

Workshop with Michael Thomsen from the Interactive Institute, Malmö 24/4 2001  
*The library as a model for the future of communication*

Michael Thomsen began with telling us that he was going to have a provocative workshop that would involve everyone participating. He had put out papers on the tables, and asked everyone to write down, in one word, what the greatest thing about libraries is. The papers were collected and all pieces of paper were put up on the wall after the person who had written the word had explained what he or she meant by it. The most common words were: knowledge (gathered knowledge, interaction, exchanging information), information (supply people with information, printed and electronic information), meeting place (meeting librarians, students and knowledge), and democracy (the library services are free, everybody can go there).

After all the words had been put up we got another question that had to be answered in one word; what is so good about books? The most common answer to this question, by far, was that it is portable. After portable came the fact that you can read it without having to use any special devices. These thoughts from the participants were meant to help us to "invent" the new generation library, at the end of the workshop. However, after Thomsen's short lecture of his thoughts of digital media, books and libraries other discussions emerged and there was never really time to make the scenario about the future library.

Thomsen shared his views on the advantages and disadvantages of books, and how the digital media can help people to become creative and interactive. According to Thomsen the new society is a society of creativity. The computer should not only be used for collecting information, but should make people want to create their own things. Thomsen means that the new communication form is many to many, not one to one or one to many as the book is. The change from books to digital media results in the library no longer being needed as a repository. Information in digital form is dynamic, which means that it can be changed at any time and therefore interaction can be made in a completely different way than when talking about a book. The consumers should become producers, and we should learn from each other. The library of the future must support the creative society and should teach people to learn through creating; creating your own thoughts.

All through the workshop there were many questions and discussions, some quite harsh. Most of the workshop participants took part in the discussions which concerned everything from *should the library be called something else in the future?* to *how shall we cope with the copyright issue in this new type of library?* It was a shame that the "invention of the new generation library" never really was discussed in depth, but the workshop was interesting and gave us a lot to think about.