

Major, newly created award goes to Danish libraries

The Aalborg Libraries are the winner of Axiell Bibliotek's award for the most innovative library in the Nordic Region.

On Thursday, 6 September the Aalborg libraries were awarded with the newly created prize for "The Nordic Digital Library of the Year" which names them the most innovative and creative libraries in Denmark, Sweden and Finland. The award was presented by Axiell Bibliotek, one of the world's leading suppliers of IT systems and services to libraries, at its large library conference in Finland, "*Citizens libraries – libraries for citizens; needs and expectations*".

The Aalborg Libraries received the award in recognition of their ground-breaking project: "The mobile library". This project succeeds in integrating mobile telephones into the interaction with library users. They have, for example, created an information service whereby library users are able to receive news via their mobile telephones about specific subjects of particular interest to them. In addition, the Aalborg Libraries are developing a chat programme whereby users can communicate with the librarian via their mobile phones.

The two other candidates were Celia Library from Finland and Stockholm Public Libraries from Sweden. Celia was nominated for being a pioneer with digital resources – especially for the visually impaired, and Stockholm for their great job in changing the library's role from being a more traditional to becoming a more digital illustrated by biblioteket.se.

Lise Søderberg, coordinator for the conference and a member of the selection committee, says: "*We are all aware that the country's libraries must adapt to the needs of the modern, interactive user if they are to survive in the information society of tomorrow. Therefore, the aim of this award was to support libraries which are thinking ahead. The Aalborg Libraries' mobile service is a unique example of a simple, but extremely useful and creative, facility which will benefit many users. Digitalisation renders the library more versatile and contemporary and makes use of the form of communication used by young people.*"

The award was conferred at Axiell Bibliotek's joint Nordic library conference in Turku, Finland which ran from 6 to 7 September. Over 30 managers from Denmark, Sweden and Finland's largest public libraries were gathered to discuss ways in which to strengthen libraries in order to meet the needs of tomorrow's users in the best possible way. In addition to this honour, the Aalborg Libraries will also be invited to take part in next year's large, international library conference in Canada, all expenses paid.

The conference is backed by the Nordic Cultural Fund and the participants had the opportunity to meet speakers and cultural politicians from Scandinavia and the USA, all of whom have advice on the way in which the library of the future should service its users.



The background for the conference on tomorrow's library users:

Falling visitor numbers, fewer borrowed books and increasing competition from digital media platforms such as Wikipedia, Google and YouTube: These are some of the challenges facing the country's libraries; challenges which they must overcome if they are to survive in the knowledge society of the future. This is the conclusion of several experts who also stress that libraries must listen more attentively to users' needs if they are to retain their position as a key knowledge and cultural institution in the future.

Therefore, Axiell Bibliotek has taken the initiative to hold a joint Nordic conference: Over 30 managers from Denmark, Sweden and Finland's largest libraries will discuss the best ways in which to appeal to the library users of the future and maintain their democratic role as a people's library.

“Basically, libraries must improve their ability to attract users and make them aware of the offers provided by libraries. As a result of the revolution within the information society over the past 10 years, more and more users – especially the young – are increasingly seeking information via other channels. Therefore, we must find new and innovative solutions and, to a much greater extent, adapt to the needs of the users and make libraries more experience-oriented. There are many alternatives: We could apply different communication models, launch new projects or integrate various different services into the library's current functions,” says Lise Söderberg who is the coordinator for the conference.