s most important projects. Theseus was developed as an electronic repository for the thesis and publications made in the



Photo: Auli Rossi.

AMK Library Day under planning. Kauko Maskulainen (left), Virpi Kultanen, Tuija Ylä-Sabara, Teemu Makkonen, Sirpa Warteva, Katja Pihkasalo ja Laura Eteläaho.

universities of applied sciences in Finland. Theseus responds to the repository needs of UAS libraries and provides access to available theses and publications.

The development of Theseus was done in cooperation with *Arene (Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences)* and the National Library of Finland. The number of publications in Theseus is already significant: the 100,000th submission to Theseus was made this year on 14th of March.

User Satisfaction Surveys

UAS Libraries have been user-oriented since their foundation. The first user satisfaction survey was made in 2004. The survey gave systematically collected and documented information, which enabled the development of the UAS Libraries services and supported decision-making. User surveys also gave valuable information to the audits of the universities of applied sciences.

Library user satisfaction surveys for the UAS Libraries and other library sectors have been coordinated by the National Library of Finland. Results from the surveys have been good. The ongoing changes in Finland's library industry have

also influenced the National Library of Finland's resources and it has not yet been decided if, when or how the next enquiry will be made.

Participation in National and International Cooperation

The AMKIT Consortium co-operates broadly. The most important partners for the consortium include Arene (the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences), the Ministry of Education and Culture, the National Library of Finland and the library associations in Finland. As such, the AMKIT Consortium has also become as an advocating body for UAS libraries.

In international cooperation, partnerships between single UAS Libraries and participation in *IFLA meetings* are important. The AMKIT Consortium has representatives in over thirty working groups within the Finnish library industry.

Collaborative Future

The structural changes of higher education in Finland, and the digitalization and utilization of social media have been successfully integrated into the practices and workflows of the UAS Libraries. The decreasing number of staff, and expand-

ing the availability of the library services and the need to re-think the work of UAS Libraries motivate the libraries to further efforts: to innovate and reshape working methods collaboratively.

Expanding cooperation between publishers and content providers is a rational step to take. One example of this kind of cooperation concerns cataloguing – the trend is towards outsourcing of primary cataloguing in UAS Libraries. The time saved from cataloguing could be used to improve customer services and to initiate new methods in data mining.

Overall, the AMKIT Consortium aims at extensive collaboration with library partners. In particular, the university libraries in Finland are seen as close partners. Earlier cooperation with university libraries has been mostly focused on

the library system, but in the future other possibilities and needs for collaboration will clearly be required. 📖

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