At the beginning of June I had the opportunity to attend the University of Helsinki Library’s International Staff Exchange Week (ISEW). It was a week of engagement, participation, and collaboration, where academic library colleagues from across Europe had the chance to discuss, share ideas, and learn from one another. The ISEW2018 staff organised library visits and tours in and around Helsinki, talks from librarians about their different roles and focuses in terms of academic librarianship, lectures on library design, open science and professional development workshops, discussions about information literacy, and much more.

Finland’s library culture has featured often in the media, particularly recently, due to the development of a new and radical public library in the city space, but also because Finns have a notable and long-standing respect for libraries that also harmonises with their world-leading education practices. It is an exciting time to visit, and is both refreshing and inspiring going to a place where new libraries are being built and to meet librarians and teaching staff working in these environments. I hope that you too will be inspired by reading this!
ISEW began at the University of Helsinki’s Main Library (Kaisa House). Kaisa House is Finland’s most popular learning environment with an average 9,000 visits each day. Following a welcome orientation, Prof. Kimmo Tuominen, the University Librarian, provided an overview of the library and the importance of education across society. Tuominen noted the tradition of openness in the Nordic countries where all libraries are open to the public, and remarked that Tarja Halonen, the former President of Finland (and the first woman to hold that position), currently chairs the Board of the University of Helsinki.

This integration of learning with daily life is further demonstrated by the university’s work to embed a culture of openness across the institution, something which UCL is committed to also (both are members of LERU); the institution’s policy paper on open science was published recently. Open initiatives such as this allow not only collaboration within academia, but also with wider society, sustaining open praxes and philosophies in a rapidly changing information and HE landscape.
Changes in learning technologies and modes of education have greatly impacted the library space and environments conducive for learning. Library patrons increasingly use spaces for:

- Recreation and chatting: Kaisa House has sound-proofed ‘telephone booths’—two on each floor—where patrons can go to make calls.
- Eating, drinking coffee, and relaxing.
- Silent, individual, and group work rooms which are marked with a red-amber-green system.
- Rest and meditation, for quiet breaks before returning to study.
- Power sockets which facilitate mobile learning on portable devices.

And—because sitting is notably bad for health—standing study spaces are becoming more common to encourage healthy study habits.

Also of note is that the building lets the maximum possible amount of natural light filter in—this was an integral design feature of the recent renovation.
ENABLING HEALTHY STUDY HABITS

That’s right! Standing is good for your health :) The university library provides desk spaces which encourage standing and healthy study habits. Some desks do not have power sockets so mobile learners can stand and work for 30 minutes or so before moving on. Adjustable book stands, placed on desks, can also be re-purposed for standing-study.
The National Library of Finland is the oldest library in Finland, founded in 1640. In 1827, the city of Turku, where the library (and university) was originally located, burned down, and the collection moved thereafter to Helsinki. From 1828 to 1917 the library became a legal deposit for everything printed in the Russian Empire (which Finland was a part of at that time). The library had—and arguably still has—the richest collection of Russian literature of that period, which is part of its Slavonic Library collection.

Located just around the corner from Kaisa House, Jussi-Pekka Hakkarainen gave us a tour which included a short presentation detailing the library’s work and history. Like the university library, it is open to the public who are also able to borrow items. The library is beautiful—it has recently been renovated and is considered the most successful renovation project in Finland; the books even continue to live with their original shelves which were retained and refitted.

Other collections held within the Library:
- Finnish National Sound Archive/Finnish National Discography, Viola – the collection
is missing only three pieces of music, attesting to the meticulousness of Finnish record-keeping.

- **Digitaaliset aineistot**, a digital archive which holds all newspaper resources.
- **Finnish Public Libraries Statistics Database** collects statistical information about and provides evaluation services for all public libraries in Finland.
- The Finnish web is consistently archived.
- Interface to record all copyrighted material is in development; there is also a centralized licensing service where one contact point negotiates with publishers ensuring cost-saving.

Only 10% of the library’s collection is stored on the ground floor—the rest is located in the basement of the building.

You can learn more about the National Library of Finland and its collections on the [website](http://www.nationallibraryoffinland.fi).
On day 2 we visited the Terkko Health Hub, a learning environment which has also recently been renovated. Where there were previously two floors filled with books and shelving, there is now an open study space on the ground floor which also hosts health talks, hackathons, medical science and IBM events, and is used by the university’s enterprise society and students and clinicians from the nearby hospital. The floor above is now a dedicated ‘library’ space.

There were interesting presentations in the morning—the first was given by Anne Kakko-nen and Kiira Grönroos and examined New space, new collaboration in relation to the Terkko renovation. Learning how service design, subjects of study, staff/student collaboration, and user support can shape aspects of the physical learning space was eye-opening.

1 To investigate the particularities of medical science learning environments, a benchmark fact-finding trip to Boston was conducted, followed by collaboration with front-line library staff and the architects. The importance of everyone being on board and understanding why certain things are done was highlighted.
(2) The design of the space also reorganised working habits so that everyone in the building—regardless of whether they are academic or library staff—knows each other. In addition, being embedded in the faculty supports a strategic approach for liaison librarianship. The greater visibility of medical staff also allows for more collaborative working with students which, similar to UCL’s Connected Curriculum, is a theme of the university.

(3) The student- and user-focused elements of the redesign were also discussed. It was important to cultivate a space in which students could study as well as possible and informing students of their ‘study rights’ is a part of this. Rather than sending users to other spaces, Terkko also adopted a “they are already here, so let’s support them here” approach, training staff to provide registration and university administration support on-site, rather than redirecting them to the main campus.
The next presentation given by Eeva Pyörälä, Senior Lecturer in University Pedagogy, explored further how the Health Hub can support study. Teaching and learning, for over 800 years, has looked a lot like this (background) illustration by Laurentius de Voltolina, which is one of the earliest depictions of pedagogical practice. But, as the learning landscape adapts to new active and problem-based teaching models and learning technologies, Pyörälä is interested to see how student learning experiences can be enhanced.

She is leading on a research project where first-year medical students were each given iPads with a stylus for note-taking; it was not known how they would be used, and so the aim is to study how the students study. Some key education uses for iPads identified so far:

- Note-taking and annotation apps are heavily used, particularly in conjunction with digital learning materials. Annotation allows students to search not only their digital learning resources, but also their own notes, which is great for revision.
- Seeking information on the Internet
- Using digital learning materials, such as editable e-books. Libraries of digital resources such as diagnostic images (without markings or texts) encourage self-learning.
... Consequently, these findings highlighted the growing need to teach students how to learn and teach teaching staff to create good digital materials—these should be:

- Viewable on a screen
- Ready to annotate
- Made available to students before classes; Pyörälä’s findings show that providing handouts before lectures does not stop students going to lectures—students will go if the teaching is good
- Usable with mobile PBL methodologies
- Engaging VLEs, which are popular in medical science

Understanding how libraries can support learning at a pedagogical level is increasingly important. At UCL, the [OER project](https://oerproject.org) from Library Services and ISD is piloting a repository, [OpenEd@UCL](https://opened.ucl.ac.uk), for open educational resources, and also supports staff who want to create digital and open teaching content. Pyörälä’s presentation and the study’s findings on annotation and mobile learning are particularly useful moving forward; her studies are ongoing and will be published in due time, and you can follow her work [here](https).
An ode to libraries

What is a library? It’s a question that Kari Lärmsä, the Service Manager at Helsinki City Library, has an affirmative and immediate (and €98M) answer to: DIY area and workshop; print shop for stickers, badges, and 3D printing; game station; “learning by doing” place with no books; music and recording studio; electricity; non-commercialist environment; different sounds and colours; cinema; café with a terrace, auditorium; art display, makerspace for kids; restaurant; an incorporated park area, and; sauna.

It is also a cultural space for public debates, discussions, exhibitions, events organised by library users, and concerts, has a living lab cube that is immersive and multi-sensory—a prototypical holodeck—with interactive and digital glass walls, and a tranquil area with no books to go to relax and spend time with one’s thoughts.

At a time when libraries are undergoing radical—and not always positive—change, Finland’s Library Oodi is radical in its response. The new public library, which is currently under development, incorporates all of the above, and

OODI

Image credit // Library Oodi (by ALA partners in Helsinki, Finland)
seeks to tackle the challenges of making electronic resources visible in a public space. It also addresses more pragmatic issues such as signage and staff management across a large space; a digital, holographic signage system and an intelligent staff scheduling system will be introduced. Staff will also be required to know what events are happening throughout the building, what a coffee costs, and be able to provide transport information, to ensure collaboration and cooperation across the space and provide the best support and information service possible.

Finland recently celebrated 100 years of independence and, due to open in December, the library is a birthday gift not only to itself, but for everyone; the front of Library Oodi (seen here) induces a vortex illusion, pulling the world into its next-generation open learning environment.

The building also faces the National Parliament of Finland, which sits on the opposite side of the road, as though a reflection of its societal value. Built on an equal level with the parliament building, this library development symbolises and strengthens the cogency and significance of the learning space in Finnish societal, cultural, and political life.
Talks from Pälvi Kaiponen, Marjo Kuusela, Marja Maisio, Eva Isaksson, and Jukka Englund detailed open science and metric work conducted in the library; here are some brief notes.

The University of Helsinki encourages open research practices and is an open access publisher. The library is responsible for the full publication cycle; it provides OA support to researchers such as open science workshops, bespoke individual support meetings, and a service catalogue in which researchers can mark what they need. See Project MILDRED to learn about the library’s drive to open data.

Regular research output generates data metrics, and accurate researcher profiles—where profile identifiers measure ‘attention’ rather than re/use—aid metric count, evaluation, evidence of research impact, and, in consequence, funding. The contextual and responsible use of metrics provides neutral and expert information for the institution as well as the library. The Leiden Manifesto and Data Citation Roadmap for Finland were identified as useful resources for their work.
Founded in 1873, the Finnish parliamentary library is one of the few in the world that allows the public access to use its space and resources. We were given a tour of the library and parliament buildings by Sirkka-Liisa Korkeila and Antti Virrankoski.

A specialist library, it is older than parliament, serves the Finnish library network, and is the current acting legal deposit for the EU. As well as holding the most comprehensive parliamentary, legal, social, and political collection in Finland, similar to the University of Helsinki Library’s political science materials, the Archive of Parliament is also located here; this includes a radio and television archive with recordings from the 1950s and an interview archive of MPs. Information literacy sessions run at the library cover the use of national and EU government databases.
At Vilikki Campus, Päivi Helminen talked about IL MOOCs offered through the University of Helsinki (HU) Library on the institutional VLE. Assessed by IL librarians, this information literacy course informs part of the academic writing programme and requires that students write an essay on a subject of their choice, outlining their search strategy, and how they store, evaluate, cite, etc., their research. This assignment is then submitted for discussion and assessment, and automated certificates—a mark of accreditation—are sent out.

A fellow ISEW participant described a similar IL assignment at their library where medical science research students ‘create a journal’; this teaches them about the full process from research to publication. There was also some discussion about implementing pre-term IL workshops for incoming students and encouraging teaching staff to use MOOCs as a way of embedding research and critical thinking skills.

Information literacy teaching at the HU Library, where open workshops run once a week, is also integrated into curricula. This is sometimes difficult because different departments can have different approaches (i.e., voluntary, compulsory, with varying content types), but skilled IL librarians can navigate these issues and inform open science, interaction, and learning practices across the university.
Why do books always get the best places?

Physical space: modern, bright, clean, maximum natural light, spacious, well-equipped, open, communal, solitary place for rest—even sleep (couches and lounge chairs), personal lockers, shoe storage and wardrobes, balcony terrace, large windows, coffee machine appliances, canteen, accessible, flexible, relaxed, large dining area, in/formal meeting rooms, height-adjustable desks, and mobile work environments.
PLANTS

... clean the air, reduce stress, and help with general wellbeing. Terkko is full of them, and the Viikki Campus has small indoor gardens (like this) for those who want to study or work amongst the foliage.
Kaisa House is big—but everyone has a smartphone. The Library’s WhatsApp service lets students communicate with the service team without leaving their desk or talking to anyone; it’s the perfect tool for a country that introduced text-messaging to the world and where WhatsApp is the most popular IM service. Unsurprisingly, it’s been a PR success. Students use the service to report faults (sometimes attaching pictures), and staff provide support immediately, sending a message once resolved. When the service was set up the staff were prepared for random messages (they only received one—“hello”) and as only telephone numbers appear without other identifying information, data protection issues were considered a low risk. Minna Suikka presented this video made by library interns, to demonstrate how the service works—have a look.
During collaborative groupwork activities we worked to identify ideas from our respective institutions. The activity made us think about and brainstorm the following topics:

- Outreach, collaboration, and promotion
- Staff skills
- Methods of IL teaching
- IL of my dreams

We worked in groups and discussed each topic, and then everyone placed two circle stickers next to what they considered the most important for that theme. Heart stickers indicate an individual’s favourite idea. Seen here are some of the results for IL of our dreams.
Suomenlinna is a Finnish sea fortress built over six islands and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We spent the fourth day here, in Pajasali Hall, part of the Crownwork Ehrensvård which was constructed in 1786. Entering through the seaside door, the cellared hall has vaulted ceilings which have been painted white; it is a light and peaceful place, where we were able to reflect on our professional work and undertake some competency mapping.

This **skills and knowledge of the academic library professional** workshop was run by Anne Kakkonen and was a highly useful and thought-provoking exercise. It allowed us to identify and think about what we do in our jobs, what skills we have, how important these skills are to our roles and how we use them, the expertise level required of us, how confident we are doing each task, where we think we need to improve, and what we want to improve—setting goals for professional development.

This was followed by a presentation on the University of Helsinki Library’s support developing a library in Eritrea and an afternoon tour of the fortress.
On the final day we visited the Aalto University Harold Herlin Learning Centre which is part of the Otaniemi campus designed by Alvar Aalto. The buildings feature Nordic classicist, modernist, and functionalist elements, and has recently undergone a renovation, consolidating new ideas of what a library is, because, as explained by Senior Specialist Matti Raatikainen, the learning space is not what it used to be.

The process for redesign involved testing users on whether they could look for and find items (everyone failed), and simply asking students, staff, and lecturers—“What do you do on a normal day?”—this gave ideas for how to organise space. An entire floor of shelved books was removed and there is now a studio to record talks, speeches, and presentations.

To encourage knowledge-sharing, play, and experimentation, MIT’s FabLab idea was implemented (there are now about 1,000 FabLabs in the world supporting physical and digital fabrication facilities), and include DIY spaces to use tools and create. It is an environment that prompts collaboration, prototyping, and innovation, as methods of learning.
IDEAS FOR LEARNING SPACES

Spaces in the Aalto University Harold Herlin Learning Centre, the FabLab space, large windows in the ceiling for natural light—*Aalto was a masterful user of indirect light*—an interactive e-book catalogue located next to the course collections for browsing, the iPads loans service, seating, an end-of-term bookshelf for students (and the library) to give their books away for free, and posters with QR codes that signal students to download maps of the library.
IDEAS FOR LEARNING SPACES
SUMMARY

Through workshops, tours, lectures, activities, presentations, and social events, ISEW reiterated the importance of the library space and the impact it has on learning activities. By scrutinising the modern-day practice and process of learning and research in different information spaces, libraries can positively inform service design, teaching practice, and health and wellbeing. Play, creativity, and innovation as modes of learning can also be encouraged through the provision of tools and learning technologies. It was a fantastic week which also offered the chance to reflect on the profession and professional development through distinctive and stimulating activities; the ISEW staff did a great job providing support and resources and planned a programme which was expertly organised, varied, and fulfilling.
KIITOS

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LIBRARY OODI
A lot has been written about the library since development began. You can visit the website and/or read some articles here:

- The borrowers: why Finland’s cities are havens for library lovers in The Guardian, by Tash Reith-Banks 15.05.2018
- Why Finland is home to the world’s most radical libraries in CNN, by Laura Houseley 29.05.2018
- Recording studios and saunas: what Finland can teach the UK about libraries in The New Statesman, by Lizzie Palmer 07.09.2017