

# Collaboration between academics and librarians at Aalto University following library reorganisation in 2018



## OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Method
4. Findings
5. Discussion
6. Conclusions

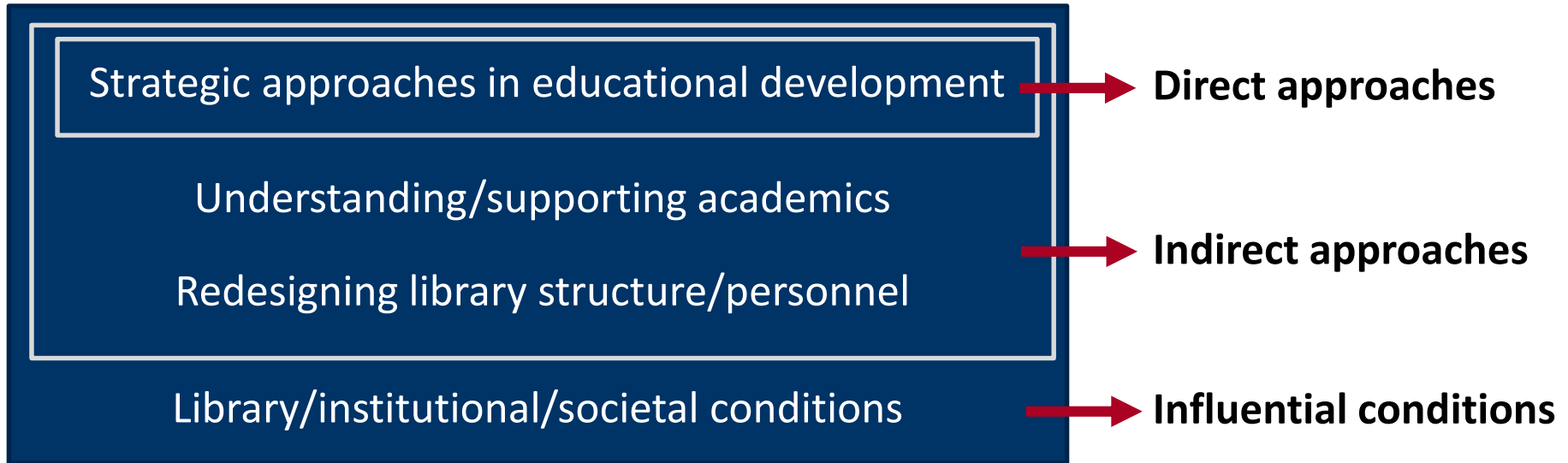
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Tayo Nagasawa PhD. student  
tnagasaw@abo.fi

Faculty of Social Sciences, Business and Economics, and Law  
Åbo Akademi University, Finland

# 1. Introduction

Thematic context of  
collaboration between academics and librarians in higher education



**Aim:** To explore the collaboration in information literacy settings for first year students from a perspective in which information sharing and social networks are combined, based on a case study of Aalto University in Finland.

## 2. Literature review I

**Information sharing:** A set of activities by which information is provided to others, either proactively or upon request (Savolainen, 2019; Sonnenwald, 2006)

**Types: super-sharing, sharers work together, occasional sharing and nonsharing** (Talja, 2002)



- ‘**Shared understanding**’ of information literacy in curricula and ‘**shared knowledge**’ of respective expertise (Wang, 2011)
- The collaborative team work towards **shared agreement and understanding** (Machin et al., 2009)
- A **shared understanding** of information literacy (Ivey, 2003)
- Organisational supportive structures at senior management level can lead to **information sharing** between academics and librarians in specific operations (Pham & Williamson, 2018)

## 2. Literature review II

### Social network analysis as a theoretical framework of studies on information sharing (Pilerot, 2010)

**Social network** The basics of social networks are “actors” maintain “relations” with others which form the “tie” between them. The collective set of actors and ties forms the “network” of connections among all members of the particular social set. Social network structures play a role in how easily information circulates (Haythornthwaite, 2017)



Few previous studies focus on collaboration between academics and librarians

“Organisational social networks almost without cohesion between academics and librarians maintain the collaboration for information literacy instruction based on occasional information sharing...” (Nagasawa, 2022)

### 3. Research questions

**RQ1: What kinds of social networks between academics and librarians exist?**

**RQ2: What kinds of information do academics and librarians share within those networks?**

# 3. Method

**Approach:** qualitative **case study**

**Case:** Aalto University

**Data collection:** **semi-structured interviews** , published materials and internal documents (between June 2021 and March 2023)

**Informants:** **librarians**

4 interviews: 1 library team leader + 1 librarian

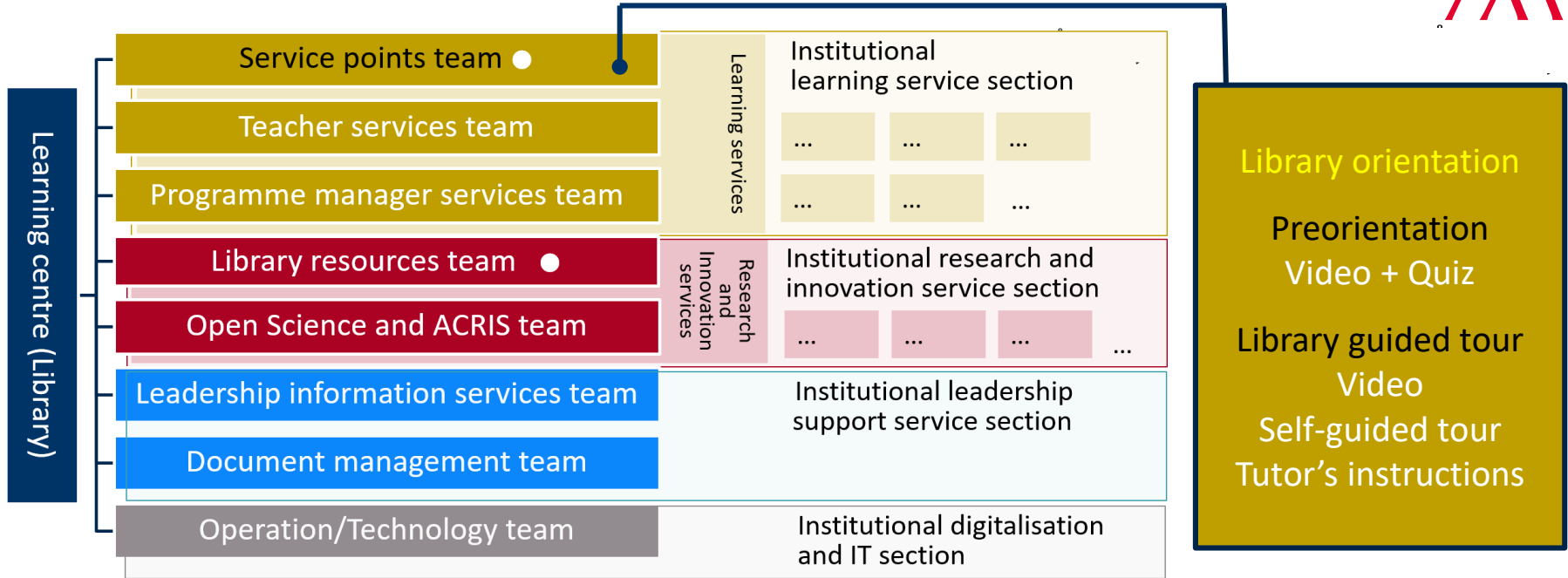
**Analysis:** **thematic analysis**, findings were identified in relation to the types of information sharing presented by Talja (2002)

**super-sharing, sharers work together, occasional sharing and nonsharing**



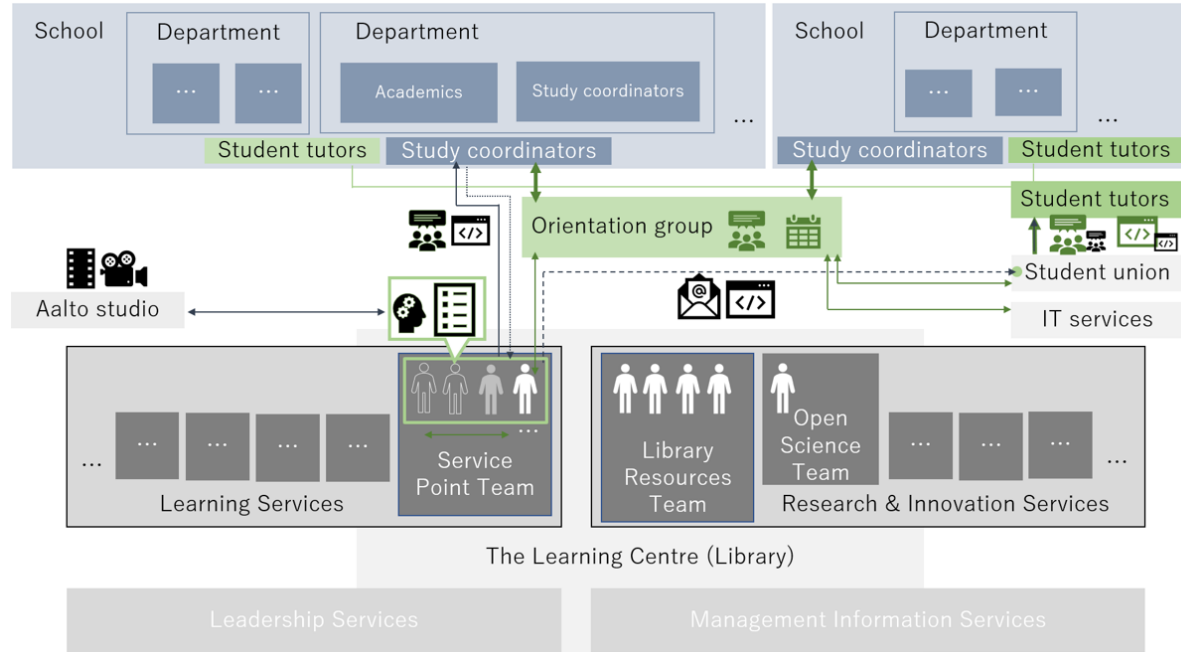
The Learning Centre (Library), Aalto University

# 3. Aalto University library : decentrally restructured in 2018



- Library reorganisation in 2018
- Information literacy instructional services were divided into two teams:
  - Service points team** for the library orientation for new students
  - Library resources team** for information literacy instruction for graduation theses seminars

# 4.1 Findings

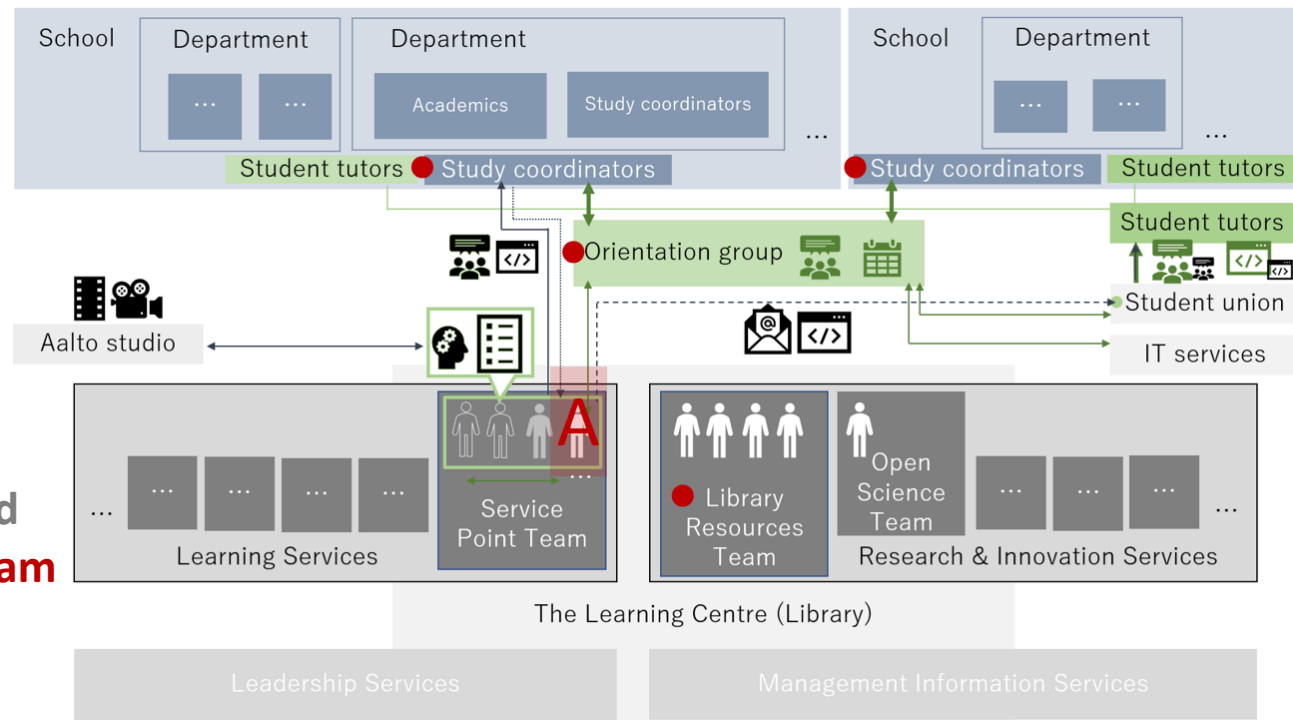


- **No ties** between academics and **the librarian**
- **Regular ties**: school coordinators, student staff, IT staff and **the librarian** through institutional orientation group
- **No/occasional/temporary ties for library orientation**
  - A) No ties in the process of designing the library orientation - **Nonsharing**
  - B) Occasional ties in the process of delivering the library orientation - **Occasional sharing**
  - C) Temporary ties in the process of designing the library orientation - **Sharers work together**



## 4.2 Findings

**A) No ties in the designing process of the library orientation with schools, orientation group and Library Resources team**



### Nonsharing

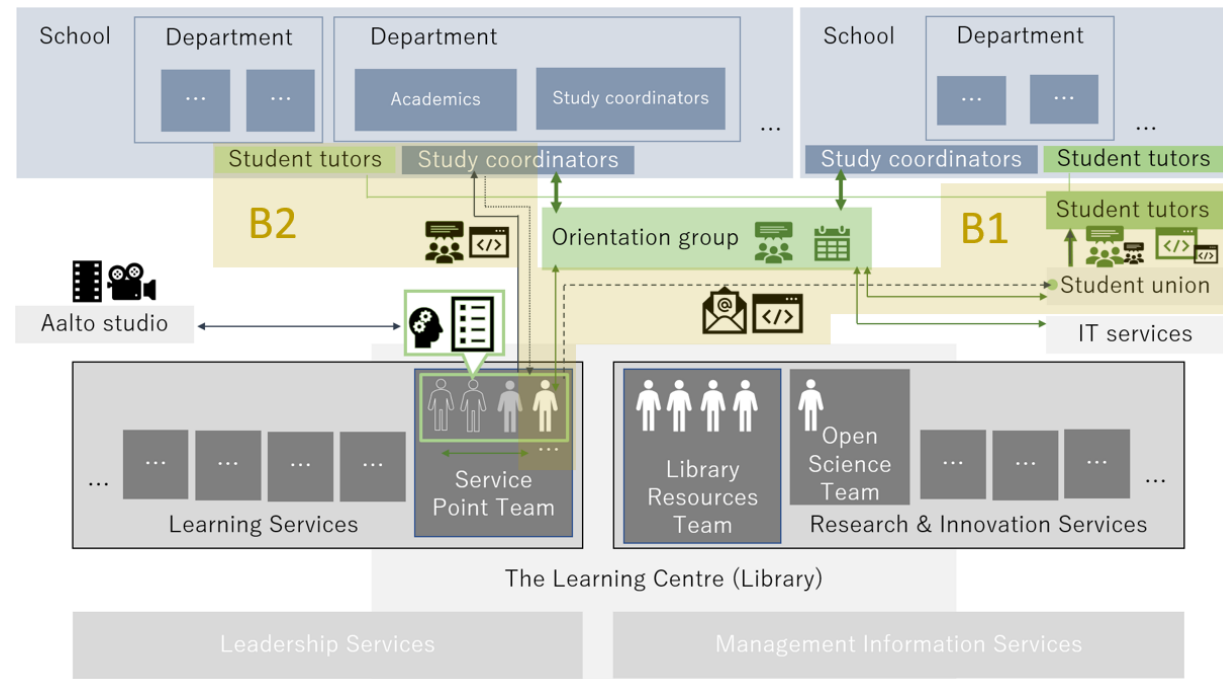
**The librarian independently prepared library orientation materials because the sessions' input and outcomes were basic and universal enough to be designed without subject information.**

“I would do it mostly by myself” “[team leader] and others trust me to be able to do that...”

“basically telling the very basic things about library services and our collection database...”

## 4.3 Findings

### B) Occasional ties in the delivering process of the library orientation with **student tutors** through **the student union/** **through schools**



### Occasional sharing

The contents of the library orientation are shared with **student tutors** through a tutor-training programme organised by **the student union (B1)** and in some situations through **the librarian** in another tutor-training programme organised by **individual schools (B2)**.

“[student union] trains tutors before they get the new students group so they are prepared and for those trainings I am providing material for the part of the library services...” (B1) “some schools have also asked me to come to their own training sessions and tell a bit more to their tutors. But some schools want me there and some schools are doing it without me...” (B2)

## 5. Discussion

FINDINGS: The librarian in charge of the library orientation develops ties with neither academics nor some potential actors in the designing process but with schools and students in the delivering process. In order to design and deliver the library orientation, the librarian applies no/occasional information sharing.

- **Wang (2011) and Machin et al.(2009)** apply “**sharers work together**”
  - sharing subject information in curriculum development
  - sharing information is more active in sharing subject information
- **Pham & Williamson (2018):** The role of organisational supportive structures at senior management level
  - NOT senior management level
  - BUT the institutional orientation group with schools and students

## 6. Conclusions

the library reorganisation built no cohesive networks between academics and librarians but did develop institutional supportive service networks including librarians and schools. The information literacy instruction task for first year students was and is accomplished based not on sharing information while designing because the information that could be shared is basic and universal. However, information is occasionally shared with schools and student tutors during delivering the library orientation.

**Contribution:** Making social networks visible as well as information sharing between academics and librarians in information literacy settings

**Limitations:** 1) The social networks and information sharing between the library reorganisation in 2018 and the start of the COVID-19 situation in 2020  
2) A wider range of informants needs to be interviewed

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