



## **How to strengthen the Social Capital of your library - Case Study of Kallio Library**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Kallio library is the second oldest branch of the Helsinki City Library. It will celebrate its 100 year anniversary this year. Kallio is an evolving district of the city. Originally a working class neighborhood, students and young families are becoming more numerous today. It is known as a very lively and bohemian area, and its residents are a colorful mix of styles.

Through the years Kallio library has been refurbished several times. The most recent large scale renovation took place in 2010. The busy service area was modernized, and return and check-out services were automated. The renovation also gave an opportunity to change entrenched working habits. The building consists of three floors and each department is on its own level. This has made them strong but also isolated from each other.

It is said that social capital plays a thriving role in a successful company. Knowledge management experts Don Cohen and Laurence Prusak describe in their book, *"In Good Company: How Social Capital Makes Organizations Work"*, how trust, personal networks and a sense of community play a thriving role in organizations.

I arrived at Kallio library at the beginning of 2011 as its new chief librarian. The renovation had already made some changes in everyday work, so it was easy to continue with new ideas. We created working teams in the library and started cooperative work with our user groups.

#### **Creating teams**

To strengthen the working climate we started planning the development of working teams. Because I was new at Kallio library and also to Helsinki City Library, I did not tell the staff how to form the best and most effective teams. The whole staff worked together to find the best solutions. The planning period took time and there were moments when staff members wished I would just decide for them. We eventually got our four "basic teams" formed by November 2011. Each team also selected its own team leader, who will be in charge for one year. In addition we will have two or three other teams, which will consist of members from the basic teams (These teams will be formed by Spring 2012.) The idea behind the working teams is to help the staff with the following:

- to see "the big picture" not only their own specific tasks
- to foster cooperation between the entire staff
- to make it easier to create new ideas

## **Creating cooperation with user groups**

For the cooperation with users we got some extra funding from the Central Library Project of Helsinki City Library. With this funding we arranged internal method training for the staff. This included the so-called Dynamic Method which makes it easy to handle and create ideas and proposals.

During the autumn we had two different events that arose as a result from those new ideas. One of them was an evening where we built partnerships regarding our music services. We now have a small group of users who are willing to arrange music events with the library staff and to take part in our acquisition process. The other event was a four hour open feedback session. We had three manned flip charts in our Dome area. The staff wrote down all feedback onto the charts and during the spring we will present how have we continued with the ideas our customers gave us. It is my hope that these efforts will continue to strengthen the knowledge sharing, innovation, and high productivity at Kallio Library.