

# **PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN FINLAND**

## **- GATEWAYS TO KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE**

Ministry of Education  
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Culture and Media Division, July 2001

## **PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN FINLAND - GATEWAYS TO KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE**

*Ministry of Education/Culture and Media Division, July 2001*

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**THE LIBRARY NETWORK IN FINLAND**

The Finnish library system is an organised, interactive network based on an extensive use of information and communications technology and information networks. Municipal libraries, research libraries, special libraries and libraries at educational institutions form part of the national and international information service networks. In Finland, both municipal libraries and university libraries are open to all citizens. Students use public libraries, university libraries, research libraries and libraries at educational institutions side by side.

Public libraries are governed by national law and follow a national library policy. All other libraries run and financed by the organisations they serve. They are not governed by any national law or regulations.

## **PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN FINLAND**

### **OVERVIEW**

There are 936 public libraries and 202 bookmobiles in Finland. There is a public library open to every Finnish municipality. The public library is the most frequently used cultural service in Finland. About 80% of Finns use public libraries.

Finnish public libraries are widely known internationally for their high use rates (about 12 visits per inhabitant, an annual total of over 63,7 million visits) and high lending rates (some 20 loans per inhabitant, over 102 million loans annually), efficient and cost-effective operations, and a highly developed library network covering the sparsely populated country as a whole.

Other important reasons for the international renown of Finnish public libraries are their architecture as well as the widespread use of computer technology and the net facilities they offer. Finnish public libraries are in fact world leaders among libraries as Internet access providers. Public libraries have main responsibility for providing information services for independent study. They also provide extensive services to primary and secondary school pupils.

### **FUNCTION OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN INFORMATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

"The objective of the library and information services provided by public libraries is to promote equal opportunities among citizens for personal cultivation, for literary and cultural pursuits, for continuous development of knowledge, personal skills and civic skills, for internationalisation, and for lifelong learning. Library activities also aim at promoting the development of virtual and interactive network services and their educational and cultural contents." (Library Act 1998, Finland)

"The public library system is a basic pillar in the provision of national educational and cultural services, which support the aspirations of the entire population to achieve a high state of intellectual development." (Cultural policy, Finnish Government Programme, April 15, 1999)

"The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning,

independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups." (UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994)

The Ministry of Education is currently devising a library policy programme which will outline the role of the library in the information and civil society.

The unique function of libraries is to acquire, organise, evaluate, offer for use and preserve publicly available material and information irrespective of the form in which it is packaged (print, cassette, ROM, the electronic medium format) in such a way that it can be easily found and put to use. It is the only institution to perform this systematic task.

The information society does not mean that the volume of libraries' traditional work would be declining. They will continue to provide a service by preserving the cultural heritage and passing it on to the future generations. As it becomes more common for knowledge to be conveyed through networks, the role of libraries in providing access to knowledge changes, but does not diminish. The role of libraries will become all the more important as organisers and evaluators of knowledge, including knowledge available through networks.

It is the task of the library to make sure that the information society is also a society of education, culture and that all its citizens have access to public libraries and their material regardless of the medium in which it is made available.

Investing in libraries means investing in democracy and equality.

## **NEW LIBRARY ACT AND DECREE**

An amended Library Act (904/1998) and Decree (1078/1998) came into force at the beginning of 1999. The salient points of this legislation are:

- It is the duty of local authorities to arrange library and information services.
- The library is a basic municipal service.
- The use and loan of library materials are free of charge for the client.
- The libraries put a sufficient number of library and information professionals and constantly renewed library material and equipment at the disposal of local inhabitants.
- The quality of and access to library services must be evaluated.
- The qualifications required from library personnel are higher than under the old Library Act.

## **AUTOMATION**

About 99 % of library activities are computerised. Local authorities have chosen independently which computerised system to use; there are ten systems available, three of which are in wider use. In recent years, the Finnish Government has invested heavily in promoting library networking. About 95% of municipal libraries provide access to the Internet. About 80 % of the libraries provide free public access to their catalogues through the Internet.

## **FINANCING**

Municipal public libraries are financed from tax revenues. Public libraries are run by the local authorities, who also determine the extent of services provided. Municipalities receive statutory state aid for operating a library. The municipalities decide independently the amount allocated to library operational costs.

Libraries receive 25-50% state aid for the construction of a library and for the purchase of a bookmobile on application. Nearly all main libraries have been constructed with state aid.

In the 1990s, Finnish municipalities were given extensive autonomy. Libraries no longer receive state aid according to predetermined percentages as they did for decades up to 1993. However, the earlier system made it possible to develop a high-quality library system even in poor and sparsely populated municipalities.

Extra information

### **Cutbacks in Library Resources**

The financial situation has been very tight for libraries in the 1990s. In recent years, both material and personnel resources have been cut due to stringency measures in state and municipal budgets. This has forced the library network to change. Thanks to a wide-spread use of information and communication technologies and the development of inter-library co-operation and centralised services, the effect of the cutbacks has not been as severe as expected.

### **Fees**

In Finland, library use is free. Since the first Library Act in 1928, the use and lending of library collections have been free of charge under law. In Finland, the principles underpinning public library services is to support and encourage free access to sources of knowledge and culture and the availability of high-quality information for all citizens regardless of their place of residence or financial standing.

Libraries may charge fees for violations of library regulations. Fees may also be charged for reservation, postage, copying and other special services. These fees are discretionary and may vary greatly from municipality to another. The interlibrary loans provided by provincial libraries, the Central Library and the Multicultural Library are free to public libraries. For any other transactions than the use of the library and lending, the municipality may charge a fee amounting to the prime cost of the transaction, the most.

### **PUBLIC LENDING RIGHT**

Under the Act on Library Compensation Grants (236/1961), authors and translators may receive compensation for the free use of their books in the public libraries. The annual sum disbursed is 10 percent of the funds spent on book acquisitions by public libraries in the preceding year.

Composers, songwriters, performing artists and others who have contributed to the production of music recordings and sheet music may receive similar grants.

Extra information

### **COPYRIGHT**

The constant growth in digital material also influences library operations. The aim is to achieve a solution to copyright relating to electronic and network material and its use at the national level which would guarantee library work and national access to information.

The storage and archives of digital materials require legislative solutions. The European Union is currently processing a proposal for a directive concerning copyright in the information society. The

projected harmonisation provides for an exemption concerning the right of libraries to make cop

## PERSONNEL AND LIBRARY TRAINING

All municipal libraries have qualified staff. Two out of three municipal library employees have so library training. The person responsible for a library generally has a university degree which inclu information and library studies.

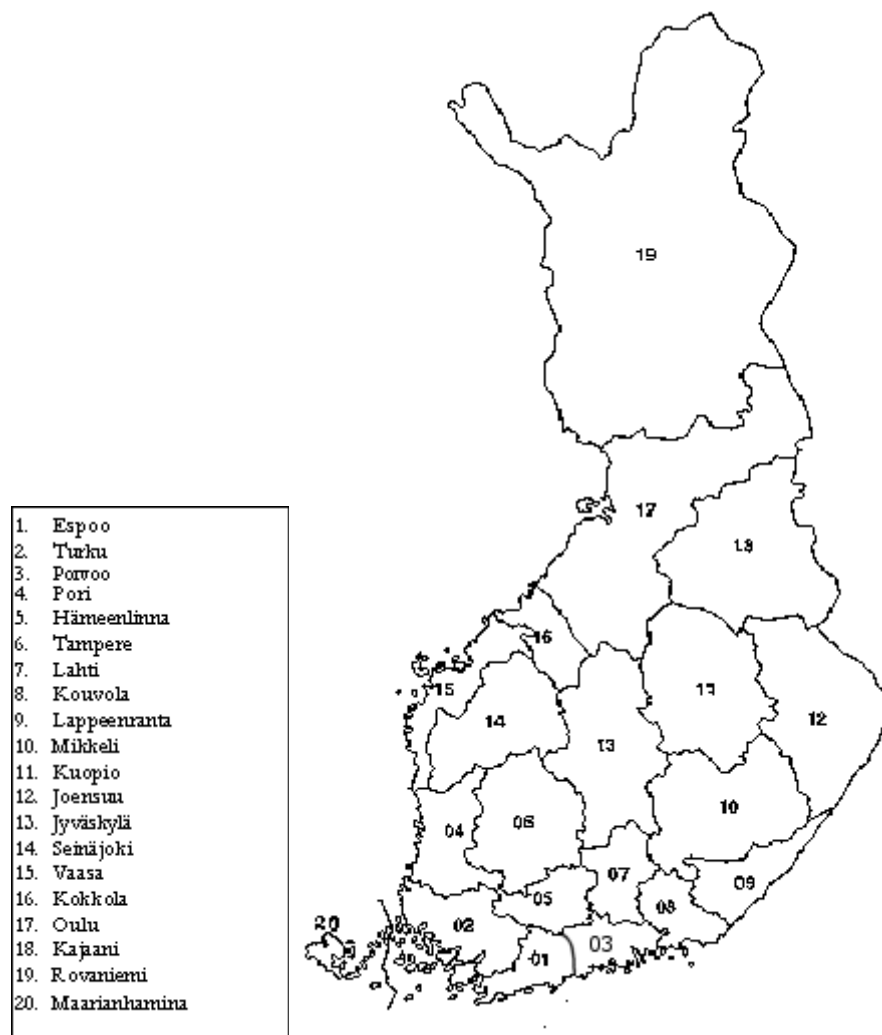
The information and library sciences can be studied in universities, polytechnics and secondary institutions. For more information about university education in the field, see:

- University of Tampere, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Information Studies:  
<http://www.info.uta.fi/home.html>
- University of Oulu, Faculty of Education, Department of Information Studies:  
<http://syy.oulu.fi/IT.html>
- University of Åbo Akademi in Turku at the Faculty of Economics and Social sciences (Sw language): <http://www.abo.fi/fak/esf/bii/welceng.htm>

[Extra information](#)

## PUBLIC LIBRARY NETWORK

### Provincial Libraries



Provincial libraries (20) are maintained by municipalities which have been assigned this task. They receive a discretionary state subsidy for the purpose. Under the Library Decree, the provincial libraries support the information and interlibrary lending services of the public libraries in the area. They are increasingly on their function as regional information and resource centres. Provincial libraries train library personnel to undertake new forms of action and development projects and upgrade their knowledge about new technologies and new information sources.

The EU information points are mainly located in provincial libraries in Finland.

### **Central Library for Public Libraries**

The Helsinki City Library is the central library for public libraries, whose tasks are defined in the Library Decree. The central library provides remote services and develops nation-wide co-operative library projects. It lends its collections to public libraries throughout the country and acquires material from foreign countries. It also serves as a multicultural library, which is a service in the Internet to foreigners. The Helsinki City Library is run by the City of Helsinki, but receives a discretionary subsidy from the Ministry of Education for the Central Library operations. For more information about Helsinki City Library, see: <http://www.lib.hel.fi>

Since 1996 the Ministry of Education has supported the House of Knowledge Project, which is managed by the Central Library. The aim is to develop search systems geared to facilitate the use of network services at public libraries and to guarantee equitable access to the Internet for all citizens. For more information, see: <http://www.publiclibraries.fi>

### **Library Partnerships**

About 70 % of the libraries in Finland have formed partnerships with adjacent municipal libraries usually based on a common computer system. This co-operation ensures a more efficient use of collections and improves customer service. This has been a great help in the 1990s when the acquisition of new library material has been declining, while library use has been on the increase. Interlibrary services are based on reciprocity.

## **EVALUATION**

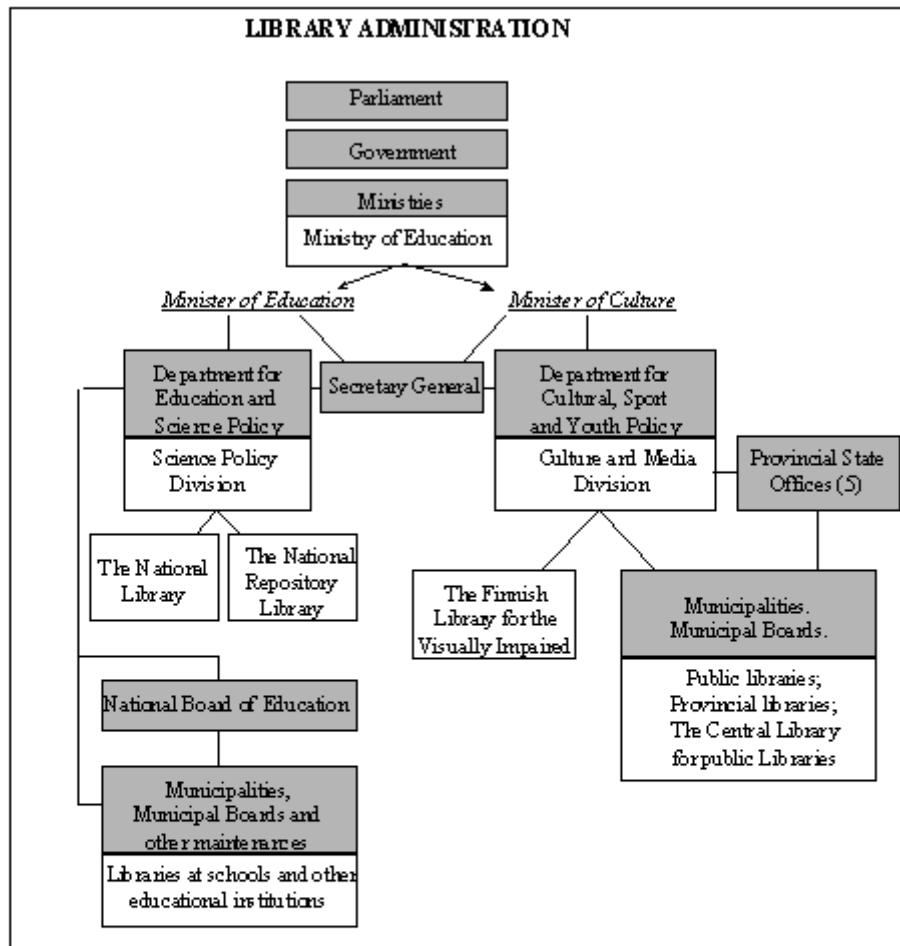
The new Library Act is the first law to provide for evaluation. Under it, the quality of and access to library services must be evaluated. Library evaluation is thus still being developed, but in principle authorities and libraries are responsible for self-evaluation. The state provincial offices undertake regional evaluations. The Culture and Media Division of the Ministry of Education supervises national evaluation, which provides up-to-date information for legislative and budgetary purposes, and for eventual special measures.

### [Extra Information](#)

## **LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION**

Matters relating to municipal libraries come under the Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry determines national library policy guidelines for public libraries, prepares legislation, prepares and submits decisions concerning libraries, drafts the national library budget, allocates discretionary subsidies directly to libraries for special purposes, compiles national library statistics, and evaluates the library and information services at the national level.

State provincial offices (5) are the regional library authorities. They are financed and administered by the Ministry of the Interior, but conclude annual agreements with the Ministry of Education on the results in public library services. Their main task is to promote and evaluate library and information services and steer activities in their region.



Ministry of Education/EirsiKalli July 2000

## PUBLIC LIBRARY STATISTICS

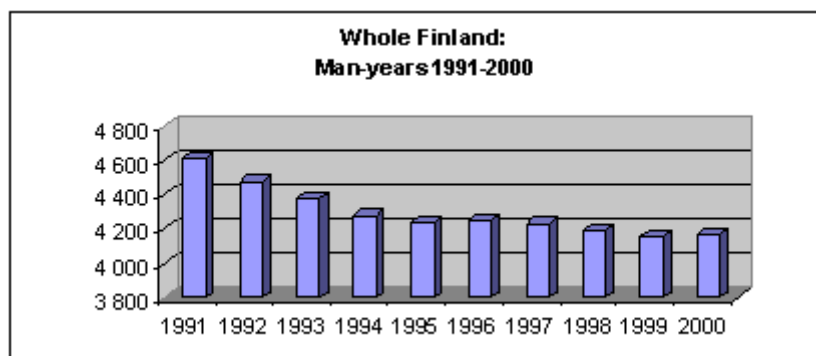
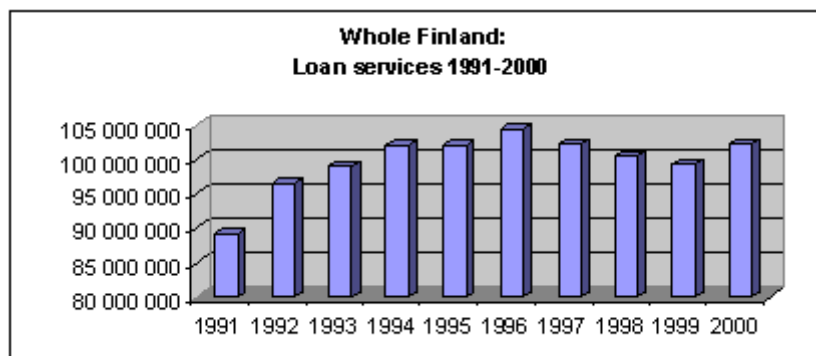
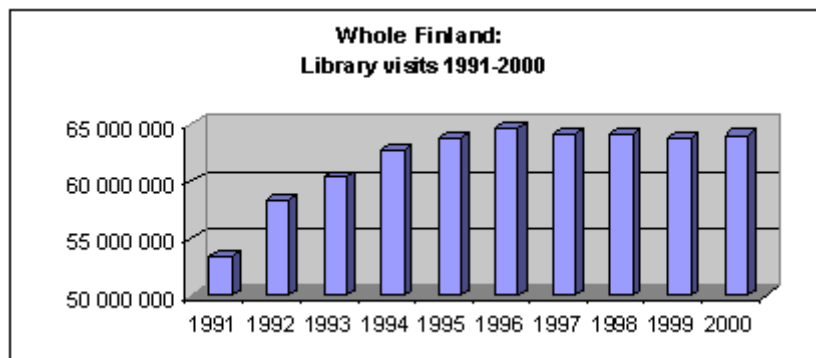
The Ministry of Education compiles basic statistics.

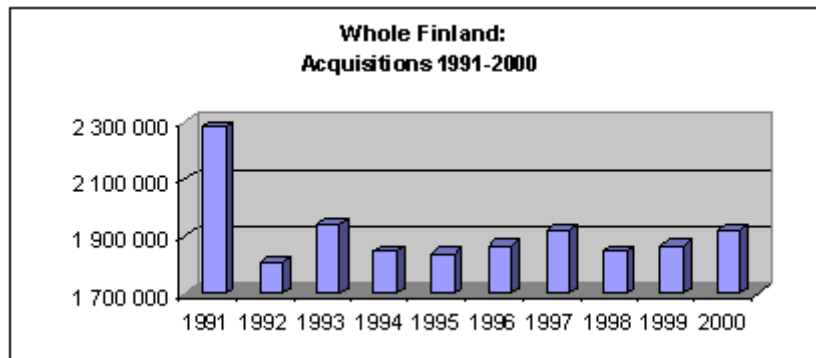
### Library Network



Network	1991	2000	+/- %
Municipalities	444	436	- 1.8
Libraries, total	1125	936	- 16.8
- main libraries	444	436	- 1.8
- branch libraries	486	401	- 17.5
- institutional libraries	195	99	- 49.2
Mobile libraries	234	202	- 13.7
Inhabitants, total	4 973 936	5 145 596	+ 3.2

### Use and Lending





The Finnish rates of library use and lending are still high in international terms, although the number of loans decreased in 1997 for the very first time. The reason for this was the prolonged decline in new acquisitions and the closing down of subsidiary libraries.

<b>Loans. Visits</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>+/- %</b>
Loans/year	89 239 997	102 197 190	+ 14.2
Loans/inhabitant	17. 9	19. 9	+ 11.2
Visits/year	53 368 661	63 990 752	+ 19.9
Visits/inhabitant	10. 7	12. 4	+ 15.9

### **Collections and Staff**

In recent years both material and personnel resources have been cut.

<b>Collections</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>+/- %</b>
Items in collection, total	38 002 670	40 897 245	+ 7.6
- of which books	35 938 179	37 013 045	+ 3.0
- of which other material	2 064 491	3 884 200	+ 88.1
Acquisition, total	2 284 593	1 916 835	- 16.1
- of which books	2 056 295	1 606 835	- 21.9
- of which other material	228 298	309 996	+ 35.8

Although library visits have increased significantly and library users would increasingly need services of library professionals, the number of man-years has decreased.

<b>Man years</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>+/- %</b>
Man years	4 612	4 174	- 9.5
Staff financed by empl.resources	909	585	- 35.6

## **Financing**

In 2000 the total operational expenditure in libraries was FIM 1,237 billion = EUR 208 million including VAT (1 EUR = 5.94573 FIM). In 1999 the government allocated FIM 464.6 million = EUR 78,1 million in statutory state aid to municipalities which maintain a public library. The average operational expenditure was FIM 230 = EUR 38,7 per inhabitant, but there were great differences between municipalities.

In 2000 libraries received FIM 36 million = EUR 6.1 million in statutory state aid for construction projects and mobile library acquisitions. In addition, the Ministry of Education has supported development of library networking. The largest subsidised projects were the hiring of computer network experts for provincial libraries and the development of the centrally maintained network service: <http://www.publiclibraries.fi>. It offers a wide range of information and links to library services, also in English.

### Extra information

## **FUTURE PROSPECTS**

"Finland is gradually developing into an information society in which knowledge and expertise are a part of the culture and also one of the key factors in production. Finland must be in the forefront in terms of technological policy. The focus in the evolution of the information society is moving towards the development and production of content-based applications and services."(Finnish Government Programme, April 1999.)

The libraries will continue to provide their traditional cultural and educational content services in the future, but must also offer both access to information networks and guidance in information retrieval and the use of networks. National decisions concerning copyright will influence the services provided through public libraries.

In the future, it is not only access to but particularly the quality of knowledge that will be important. The library, as a quality institution, is expected to provide the answer to this. The focus is now shifting towards the development of contents and user-friendly, self-directional channels to information services.

Library funding should be completely reconsidered, because the library has a vital, multiple role to play in the information society. Since one of the overriding principles in our society is lifelong learning, it is necessary to determine how to realise the citizen's right to information in practice. One major question is how to ensure that the library's role is fully recognised and supported.

in this respect is how the local authorities, faced with austerity measures as they are, will be able to serve the library clientele with up-to-date information in different forms, with modern equipment with highly qualified personnel.

In order to secure citizens' access to information in the future, democratic, open and transparent societies are exploring ways to provide the necessary up-to-date information for their citizens. One is to produce part of this information at the national level and make it available through the public library network.

To this end, measures are also being taken to intensify co-operation between public and research libraries and the libraries in educational establishments as well as between the libraries and other administrative units.

## **National library policy**

In 1999, the Ministry of Education set up a working group of library policy to draw up a proposal on the role of library in the information society of citizens. The aim of the group is to outline probable future changes and challenges in the society, the greatest of which are changes in technology and communication systems and their influence in, for instance, the need, availability and quality of citizens' library and information services; reformation of the library network; changing job descriptions in library organisations; flexible use of information stores; traditional cataloguing and metadata; generating of collections; information acquisition of school and university students and the role of library in the process of procurement of knowledge; the changing role of library in relation to commercial communication; changes in job profiles and division of labour; interlibrary course of action; and structure of library financing.

### **[The salient points and proposal in the Finnish Library Policy Programme 2001-2004 committee's report](#)**

#### **Working group of Digital information services**

At the end of year 1999, the Ministry of Education set up a working group of Digital information services with the aim to enhance the availability of information and culture in the citizen's information society, especially in digital environment. The working group is a sub-group working according to the objectives set in the Content Provision project that is developing content for interadministrative information society as proposed in the Government program for 1999-2004.

The most essential objective is to promote the development, production and availability of user-friendly, good-quality and reliable digital information content, services, metadata, and quality portals. The aim is to draw up a proposal for creating a working information and library network that works beyond organisational structures.

#### **Information strategy for education and research, 2000-2004**

The Information strategy for education and research, 2000-2004, of the Ministry of Education approved in 1999, and its implementation plans are continued in the following years. For more information, see <http://www.minedu.fi/julkaisut/KESU2004/eng/engKESU.html>

#### **[Extra Information](#)**

## **RESEARCH, SPECIAL AND LIBRARIES IN SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

The libraries of universities, research institutes, educational institutions, administrative agencies and business enterprises are run and financed by the organisations which they serve and are not governed by any national legislation or regulations. These organisations determine independently the financing and the activities of the library.

Finnish research libraries are mainly run by universities (20). There is no specific national legislation concerning research libraries. Besides their owner organisations, research libraries serve the surrounding society and are, thus, public research libraries. In addition, there are more than 20 special libraries.

The libraries at the polytechnics are still in a process of development, because this form of education has been instituted so recently in Finland. There are a number of libraries at other educational institutions at research institutes and administrative agencies.

### **National Library**

The Helsinki University Library is the National Library. It is run and financed by the University of Helsinki. The Ministry of Education allocates discretionary state subsidies for the National Library's operations and for special projects, such as the Finnish National Electronic Library. For more information, see: <http://hul.helsinki.fi/hyk>.

### **National Repository Library**

The National Repository Library serves both public and research libraries. It is a state library and subordinate to the Department for Education and Science Policy of the Ministry of Education. It provides its services free of charge. It is the only library which private customers cannot visit. For information, see: <http://www.nrl.fi>.

### **Finnish Library for the Visually Impaired**

The Finnish Library for the Visually Impaired is another state library, which is governed by special statutes and the regulations of the Ministry of Education. It is subordinate to the Ministry's Department for Cultural Policy. The library serves blind and visually handicapped persons, elderly people with visual impairments and the deaf and blind. The library provides its services free of charge. It also prepares Braille and talking books for the library and for visually impaired schoolchildren and students. For more information, see: <http://www.nvkirjasto.fi>.

### **Libraries at schools and other educational institutions**

School libraries are not very common in Finland, because most schools are very small in size. That is why it has been more cost-effective to develop the public libraries, which also serve the education system. There are no national statistics available on the activities or costs of school libraries.

Schools and other educational institutions in Finland are adopting new teaching methods which emphasise independent acquisition of information and self-directed learning. To ensure access to information for learners of all ages, local authorities are creating partnerships between educational establishments and public libraries.

### Extra information

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For additional information:

[http://www.minedu.fi/minedu/culture/public\\_libraries.html](http://www.minedu.fi/minedu/culture/public_libraries.html)

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## **LIBRARY ACT**

**904/1998**

Issued in Helsinki on the 4th of December 1998

In accordance with a decision of Parliament the following is enacted:

### Chapter 1

#### **Objectives**

##### 1 §

This act prescribes the library and information services to be provided by municipal public libraries and the promotion of these services both nationally and regionally.

##### 2 §

The objective of the library and information services provided by public libraries is to promote opportunities among citizens for personal cultivation, for literary and cultural pursuits, for continuing development of knowledge, personal skills and civic skills, for internationalisation, and for lifelong learning.

Library activities also aim at promoting the development of virtual and interactive network services and their educational and cultural contents.

### Chapter 2

#### **Arranging library and information services**

##### 3 §

The municipality shall be responsible for arranging the library and information services referred to in this act.

The municipality may provide the library and information services independently, or partly or tot co-operation with other municipalities, or in any other way. The municipality is responsible for tl services being in accordance with this act.

Library users shall have access to library and information professionals, and to continually renew library material and equipment.

In a bilingual municipality, the needs of both language groups shall be taken into consideration o equal grounds.

In the municipalities of the Saami home area, the needs of both the Saami and the Finnish langu groups shall be taken into consideration on equal grounds.

### Chapter 3.

#### **The library and information service network**

##### 4 §

A public library shall operate in co-operation with other public libraries, with research libraries an with libraries in educational establishments, as part of the national and international networks of and information services.

The libraries acting as the central library for public libraries and as provincial libraries supplement services of public libraries.

The central library for public libraries is a public library in a municipality appointed by the relevant ministry, with the consent of the municipality. Its sphere of operations shall be the whole countr

A provincial library is a public library in a municipality appointed by the relevant ministry, with tl consent of the municipality. The sphere of operations shall be laid down by the relevant ministry

The tasks of the central library and the provincial library shall be enacted in a decree. The relevant ministry can, after consulting the municipality, cancel the designation as central or a provincial lil

### Chapter 4

#### **Library services free of charge**

##### 5 §

The use of the library's own collections within the library and borrowing from them shall be free charge.

Interlibrary loans issued by the central library and by the provincial libraries to public libraries sh free of charge.

For other library transactions, the municipality may charge a fee amounting to the prime cost of transaction at the most.

For a specific reason, the fee which would otherwise be fixed to amount to the prime cost may e this.

## Chapter 5

### **Evaluation**

#### 6 §

The municipality shall evaluate the library and information service it provides.

The purpose of the evaluation is to improve access to library and information services and to promote their development. The evaluation shall monitor the implementation of the library and information services and the quality and cost-effectiveness of the services.

Each municipality is obliged to take part in evaluation referred to by this clause.

Decisions about national evaluation and about national participation in international evaluations shall be made by the relevant ministry, which shall carry out the evaluation together with the State Provincial Offices. The municipality shall contribute to the evaluation referred to in this subsection.

Salient findings of the evaluation shall be made public.

## Chapter 6

### **State administration of library and information services**

#### § 7

The relevant ministry shall be the national administrative authority for library and information services. The State Provincial Office shall be the regional administrative authority. The tasks of the State Provincial Office shall be enacted in a decree.

## Chapter 7

### **Miscellaneous regulations**

#### 8 §

The library system shall have a sufficient number of staff qualified for library and information services and other personnel.

The qualification requirements for library staff shall be enacted in a decree.

For a specific reason, the relevant ministry may grant exemption from the formal qualification requirements.

#### 9 §

The municipality shall receive statutory state aid towards the costs of operating the library under the Act on the Financing of Educational and Cultural Provision (635/1998).

The municipality shall receive a government grant towards the costs of constructing and renovating library under the Act on the Financing of Educational and Cultural Provision. The purchase of a mobile library bus or boat shall also be regarded as construction.



10 §

The library may issue library rules which contain provisions concerning the use of the library and rights and duties of the library user.

Infringement of the library rules shall be chargeable with fines commensurate with the infringement

11 §

More detailed provisions on the application of this act shall be issued by statute.

Chapter 8

**Entry into force**

12 §

This Act shall come into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1999.

The statutory state aid and state subsidies referred to in this Act may be allocated from the proceeds of the state lottery until the end of 1999.

This Act repeals the Library Act (235/1986) of 21 March 1986 and all amendments thereto.

Done in Helsinki, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1998

President of the Republic

MARTTI AHTISAARI

Minister

Liisa Jaakonsaari

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**LIBRARY DECREE**

**1078/1998**

Issued at Helsinki on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, 1998

On the referral of the Ministry of Education, it is enacted under the Library Act of the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, 1998 (904/1998), as follows:

#### Section 1

### **Functions of the Central Library of Public Libraries**

The central library of public libraries shall

1. act as the national interlibrary lending centre;
2. promote co-operation of public libraries and between public and scientific libraries;
3. develop common methods and instruments necessary for organising library and information services; and
4. perform other duties assigned by the competent Ministry.

#### Section 2

### **Functions of a Provincial Library**

A Provincial Library shall

1. support the information and interlibrary lending services of the public libraries within its r
2. develop information services relating to its own sphere of operation;
3. provide the personnel of the sphere of operation with training in new forms and develop projects of library work; and
4. perform other duties assigned by the competent Ministry.

#### Section 3

### **Functions of the State Provincial Office**

The State Provincial Office shall

1. in co-operation with the competent Ministry, monitor and promote library and information services needed by the population, and evaluate the accessibility and quality of the services
2. promote regional, national, and international development projects in the field of library and information services; and
3. perform other duties assigned by the competent Ministry.

#### Section 4

### **Qualification Requirements**

A minimum of two thirds of the personnel referred to in Section 8, Subsection 1 of the Library Act (904/1998), must have a university degree, or a college diploma, or a vocational qualification which includes, or has been supplemented with, a minimum of 20 credits of library and information studies at a university or a vocational institution.

The qualification required from the person responsible for the library and information services in a municipality shall be a higher university degree which includes, or has been supplemented with, a minimum of 35 credits of library and information studies.

## Section 5

**Entry into Force**

This Decree shall come into force on the first day of January, 1999.

The provisions of Section 4, Subsection 1 shall not apply to the personnel employed by a library time when this Decree comes into force.

Any process of filling a vacant post or position pending at the time when this Decree comes into shall be subject to / comply with the qualification requirements valid prior to the entry into force this Decree.

Before the entry into force of this Decree, necessary measures may be taken to implement it.

## Section 6

**Transitional Provisions concerning Personnel**

A person who meets the qualification requirements applicable for professional library personnel time when this Decree comes into force, shall be qualified for the posts and positions subject to qualification requirements referred to in Section 4, Subsection 1.

If, at the time when this Decree comes into force, the requirement for a post or position is a uni degree which includes or is complemented with library and information studies at a university or vocational institution, a person thus qualified shall continue to be qualified for a post or position referred to in Section 4, Subsection 2.

A person referred to in Section four, Subsection 2, who has been employed in a post or position this Decree enters into force and who has been qualified under provisions valid at the time when Decree comes into force, shall continue to be qualified for the post or position in question.

## Section 7

**Transitional Provision concerning the Completion of Studies**

A person who has started studies to meet the qualification requirements valid at the time when tl Decree comes into force shall be qualified for the posts and positions referred to in this Decree, or she completes his or her studies by the end of the year 2001.

Helsinki, the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, 1998

President of the Republic

Martti Ahtisaari

Minister

Suvi-Anne Siimes