

Chapter 4.11

E-Services in Danish Research Libraries: Issues and Challenges at Roskilde University Library

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reports the findings of a case study of e-services adoption at research libraries. The case under consideration is Roskilde University Library (RUB), a research library supporting learning activities at Roskilde University. The research focuses on the main issues that RUB had to deal with in the process of adopting e-services and the future challenges that e-services provide for RUB. The chapter also presents the consequences of e-services adoption for Roskilde University library's organization, its business model and the relationships with customers, publishers (providers of knowledge), and other research libraries in Denmark. The main results can be summarized as follows: (1) adoption of e-services has forced RUB to innovate rapidly. Innovation is driven, among other factors, by ICT developments (technology push), but innovation is also user-driven and pervasive throughout the

organization; (2) e-services have changed RUB's organizational structure and division of labour by moving more and more towards IT-based jobs and competences; (3) e-services have changed the relationships between users and publishers; (4) e-services have changed and continue to change the business model of the library; and (5) RUB is becoming a combination of a virtual and a physical library, moving more and more towards a virtual library with electronic resources and online communities, but still keeping the traditional function of a "knowledge space."

E-SERVICES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

The networked ICT technologies (such as the Internet) are having a dramatic effect on how services and especially knowledge services are innovated, designed, produced, and distributed. In addition, ICT networks such as the Internet have created

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the basis for the development of new types of services. These networks may also change the way customers or users experience service functions.

E-services are defined here as services that are produced, provided, and/or consumed through the use of ICT networks such as Internet-based systems and mobile solutions. E-services can be used by both consumers and businesses, and can be accessed via a wide range of information appliances (Hoffman, 2003, p. 53). E-services also include the selling of physical goods on the Internet as for instance an airline ticket that is purchased online, but delivered by surface mail to the buyers or government services offered on the Internet or e-government. There are three main characteristics of e-services:

- The service is accessible across the Internet or other electronic networks
- The service is consumed by a person across the Internet or other electronic networks
- There might be a fee that the consumer pays the provider for using the e-service, but that might not always be the case as for example in some e-services offered by the government

Normally the production, provision, or consumption of a service requires the interaction between the service provider and the user of the service. Traditionally, this has been based on personal interactions, most often face-to-face interactions. In e-services, the production, consumption, and/or provision of services takes place through the intermediation of an ICT network such as Internet-based systems or mobile solutions. Examples of e-services are e-banking, e-library services, e-publishing, airline tickets, e-government, information, and location services. However, e-services also include, for example, the online selling of real estate property or the purchasing of physical goods that are then delivered

by other means. The advent of e-commerce and e-services has raised a number of challenges for knowledge intensive service organizations such as consulting companies, libraries, and publishers as well as for companies selling physical goods. For example, companies have to innovate, have to develop strategies and new business models for the production and provision of e-services, and acquire or develop new competences.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges that e-services are posing and will pose for research or academic libraries. The research library is chosen here because it is a particular type of knowledge intensive service organization: it has the role of acquiring and providing research and learning related knowledge as well as storing and preserving such knowledge. More specifically, the study shows how the advent of e-services has revolutionized the whole concept of the library and forced the libraries to innovate at an extremely fast rate. In fact libraries have been using information and communication technologies (ICTs) for more than 20 years, but while the first wave of ICTs and technological change had resulted in automation with consequent rationalization and decreased costs, the advent of e-services is moving the library from automation to digitalization, causing a shift of paradigm in libraries. The study has focused on the issues that RUB has had to deal with as a result of e-services adoption as well as the future challenges that e-services provide for RUB. In addition, the investigation has also focused on the consequences of e-services for Roskilde University Library's organization, its business model, and relationships with customers, publishers (providers of information), and other research libraries in Denmark.

The case is based on a number of interviews with RUB management, other secondary material provided by Roskilde University Library and information provided on the Web page.

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