

# **LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM 2006-2010**

The library as an integrated service center  
for rural and urban areas

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Helsinki, September 2006  
ISBN 952-485-236-5 (pdf)

An electronic version:

[http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Kirjastot/linjaukset\\_ja\\_hankkeet/?lang=en](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Kirjastot/linjaukset_ja_hankkeet/?lang=en)

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## Basic guidelines already completed

Library Development Program 2006-2010 is a continuation of Library Strategy 2010, guidelines drafted in 2003 by the Ministry of Education, to ensure the accessibility of information and culture. It is also a response to the Provincial Policy Program 2006-2010 proposal “Provincial libraries will be developed into centers of culture, information and activity by means of a development program.”

The objective of this document is to clarify the future role and significance of the library and to associate the library more closely as a central actor within the regions and as part of the robust provincial areas. Libraries can build the future of the provincial regions with services which no other institution provides. Modern and diverse library services have a decisive role in the vitality and allure of provincial areas and in the prevention of marginalization and polarization of the population.

The program presents alternative operations models, above all, for library services in the provincial areas, no matter what changes occur in the community. The goal is to ensure the same accessibility to education, information and culture in the rural and outlying areas as is available in cities. Changes of the needs of the population and patrons and diversification of life styles and life paths, as well as more involved regional cooperation form the background of the program.

*According to the government's program for 2003-2007, “Accessibility of diverse and high quality information and library services shall be ensured throughout the whole country using the proposals of Library Strategy 2010.” With the support of the government's information society policy program 2004-2007, support for the acquisition of library patron terminals and network service training for personnel has begun.*

## Abstract

The backbone of the success of libraries lies in professional library know-how and open-minded seizing of new challenges. Libraries in Finland have always been a fixed part of community development. The service level of the modern library makes study, vocational practice, remote employment and other information-intensive activities possible in rural areas.

Regional cooperation and network and mobile services complement, but do not replace the physical library or the need for library professionals. A rise in the population's level of education requires a staff adequately educated in the library field, above all, in provincial areas, where there are no other information service providers.

Library services are basic services. Although libraries already operate as integrated service centers, their primary task is to function as a library and their core task is library expertise. The library's task range has expanded and become more demanding. Despite the diversification of tasks, users and constituencies expect libraries to have expertise in their core functions. Everyone benefits from the high level of competency of library staff. The latest expertise and infrastructure are prerequisites for sustainable competitiveness in provincial areas.

The influence of libraries cannot be measured solely on the basis of book loans or visits by patrons. A great amount of library material is only in electronic form. Internet services have increased in equal pace with traditional library work and services. The use of the premises has diversified and the significance of local libraries in their communities has grown with the Internet. The use and need for the physical library premises have increased with virtual services. Libraries function as community centers and social venues for their regions. Libraries provide a flexible learning environment. They are one of the most important, public, non-commercial meeting places, where anyone can come and be him- or herself. The library is one of the only remaining public oases of calm and peace. Since many people have the dilemma nowadays of finding an important piece of information from a vast volume of information, the guidance offered by the library facilitates the accessibility of the information.

The first condition for the quality of library services is an educated staff. Producing Internet services and guidance in their use requires particularly up-to-date expertise. Special services liable to fees also require a high level of professional expertise. A staff educated in the field is not only able to specialize, but also to expand cooperation with other actors.

If extra measures are not taken, the polarization of the population will increase, everyone will not receive the same opportunities for learning, the assimilation of new civic practices will slow down and literacy will decrease. Additional funds allocated to library services have a sustained and great influence. It is considerably more economical than managing problems caused by marginalization, building a comprehensive school library network again from scratch or establishing new institutions. It is also necessary for the quality and accessibility of library services. "Accessibility" means here the accessibility to professional guidance.

The library also reduces regional inequality in information acquisition, acting as both a physical facility and a virtual network. The area is so broad that it not only covers its own physical area, but also the whole world and its cultures. However, the use and need for the physical premises, the library premises, have not decreased with the hybrid library. Libraries have become the social centers of their regions.

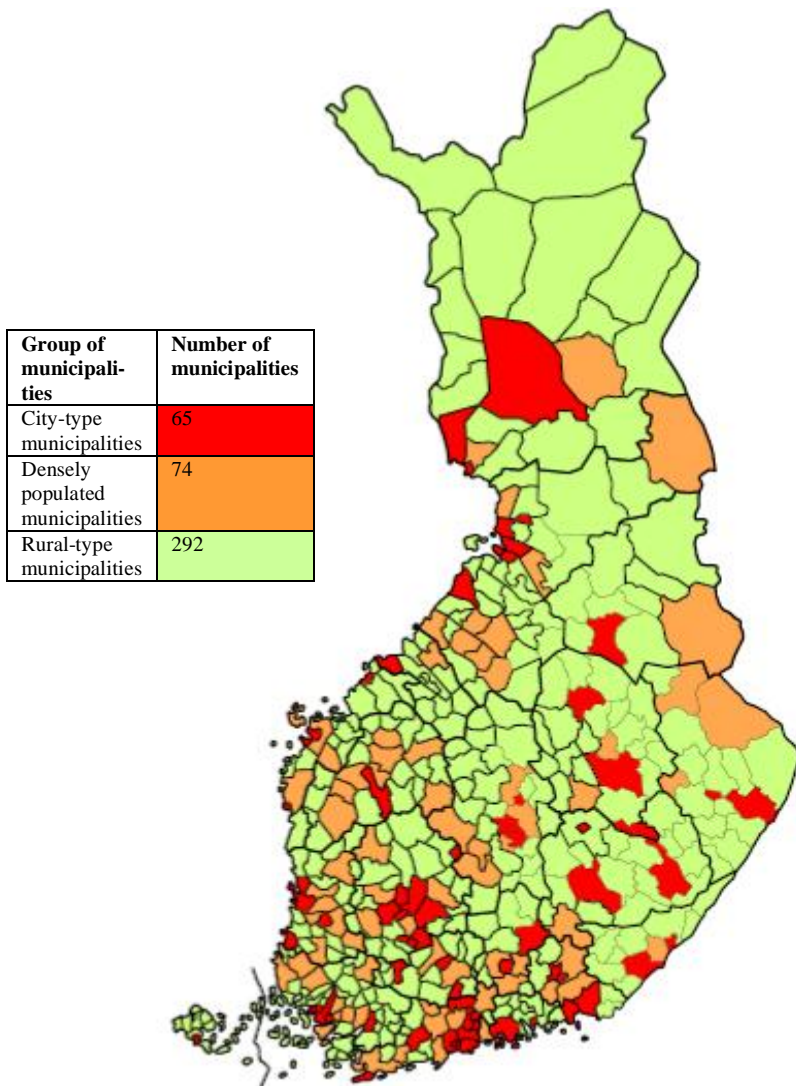
## Library program, vision 2010

1. Citizens will be equal with regards to accessibility of information, education, culture and new civic skills. “Accessibility” primarily means access to professional guidance.
2. Quality and reliability will be characteristics of library services, as will up-to-date skills, diverse material, multi-channel services and customization of services together with patrons.
3. The number of employees with a post-secondary school education in the library profession will increase. Supplemental professional training will be continual.
4. Libraries will spread a feeling of well-being in their environment as integrated service centers and, at the same time, as specialized local libraries and as providers of library bus services.
5. Libraries’ expanded tasks and increased quality requirements will be taken into consideration in resourcing. Library premises will be built to be easily modified.



# 1 Changes in society

The population in Finland is dispersed for historical reasons. Basic infrastructure was built in nearly the whole country. Living anywhere in the country is possible. In Finland, both constitutional law and library law guarantee each citizen equal opportunities to develop him or herself, regardless of wealth or domicile.



Finland is the most rural country in the EU

Changes have occurred in the development of the rural regions. The number of farmers has drastically decreased, while the number of holiday residents and part-time residents has increased. City-dwellers spend some time during the year in the country. Broadband connections reach all over the country and rural regions. Internet connections are also in daily use in the countryside. As a counterbalance for urban congestion, rising prices, lack of security and similar phenomena, the appeal of the countryside as a peaceful and high-quality living environment is increasing. Migration also brings new civic activities to rural areas.



Work and study are constantly changing. Environments, habits and facilities change, openness and flexibility are increasing. The role of the Internet is being emphasized at the same time that technology is becoming easier to use, transfer speeds and quality of transfers are increasing. Multimedia is becoming wireless and mobile. Diverse types of connections are opening new possibilities for interactivity. Mutually complementary and alternative opportunities for learning and working are being developed. Wherever there are communications connections, there is the opportunity to study and do more diverse kinds of work. Information and communications technology are being used more and more for retrieving information and for problem solving.

The need for healthcare services is developing in different ways in different areas. Lifestyles are diversifying. Life paths are becoming more multifaceted; work and study phases can alternate throughout life, likewise living in different places and countries. There is no predictable lifestyle for each period of life. Life values and choices differentiate between individuals and groups.

The central goal of Finland's policy concerning the elderly is that they are able to live in a familiar environment as long as possible. Up to 16 % of Finland's future pensioners living in the largest central districts are planning to move to the countryside. Furthermore, one-fifth plans to increase time spent living in second homes in the countryside. Aging individuals in the workforce and pensioners are finding their way back to their home communities and to their family roots. Municipalities must also be able to ensure acceptable service facilities and physical and communications connections, for these residents.

Changes influencing the way libraries operate include those in technology and communications, the population's age distribution, the mobility of the workforce, and living arrangements. The role of libraries as centers of education and expertise is especially emphasized in rural areas. With today's range of services, they are meeting the needs for the expertise of a creative society. Libraries offer an objective forum for people in all life situations and phases. The library can offer new methods of doing business and customer service models for pensioners and for those in other life situations. Libraries foster the national identity, the nation's languages, literature and multiculturalism.



## **2 Libraries as pioneers for change**

### ***2.1 The specialized experts and generalists of the library***

A competent staff is required for the high-quality development of library and information services. The demand for library skills has increased. Information management, material and information retrieval, selection, usage and evaluation are the core specializations of the library. People look for answers to simple questions nowadays on the Internet. There is additionally a need for information searches and the guidance of information specialists for problem solving.

Library staff helps library users to find the best possible material or information. “User” refers here to the person who is looking for material or information in the library, either physically on-site or via the Internet, alone or in a group. The way to find the best possible information is through a combination of talking with the patron and professional knowledge of information sources. Well-organized, up-to-date collections and library services are adapted by region, taking into consideration the users who are not able to come themselves to the library.

The task range of libraries has broadened. The continuous updating of management of new materials and collections, of user skills for new technologies and of network services is a challenge for both library staff and users. Employees in libraries in rural areas, developed areas and in small libraries especially must be information and culture generalists. The job tasks of library workers are becoming increasingly more like those of teachers, editors and informers.

In a municipality, the core expertise of libraries is needed especially in teaching, archiving and in museums, but also in other municipal administration information management, in business, zoning, environmental management and the preparation of decision-making. Information about the European Union, its member countries and decisions can also be obtained from the library.

### ***2.2 Using the library***

The library premises are used for studying and distance learning, for finding information and carrying out electronic transactions. It is a public meeting place for all municipal residents, a communal living room of the municipality, where people come to read the daily newspaper and to meet friends. The rise in the level of education, changes in teaching and increased use of the Internet mean increased demands on the quality of libraries’ core expertise. The public library offers a flexible learning environment.

Public libraries in Finland have responded to societal change by developing and increasing network and mobile services. This enables the use of library services from home, from the workplace, from a holiday home – the library comes to the user. Students, rural residents and those living in sparsely populated areas particularly benefit from this. Nearly every library has library systems network services, while every second library has mobile services. In 2005, over 47 million public library website visits were recorded<sup>1</sup>. Continual professional work is necessary as a base for Internet services.

Residents can renew their books online in 86 % of the libraries in Finland and they can reserve books in 89 % of the libraries. Every other library offers its patrons text messaging services, which

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<sup>1</sup> "Website visit" means here an external virtual visit by a library patron to the library's website, during which many different actions may occur, as with physical visits.



is most commonly used for informing of the arrival of reserved material. Improving service to their patrons is the most common reason why libraries take network and mobile services into use (90 %). Nearly 40 % of the libraries have noticed that the circulation of material has become faster with the introduction of network and mobile services. Regional network and mobile services complement, but do not replace the physical locations or library and information services.

### ***2.3 The library as an integrated service center***

The positive development of provincial areas requires conscious activity, in which resources are taken into use in a new way. The library, with its well-educated staff, up-to-date materials and equipment, is a strong element and attraction in a rural region, an element which offers actors a unique kind of support. The library is without a doubt one of the services which reaches people of all age groups.

The provincial areas' developing industries, diversifying agriculture and tourism require education and information service in the same way as other industries. Distance working and learning, independent of place and time, are also part of the future of provincial areas. The library in provincial areas is a place where the traditional and information literacy of children and youth is maintained, where the elderly are guided in information society skills and where cultural events are organized.

Especially in provincial areas, libraries are already working in cooperation with educational and cultural activities, as well as recreational and youth activities. In over 100 municipalities, the library also manages the municipal cultural duties.

As community-builders, libraries provide premises for meetings and services. Services relating to the municipality's internal business are used most in the library. E-democracy projects, feedback channels about municipal decision-makers' activities or monitoring of the municipal decision-making processes are all matters of electronic transaction. Cooperation is carried out with organizations, banks and communications and tourism companies

Cooperation also extends to social services. Libraries serve all municipal residents, from children in daycares to residents of homes for the elderly. Library services which are tailored and brought close to the patrons are generally intended for patrons who themselves are not able use the library.



## ***2.4 The library as a learning environment***

The national library network comprises a network of public libraries, institutes and special libraries which was developed over decades. Universities of applied sciences have brought a valuable addition to it. The integration of the services provided by public libraries into education is still under-way in Finland. About 80 % of library buses stop at schools. According to the results of a library survey done in autumn of 2005, one of the most time-consuming tasks of provincial libraries is the guidance of students and other learners in the use of different materials, media literacy and teaching information management skills.

Learning is becoming more and more a question of independent analysis of information. The role of Internet services in education is being emphasized and Internet learning is expanding. The learner is a seeker, chooser and analyzer of information. Libraries have to be in a key position in implementing the teaching goal. The local library is the only place to use databases liable to fees or other limited databases. The library has an important role in learning via the Internet, especially with regards to those students who do not have their own equipment or Internet connections to help them with their studies. For adult students, the provincial library is a central actor.



## ***2.5 Networking of provincial library services***

In municipalities, libraries in particular have gone the farthest in regional cooperation, in rapid introduction and use of information technology and in using Internet services. Libraries already have many years of experience in inter-municipal cooperation, which ensures the more extensive and effective accessibility of services.

Provincial libraries and local libraries benefit the most from networking. Sixty percent of the libraries have a joint materials and patron register and therefore the library appears to patrons as one service entity that extends beyond municipal borders. Accessibility of the libraries' network and mobile services in Finland is good – 97 percent of libraries provide their patrons with 24-hour Internet services; online book renewals are possible for 85 percent of libraries and online book reservations for 89 percent. Half of libraries provide text-message services for their patrons. Thanks to regional cooperation, municipal residents have access to more collections and information resources beyond those of their own municipality. The libraries' diverse collection is the citizens' common cultural property. Only about 7 % of the country's libraries are not taking part in inter-library cooperation.

Regional cooperation, the ease in using online catalogues and other library network services have multiplied the mobility of materials. Reduced grants for materials have no longer guaranteed book collections of sufficient quality and diversity for all libraries. With regional cooperation and jointly organized transportation of material, libraries have been able to serve their patrons. Despite the successful cooperation, all libraries have to renew their collections.

In the regional cooperation, the library network is more than a sum of individual libraries. The libraries of an area receive peer support in practical work. The next phase of regional cooperation and networking is the actual distribution and specialization of work and expenses.

Benefits of regional library cooperation:

- shared material and patron database,
- shared acquisitions of material, software and equipment and contracts associated with them,
- joint use of traditional and electronic material,
- Internet services produced in one library can be used in all the libraries of the region,
- shared storage and storage policies,
- shared general administration and staff and economic administration,
- library bus services covering a large area,
- joint development programs, logistics services (i.e. transport of material), and
- cooperation with schools, other libraries and other actors.

PIKI, the Pirkanmaa transport pool, is a good example of regional cooperation. It is a system in which libraries share a library system, collection work and materials transports.

<http://kirjasto.tampere.fi> -> "Piki" (service also in English).

## 3 Challenges

### 3.1 Expertise in the library profession

The number of employees with a post-secondary vocational education in municipal libraries has decreased extensively. The result of this is that information and guidance services have been constricted. The decrease in professional staff decisively weakens citizens' intellectual equality and the realization of their civil rights.

The biggest challenges and problems for library activities are the same as the factors for success: the adequacy of the staff in the library profession and the continual updating of the staff's core expertise in a changing environment. The rise in the population's level of education, the increasing needs of education and the diversification of information management require that library professionals have a good basic education and supplementary training. A developed information society and extensively networked operations set new challenges for the expertise of library staff.

Basic education in the library field can be obtained at the university, university of applied sciences, and the post-secondary education levels. In the future, we must ensure that quality education in the field can be attained at all levels. The goal is to raise the level of expertise of library staff. Digital materials and Internet services are available in libraries, but they are used too infrequently. The Ministry of Education has funded the production of different search services and databases so that quality services would be available for everyone's use through libraries. As things currently stand, this goal has not been realized. A reason for this is a shortage of staff and lack of supplementary training.

In library services, we have to answer more and more challenging questions, which require the continual reinforcement of expertise. Library staff needs supplemental training in pedagogic and information retrieval skills. Provincial libraries can arrange training for the region's staff in knowledge of information sources related to the professions of the province. There is also a need in provincial areas to arrange supplemental training across administrations with cultural and educational units.

*A requirement is that professional library staff be increased and supplemental training be continual.*

*The need for information service is constantly growing. Competent staff with broad knowledge of society and culture must be obtained for provincial areas in the future as well.*

### 3.2 The library as a promoter of information society skills

Libraries play a significant role in teaching information society skills, as creators of a community environment and as providers of background information which influences citizenship and premises for social gathering. Libraries can do their part to fulfill the growing need for home services and seek solutions for transporting materials and for people's new ways of doing business.

The rapid increase and change in electronic transactions accentuate the importance of information management skills. According to experience, so-called "cold transaction spots" will remain unused, because it is essential to get reliable guidance for electronic transactions. A prerequisite for reliable

guidance is the continual training of the staff. The vitality of provincial areas can be maintained by taking advantage of electronic transactions.

The networked activities of an information society set new challenges for the expertise of library staff. The library's extensively developed technology produces new possible working methods to take library services to the patrons. Using new working methods, we can reach patrons who are physically far away from library locations or who have not had the chance to use technological equipment.

*Possibilities provided by the library in teaching information society skills to the elderly and other special groups shall be utilized.*

*Preconditions for the realization of citizenship shall be reinforced by developing libraries more consciously into a meeting place for citizens and the government, and by building library and information services and public administration electronic transactions into one Internet service.*

### **3.3 The library as a meeting place**

Municipal residents need different working and studying environments, facilities for in-depth work, computers and connections. Properly resourced libraries adapt excellently as posts for Internet work centers. In addition to information technology equipment, they offer other materials and professional help for broader information acquisition.

Challenges are accentuated in provincial areas, where there are no other organizations, cultural institutions or specialized experts nearby. The important task of provincial libraries is to provide a physical place, a meeting place, which offers a pleasant area for recreation and voluntary study for everyone.

*Possibilities provided by the libraries as builders of a community environment, as open, non-commercial meeting places for all and as providers of meeting and service premises shall be utilized.*

*New issues must be taken into consideration in new library premises: pensioners coming to the library with their laptops, wireless areas, project and working areas, areas for communications, areas for studying and living space.*

### **3.4 Cooperation between schools and libraries**

The greatest challenge for libraries is to bring the focus in learning onto information management.

Primary schools, high schools and, partially, also vocational basic education, lack strong information service networks. Through public libraries, they can use library network services in rural and developed area by means of a joint agreement. The amount of information management skills in the curriculum is still not enough. Another challenge is also to increase the information management skills of teachers and the pedagogic skills of library staff considerably.



With a feasible plan, cooperation and modern library infrastructures, quality library services can be provided to students of all ages with relatively little additional investment. Services which are also an important attraction in choosing a place to live can be created for students of all ages.

Cooperation is more successful if the necessary funding is ensured together and an agreement is made concerning the shared use of premises and equipment. Courses in information technology shall be developed regionally and general pedagogic informants shall be hired. Cooperation in acquisitions shall be carried out (competing, purchases, recording material to the database).

### **3.5 Regionalism**

With increasing regional cooperation, the introduction of common standards and comparable operation statistics of Internet and mobile services are required of library computer systems more than before. A big practical problem is the lack of functional and cost-effective logistics (remote service and material transport). With regional logistics, municipalities can reduce costs.

Regional logistics solutions can be used especially in developing new services, which are, for example, chargeable home delivery of materials, library machines and material transport between the region's municipalities in sparsely populated areas. New ways for libraries to operate, for example, bringing the service to the patron, would also require new logistical operation models in electronic transactions.



## **4 Measures to ensure a high level of education and information society skills for the population**

### **Cross-administrative measures**

In the future, more and more cross-administrative measures will be needed. Libraries will operate actively in cooperation with other administrations, make cooperation agreements and agree on distribution of costs.

#### **Individual proposals:**

- A new concept of operations will be created for remote service and it will be implemented in the most economical and flexible way possible. New logistic solutions will be created.
- The development of combination libraries will be supported (a library combining the public library and education, which has an informant trained in pedagogy).
- Both distance and on-site continued education will be arranged for library and teaching staff.
- Support for acquisition of up-to-date equipment and communications infrastructure for libraries will be continued.
- The libraries' contribution to the comprehensive and information strategies of municipalities and regions and to the information and communications strategies of the municipal and regional schools will be clearly recorded. Information management skills will be included in subject-specific curricula.
- New operations models and concepts will be created for information services for the province's primary school students, high school students and for vocational basic education.

### **The municipal and regional level**

#### *Ensuring quality*

- The quality of library services will be ensured by hiring library employees with post-secondary education in the field and by acquiring diverse, up-to-date material. On a case-by-case basis, it must be recorded in the establishing agreement for new libraries, that the person responsible for local or branch libraries must have a post-secondary education degree and professional education in the field.
- When reorganizing the education structure, it must be ensured that quality education in the library and information field is available at the university, university of applied sciences and other post-secondary schooling level.
- The staff must undergo supplementary training.

#### *Networking and regional cooperation*

The next phase in regional cooperation and networking is the actual distribution of work and costs with different organizations and administrations.

Libraries are diversifying and becoming more specialized than before. The different library locations and library buses of an administrative unit focus their activities according to the needs of the region and specialize, for example,

- as integrated, information or cultural centers for municipalities
- in digital services
- in teaching information management skills
- in some subject area (i.e. art, music) according to the nature of the region
- in materials and tourism pertaining to local history and culture

The basic duty of libraries is the main issue in all alternatives.



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