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A boundary-crossing collaboration for knowledge creation and expertise: The CIP Project

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The paper proposes theoretical framework and an experimental case of a project CIP "Connecting Information Professionals Worklab 2006-2007" (CIP Work Lab) being developed at Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland. The purpose of the CIP Project was set up in order to (1) examine and develop the relationships between the degree programme in library and information services and the practice field, and (2) to investigate the key knots of knowledge transfer network from the relevant participants' point of views: from regional innovation area's, from the employers' and from the university lecturers' point of views. The background of the project CIP Worklab is based on the concepts of open innovation and living lab cooperation.

The paper efforts to interpret prerequisites and challenges in the university-industry cooperation and get experience about the shared knowledge creation in the systematic mutual interaction between the university and the professional practice. In practice there is a target of deeper further collaborative development of both the university lectureres and the staff of the regional library sector, in order to set up a win-win collaboration model.

The question is: how to improve the collaboration on the practical individual and professional expertise level in order to act efficiently in knowledge creation and in a long run in order to generate innovations, thus to strenghten the quality and impact of the library service. Subquestions are: (1) what kinds of barriers the individual human actors, lecturers and the library partners, in practice see, such which diminish the interests and opportunities to build collaboration; (2) what kinds of new opportunities there opened during the collaboration encouraging project CIP Work Lab; (3) what kinds of qualitative aspects should the effective cooperation model be composed of?

There are needed new models to improve and strenghten the lively link between higher education, professional practice and information research. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are considered as communities of information and know-how, which have an essential role in the regional development as producers and distributors of new knowledge and innovations. In addition, the task of the HEIs is not only to produce new knowledge and know-how but also to absorb creativity and talented people from the surrounding environment and this way to strengthen the capacity of the region.

Hazelkorn (2005) has recently illustrated the relationships and different tasks of the knowledge institutions as the nexus of research, education and practice. The mission of the traditional university is to promote free research and scientific education and to provide higher education based on research. Specialized research institutions have concentrated in combination of research and professional practice, while traditional vocational education has emphasized balance between education and professional practice. New generations' universities and polytechnics in Europe have pursued a new ways to combine practical professional expertise, research based education and regional development activities ("the third mission") with high importance of collaboration with private sector. The knowledge economy emphasizes the importance of internal and external networking and transdisciplinary research in the organisations for supporting innovations. The task of national higher education policy and of each university is to merge research and development activities and regional development policy together in a rational and expedient way. The HEIs have to learn to act in the new context. (Hazelkorn 2005; Houghton 2005.)

The case CIP Work Lab asked questions as follows: How the library and information field could seitze the opportunities of cooperation with the universities? What kind of

differences there are considering between the internal communities of library practice and universities? How to measure the quality of the collaboration?

The background for the practical development project CIP Work Lab presented in the paper as an experimental action research is grounded on the Triple Helix approach, introduced by Henry Etzkowitz and Loet Leydesdorff (2000), which considers both enterprises and higher education institutions having the leading role in development and innovation. The regional research and development activities will be based on the three actors' collaboration and interplay: between industry, government and the higher education sector. This model of innovations emphasizes client driven development and applied research supported by the university resources. In this sort of systemic approach, based on the interactive learning model, innovation is seen as an evolutionary process of complex, interactive, non-linear external and internal learning inside the library organisations and between libraries and their environments.

Keywords: collaborative development, strategic partnership, quality of networking, knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, networking, learning regions, interaction between theory and practice

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