

Report

KVINFO – The Danish Centre for Information on Women and Gender

KVINFO is the Danish Centre for Information on Women and Gender. The centre's primary objective is to promote the results of women and gender research to the general public, nationally and internationally. This we do through a wide range of services and activities, i.e. KVINFO's library, our website, the web magazine *Forum for Gender & Culture*, the expert database Women OnLine, conferences and cultural events, and through cooperation with other Nordic women's libraries and information centres.

KVINFO'S LIBRARY

The heart of the centre's activities is the research library. Our library is open to the public for four days a week, eight hours a day. The library's core users are university students, but an increasing number of young people from other levels of the educational system, such as secondary schools, grammar schools and vocational education also use the library. A small but very important part of our users are researchers in women's and gender studies. Professionals working with gender equality, civil servants, journalists and politicians are also important user groups. An increasing number of requests and questions are received by email. As part of our service, we are also happy to answer any factual or statistical questions from other countries on gender issues (the email address: kvinfo@kvinfo.dk).

Our collection consists of approximately 15,000 titles: 11,500 books and 3500 reports, brochures, unpublished papers and dissertations. The library subscribes to 350 women's magazines, women's studies and gender studies journals, and several newsletters. The entire collection is on open shelves and users of the library are welcome to find books themselves just as they can use the Internet and our databases free of charge. Most of our collection can be borrowed for use outside the library. In addition to this we take part in the Danish inter-library loan system that makes it possible for other libraries in the country to borrow publications directly from us (our library database can be found at KVINFO's homepage: www.kvinfo.dk).

The library collects and registers all Danish publications on women's studies, gender studies, men's studies, queer studies, gender equality, central and valid statistics, biographies and autobiographies of Danish women, exhibition catalogues of Danish women artists, etc. When it comes to other Scandinavian countries, such as Sweden and Norway, we aim at collecting nearly at the same high level as for the Danish material. This decision is based on the fact that welfare state models and the ways to work for gender equality are very similar in all the Scandinavian countries. We also collect the most important international research on women, gender and men's studies, and the most important publications about equal opportunities in the member states of the European Union. In fact, no less than 60 percent of our collection is made up of material in English.

KVINFO has its own classification and subject indexing system invented by Nynne Koch, our founder, and developed over the years by ourselves. It has been adapted to the needs of a research library like ours, specializing in women's and gender studies. The philosophy behind this unique system is to enrich each post in the catalogue with key words giving each post as many search-entrances as possible.

The library also houses the Danish Women's Photo Archive, a file of 5000 photographs of Danish women taken between 1880 and 1940. The photographs were collected in the 1980s and give a good insight into women's private and public lives. A small selection of these photos can be viewed at our homepage: www.kvinfo.dk, at 'Fotoarkivet'. The archive is classified by the topic, i.e. women working in the fields, women in the kitchen, women on bikes, women teachers, female industrial workers, etc. The archive is currently accessible at KVINFO in the form of catalogue cards with contact copies. The negatives are stored at the Royal Library and copies can be ordered at production price.

At the library's website there is, among other things, access to links to other women's libraries, research centres, women's and men's organizations and other sites. We have a list of addresses of central organizations, associations and NGOs working with women's and gender issues in Denmark, and several lists of important dates in Danish women's history. It is also possible to read about the origin of the International Women's Day in Danish and German, still celebrated each year on 8 March in several countries.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Besides the library, KVINFO offers many other facilities, projects and services. Every year, we arrange a wide range of lectures, seminars and cultural events. In recent years, it has been our deliberate strategy to strengthen our services on KVINFO's homepage, www.kvinfo.dk, as this undoubtedly has proven to be the best way of reaching our target group and fulfilling our purpose as a documentation and information centre.

FORUM FOR GENDER & CULTURE

KVINFO's magazine, *Forum*, was launched in 1982 and until 1992 it was the only Danish women's studies journal. In 1998, KVINFO decided to stop publishing the paper edition altogether and thus it became the first Danish cultural web magazine. The purpose of the web magazine is to reach new groups of readers and to place gender on the agenda. The aim is to increase the visibility of Danish

women and of gender issues and to create links and contact to other women and gender researchers globally. The magazine is widely used by Danish journalists with an interest in gender, culture and ethnicity. It is published in Danish, but some articles are also available in English for our international readers. *Forum* also contains a useful link terminal – a guide to central links and articles on gender and culture worldwide. *Forum for Gender & Culture* is available at the address www.forum.kvinfo.dk, where it is also possible to join the mailing list.

WOMEN ONLINE

In 1995, KVINFO set up a database of women experts in Denmark called Women Online. The database contains easy-to-access biographical information in Danish on a large number of women opinion leaders, senior managers, politicians, researchers and experts within a wide range of subjects. Currently the database has over 1300 entries. All women in the database have been personally contacted and have all agreed to publish their profile.

Women Online is designed for the use of journalists, broadcasters and media workers. It provides a broad selection of candidates for appointments in private and public office, for committees, tribunals, commissions and councils, and offers names for speakers, teachers, facilitators and consultants (Women Online is accessible to users on the Internet and is free of charge at the address www.ekspert.kvinfo.dk).

WOMEN'S HISTORY SOURCES

One of KVINFO's latest additions to our website is the web project Women's History Sources, or Kvindekilder. The site was launched in November 2001 and tells the story of Danish women's road to equal opportunities from 1850 to 1920. Important landmarks in the history of Danish women, such as the suffrage, women's access to education and employment, women's fight for independence and the debate on sexual morality is now available in Danish on the Internet. The website consists of introductory essays, original sources, i.e. historical documents otherwise not available to the general public, such as newspaper articles, extracts from debates from the Danish parliament, extracts from laws and bills, memoirs and letters, as well as biographies on key figures and women pioneers and a timeline indicating important events.

The website is aimed specifically at older pupils at secondary school and their teachers, but gives the general public a unique opportunity to explore the history of women in Denmark in a completely new way. It has been an overwhelming success and over the next few years, other subjects and periods will be added to this site. By the end of this year, the story of the feminist Redstocking movement of the 1970s will be launched on the site (the site can be found on KVINFO's homepage and at the address: www.kvindekilder.dk).

THE BIOGRAPHICAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF DANISH WOMEN

Another important web project to be launched by 2003, is *The Biographical Encyclopaedia of Danish Women*, or *Dansk kvindebiografisk leksikon*. The encyclopaedia was published in three volumes in 2000 and contains approximately 2000 Danish

women, all pioneers within their field, i.e. within education, nursing, science, music, etc., or central figures within the suffrage movement, politics, women's organizations, research, business, the arts and so forth. The initiative was taken by women historians within women's studies in Denmark more than 10 years ago, headed by Jytte Larsen, editor, women's historian and former head of the library at KVINFO.

In December last year, KVINFO required the rights from the publisher to digitalize the biographies. It will be of great importance to ensure that the biographies of important Danish women become available to the general public free of charge on the Internet.

COOPERATION WITH DANISH CENTRES FOR WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

Being a self-governing institution, KVINFO is not formally connected to any of the centres for women's and gender studies at the Danish universities. However, KVINFO has close contact to the centres and cooperates with researchers on a regular basis. As a service to the students and researchers in women's and gender studies and to others working professionally with gender issues, the library publishes a Danish newsletter four times a year which, among other things, includes a copy of the table of contents from the most important research journals within the field. Researchers and others then have the opportunity to order copies of the articles free of charge.

KVINFO has a close connection to the Coordination for Gender Research in Denmark and also the Association of Gender Research in Denmark. We are represented in the executive committee of the association and take an active part in its annual conference for researchers and students by, for instance, organizing workshops. In 2001, KVINFO arranged and hosted the annual conference in Copenhagen, which was attended by 150 students and researchers primarily from Denmark and Sweden.

COOPERATION WITH WOMEN'S LIBRARIES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

The Internet offers new possibilities for cooperation and exchange between libraries. In 1996 KVINFO, together with NIKK, the Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research, took the initiative to a renewed cooperation between libraries in the field of women's studies and gender research in the Nordic countries, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Denmark.

In 1997, representatives from women's libraries in all the Nordic countries met in order to discuss the possibilities for a Nordic Virtual Library for Women's Studies and Gender Research. The idea was to make women's studies and gender research in the Nordic countries more visible both in the Nordic countries and internationally by making the best resources in the Nordic countries available from a joint website. The Nordic Virtual Library for Women's Studies and Gender Research is a website offering descriptions of each link and thereby offering a better service. In the future, we hope to build a joint search interface for some of the most important databases. The virtual library is accessible from NIKK's and KVINFO's homepages and is available both in English and in the Scandinavian languages: www.nikk.uio.no or www.nikk.uio.no/qbiblioteket/index.html

THE HISTORY OF KVINFO

KVINFO is the only women's library in Denmark and, contrary to what many people think, it did not grow out of the feminist movement of the 1970s. Its history goes back to 1964, when Danish women's rights organizations succeeded in their efforts to establish a women's archive at the State Library in Aarhus. This inspired KVINFO's founder Nynne Koch, who at the time worked at the Royal Library in Copenhagen as a secretary, to initiate a women's documentation service. She was allocated 15 minutes a day in which to register incoming books on women's issues in a card catalogue. KVINFO, in other words, has its roots in the Danish library sector, but grew out of and has always been committed to women's and gender issues.

By 1982, KVINFO was established as a four-year experiment funded by the Danish Ministry of Culture. Nynne Koch and her staff of volunteers moved out of the Royal Library to a new venue in order to reach a broader audience and to expand the activities. Five years later, KVINFO became a self-governing institution financed by the Ministry of Culture. In 1997, KVINFO moved into a newly built venue next to the Royal Library. Besides more space, better facilities and a beautiful view over the harbour, we were also able to provide our library users with a modern reading room with open shelves and free access to PCs. Today, KVINFO is run as a professional institution widely acknowledged for our work.

LIST OF LINKS MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLE

KVINFO: www.kvinfo.dk

Forum for Gender & Culture: www.forum.kvinfo.dk

Women's History Sources: www.kvindekilder.dk

Women Online: www.ekspert.kvinfo.dk

The Nordic Virtual Library for Women's Studies and Gender Research:
www.nikk.uio.no/qbiblioteket/index.html

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