

Library Strategy 2010

Policy for access to knowledge and culture

Publications of the Ministry of Education 2003:9



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Library Strategy 2010
Policy of the Finnish Ministry of Education
for ensuring access to knowledge and culture.
Public Libraries

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Library Strategy 2010 – Summary

Library strategy 2010 — the vision: Alongside basic education, public libraries are the public authorities' most important tool in creating the prerequisites for citizenship in the information society. They are a vital civilizing and cultural service; they satisfy the needs of individuals, and have an extensive influence on learning, teaching and active citizenship. In the information and knowledge society of today, libraries are perceived as places where knowledge and culture flows freely; they are the antidote to the selective offerings of mass media and the educational system.

Objectives: Library and information services work as one tight network, appearing to the user as an integrated whole. Production of local, regional and national services is coordinated, and the service effectively reaches those in need of it. Diverse library services are on offer, both for Finland's official language groups and for immigrants. Libraries ensure that people have equal access to sources of knowledge and culture. Citizens get the right information, in the right place and in real-time, and as appropriate to their age and levels of capability and knowledge. The libraries' information services are being developed into a precision service characterised by: customer-orientation, rapid feedback, quality

control, continuity and responsiveness. Library know-how and spearhead expertise are coming to the fore in the library field. The ability to manage the flow of information is emerging as a civic skill of great importance, as well as a part of learning on all levels.

Challenges: Prerequisites for the citizens' information service are: hybrid libraries, a more versatile role for libraries, and further development of the library network. A holistic channel for digital information service and electronic communication for all are still wanting. Local government is now less able than before to provide library services fit for the information society. Despite cuts in staffing, library services face new trials: education levels in the population are rising; the challenges posed by the educational system and lifelong learning are growing, and the demands on library know-how are increasing.

Measures: Tasks are divided between local government and state in such a way that municipalities are responsible for arranging statutory library service and providing established basic services. Municipalities and central government together take care of finances. The state takes special measures to ensure that libraries offer diverse material of high quality, including public sector information, and

access to national culture; it also ensures that new structures for the national library network benefit the population. These measures lessen the informational displacement caused by a person's domicile, age, educational level or lack of means, and the digital chasm and inequality of developing library services. They also yield significant savings of time, work and costs, while reducing duplication of work done in different places.

Differences between regions and libraries are levelled out if precision services of high quality are created centrally and regionally for joint use over the web, and if provincial library services are given support. Leaning on these, individual libraries can concentrate on their core tasks and give service to users in the community.

To ensure access to knowledge and culture for all citizens, and to realise the right of all customers to equal service, an **Action Plan** will be implemented during the Government's next term of office. This will secure user-centred information service for citizens by supporting public libraries in becoming hybrid libraries. A first prerequisite is that all libraries have not only competent and trained staff, but also up-to-date technological infrastructure and all necessary standards in use. After that it is possible to develop the library network and web services to satisfy

the information needs of the people. The vital importance of libraries and library know-how is recognised in all decision-making; thus it is taken into account as our information society is developed, when national culture is promoted, where learning, teaching or giving guidance about civic skills are concerned and within politics, both regionally and in the increasingly international sphere.

The biggest changes and development measures require that:

- the technological infrastructure of all public libraries be modernised. Standards and rapid data transfer connections must be introduced; data systems and customer terminals must be up-dated. Increased guidance must be provided for citizens about the use of computers and web services in libraries.
- digital information service for citizens be guaranteed through developing library and information services and electronic communication within the public administration towards a joint web service
- an unbiased evaluation of library and information services be carried out nationally to clarify and safeguard that all customers enjoy equal rights.
- the special needs of library services be recognised within the system of statutory state aid.
- financing for national web services and for special tasks of libraries be secured via the state budget.

- new operational models and concepts be created for the national library administration, for library organizations, and for the information services aimed at pupils of comprehensive, upper secondary and vocational schools. Pedagogic information specialists will be needed for regions and/or larger schools.
- the competence of library staff be increased.

Library Strategy 2010 presents visions and objectives regarding access to knowledge and culture; it identifies challenges and development needs; it details measures aimed at securing information services for all citizens including pupils, and it outlines the roles of local authorities and the state. Though the Strategy emphasises public libraries and the specific obligations of the state, good results can be achieved only through more effective cooperation between municipalities, the state and other parties. Views presented in the Library Strategy can be used as a basis for the next government negotiations and for other decision-making.

Library Strategy 2010 – starting points

Background to the Strategy

The Strategy and the Action Plan will include issues that have not been dealt with through more effective cooperation or through the efforts of civil servants. These are issues that require a holistic vision, new thinking, new ways of working, political decisions, administrative action, and common goals that transcend sector boundaries. They may also require new finance.

Back in 1998 public libraries were given shared responsibility for citizen information service in digital environments. This entailed meeting several objectives, of which the most important are to ensure equal access to knowledge by making new technology and new materials available to everyone alongside printed material, and by ensuring that sufficient skilled staff are available to guide the customers. That obligation was not supported by commitment and financing at the necessary levels.

During the information society boom, standards of municipal libraries in Finland, and citizens' access to information, have begun to deteriorate. This is despite the facts that public libraries are supposedly the concrete realisers of the information society, and that the Finnish Government Programme of 1999-2003 stated: "public libraries are to be developed as a means of promoting a knowledge-based society for citizens" and "displacement of citizens and regions is prevented by making services of the information society accessible to everybody in an equal way."

The Strategy is based on the Finnish Library Policy Programme 2001-2004 and on an evaluation of the present state of the proposed measures. Details of these can be obtained on the Ministry's website:

<http://www.minedu.fi/minedu/culture/index.html>

The Strategy has been prepared following investigations that were commissioned, and an extensive network of experts in various fields has also been used. Articles in the publication “Digimaan kartta” (The map of Digiland), which was produced by a working group within the Ministry of Education looking at digital information services, have also given significant perspective to the analysis. The Strategy has been presented for libraries at seminars on 5 June and 30 August, 2002.

Values

Within both the traditional and the digital environment libraries are conveyors of contents, both of education and of culture, thus acting as local and regional centres of culture and knowledge. A high educational level is one of the Nation’s vital success factors, which promote welfare and international competitiveness. The starting point of the Strategy is that citizens are to be guaranteed equal access to sources of culture and knowledge. Access to knowledge is a basic human right and is fundamental to citizenship in the information society. Without it there is no democracy. For democracy to flourish, the following must be provided:

- information services organized by society,
- such public information as is needed for active citizenship,
- access to metadata (information about information) and to information.

A minimum level of access to information is that at which everyone receives reliable information about existing information, i.e. metadata that makes it possible to search for the necessary information via various channels.

Basic values of the information society are:

- the right and ability to make use of information,
- the right and ability to practice citizenship,
- the right and ability to self-expression and creativity
- access to information,
- data protection,
- copyright.

The information reserves of libraries form part of the valuable capital of the knowledge-based society. Libraries

- enshrine the basic values of the information society,
- promote access to knowledge and culture,

- develop people's language and thinking,
- support the skills of citizenship in the information society,
- contribute to knowledge of one's own and other cultures, promoting deeper understanding of oneself and other peoples. This is vital for learning, for participation in society, and also for every individual's entire life.

Public libraries are the only organization that is an expert on fiction. For the knowledge-based society, and for education, the library is particularly important as promoter of literacy and inspiration for reading. The traditional literacy is the basis for media literacy, which includes the ability to search for relevant information from both printed and electronic sources, the ability to evaluate and compare various information sources and the skill to apply knowledge for one's own use.

Library services take into account the needs of different age groups. People trust the library. Library services carry through entire life-spans. For citizens, the library has intrinsic value, as do science, culture and art.

The Vision

Public libraries in the Finnish society

- add value to information retrieval and management through their services that are critical of media and sources. Library competence, the ability to handle information, is becoming a vital citizen skill, and constitutes an essential element in all learning and teaching.
- are creators and supporters of community spirit and important for the region's welfare and success. The library is the municipality's cultural and social space.
- are an organization open for everyone and they strengthen democracy,
- are a hybrid library offering a physical space, versatile material and local services in parallel with web and remote services,
- are active and effective operators, their services are easily available,
- are conveyors of cultural heritage and promoters of multiculturalism,
- give continuity to document collections and web-services, create added value through choosing and arranging various material,
- are versatile socialisers into literacy – also web-literacy. A significant amount of fiction and

non-fiction is still published and consumed in printed form, whereas the information produced by the public administration nowadays is almost wholly digital.

During the next few years the significance of the library will increase

- as a place for learnings and experiences, as a conveyor of diverse knowledge and culture,
- with a view to mastering and organizing information according to user needs,
- as a gateway to information and to electronic communication within the public administration,
- as part of a learning society that practices lifelong learning, because
- the significance of the web and electronic communication is brought out only when the contents are being used, and ultimately by how well users have the chance and ability to utilise the information in their lives.

The library network

- Library and information services work as one tight network, appearing to the user as an integrated whole. The network supports each library. Information can be accessed wherever it is needed.

- Production of local, regional and national services is coordinated, and service is efficiently aimed at those needing it.
- Libraries in small municipalities function as centres of culture and information for their locality. They use the services of the whole network, so can offer an up-to-date and high quality service.
- All significant national information resources and virtual library services can be utilised by every citizen, regardless of domicile. Libraries also function as accessible settings for study and as conveyors of know-how.
- The digital chasm caused by domicile, by level of knowledge or by lack of means is narrowed.

Technological infrastructure

- The technological infrastructure of libraries has been attended to and become commonplace. Every library has rapid data communications, with effective, accessible and user-friendly data systems. Throughout the country it is simple to make contact electronically both with library services and with the public administration. One precondition for electronic communication to spread is that it is quicker, simpler and more convenient than the traditional way.

- Citizens can get expert and individual information service electronically, regardless of the time of day. Customers can choose to have dealings electronically and physically with different libraries.
- Information systems of the libraries are able to exchange data between themselves and other players. They can also exchange customer data, which enables customers to float.



The Hybrid Library

The library of the information society is not a single entity; it is a hybrid, in which the operations are a blend of traditional library services with those of a digital library that conveys only digital material.

According to an EU definition from 1997, a hybrid library is a networking library of mixed types, offering access to global information via various kinds of media, material and networks. Essential to the hybrid library is that it offers guidance. The EU sees libraries increasingly serving the information society. (Public Library and Information Society, EU Commission, DGXIII, 1997)

The table below distinguishes the services offered by traditional and hybrid libraries.

Competent staff and information service are characteristic of libraries in both traditional and digital environments. To facilitate the finding and use of information, libraries select, acquire, organize, evaluate, store and convey a wide range of diverse materials. Information service involves not only searching many different media, sources and materials, but also analysing and organizing collections, material and knowledge. Libraries use the same methods to ensure that essential and significant information can be found on the web.

The Hybrid Library – a “combination library”

Traditional library activities,

Conveying traditional, printed material (books, journals), talking books, videos and music material (sheet music, scores, recordings). The physical library offers the space, material, personnel and access to appliances. Service aimed at the local society and interest groups: guiding pupils and groups of various ages, teaching information retrieval, cooperating with local bodies and authorities.

with the addition of new kinds of material and extended services

Diverse materials and contents. Virtual channels to the material, know-how and service of libraries. Remote service. Licensed material. Own production of contents. Interactive, personalised, sectorised services. Work stations. Data systems. Electronic communication. Forums. Active engagement and exchange of knowledge.

Expanded service and collections

- Expanded information service: in a hybrid library the service is available both in the physical library and as remote, virtual and mobile services.
 - More diverse library material: CD-ROMs and DVDs, e-books and other new types of recordings; digital material; web-services. Licensed web-material (full texts, articles, reference databases and, for example journals, encyclopaedias, statistics, maps, text books in electronic form, which the library has acquired the right to use).
 - Expanded use of library facilities and equipment: work places and stations, group rooms, places to be social in and others for studies in silence. Spaces can be changed in a flexible way. Customers can use traditional collections, digital and web-material, as well as licensed material. Guidance is given in use of web-services and work stations, information service is offered and staff give instruction about information management. The social aspect of library spaces becomes more important. There is an opportunity to communicate with the public administration electronically (e.g. access to electronic applications, registrations and other forms).
- The opportunity remains to browse and read newspapers and journals; to borrow material direct or as interlibrary loans, and to receive individual or group guidance in how to use the library. It is still possible to use music appliances, video recorders and microfiche readers. Individual and group instruction is provided for schools, teachers and pupils of various ages in how to look for information. Exhibitions, lectures, fairytale hours and other recreational events are staged.

New services

Virtual channels to material, knowledge and service in libraries

- collections databases (web-based and wireless connections for searching, reserving, renewing loans, checking personal loan information, profiles etc.),
- other material, produced by the library for the Internet (for example databases concerning authors, fairytales and regional subjects, selected lists, services for children),
- information about service and contact, events calendars, feedback channels, remote information service etc. and chat-rooms (for instance a forum for reading experiences, publication of one's own texts).

Interactive, personalised, sectored services

mastering one's own loan and search information, novelty follow-up, booking material, requests for information retrieval, feedback and discussion services; services aimed at, and allocated to, various age and customer groups, including free-of-charge services. Even more individual services can be offered via secure connections.

Remote services. Several service channels (independence of terminal equipment)

Web-services and digital web-material (for instance, information about collections and remote information service) conveyed by libraries and offered via the Internet, wireless connections or interactive digital television.

New digital environments where the route to finding documents can be other than search words, for instance www.publiclibraries.fi/ and <http://igs.kirjastot.fi>

In-house production of contents

Production and publication of contents related to collections, databases, services and library know-how, mainly via the Internet. Examples of such pages are those giving guidance to information retrieval, author directories, pages for children, recommended material, databases, regional traditions or the like.

The statistics database concerning public libraries:
<http://tilastot.kirjastot.fi>

Objectives

Quality criteria

- Skilled professional staff is the first prerequisite for quality.
- Diverse library services of high quality are guaranteed for the domestic language groups and for immigrants. Citizens obtain the right information, in the right place, in real-time, adjusted to age and level of skills and knowledge.
- Civic activities require information sources that are available throughout the country, provided by libraries that operate under the same quality criteria and service principles.
- Digital services offer integrated information functions, in accord with the principle of targeted service.
- Digital information service for citizens is guaranteed through developing library and information services and electronic communication within the public administration towards a combined web-service.

Targeted service and top-class expertise

- Services, both on-site and remote, are developed according to the principle of targeted service. Targeted services make functions more effective and improve information service efficiency, which affects the whole society. Characteristics are customer-orientation, rapid feedback, quality control and correlation with needs.
- The competence of library personnel is sustained and developed long-term. Professional further education is supported and complemented by continuously updated tuition conveyed via the electronic knowledge portal.

Functioning library networks

- By means of effective web-services, produced by libraries jointly, people can find information as and when they need it, in either electronic or printed form, and, if they so wish, they can request that the loan be delivered to their home or work place. Library services are also available outside the library building.
- Electronic, physical and remote services are bought, borrowed and exchanged from or with various parties, depending on the customer's need at the time.

- The National Library has a national, societal and cultural significance that benefits citizens. It operates as a national developer of web-services for all types of libraries.
- For purposes of evaluation, each remote service carries as much weight as a service performed locally in a library.
- The interlibrary loan concept has been expanded to include remote use of both physical and electronic collections. The National Repository Library is the interlibrary loans centre, a national activity that has been developed from the traditional concept.
- The Repository Library operates as free copy library, thus guaranteeing access to national culture.
- Within the library network it is mainly the biggest units that produce remote services for the needs of the entire country.
- Within the framework of regional web-services, libraries are substantial producers of information, and have some organizational responsibility for the development of regional web-services.

New patterns for collaboration between organizations

- Producing targeted services requires that the organizational borders between various library sectors and libraries be significantly lowered, and that long-term investment be made in digital information provision that focuses on the user.
- New operating systems for the National Library and Repository Library serve the entire library network in a customer-oriented way.
- Developing digital targeted services is undertaken collectively by various authorities, while libraries act as experts on information retrieval.

Expanding diversity and information service

Traditional services supplemented by a wider variety of services: more diverse material and personnel competence; virtual channels to material, knowledge and service; licensed material; remote, interactive, personalised and sectorised services; own contents production; new service channels etc.

Basic service free of charge

The aim is to keep free of charge those basic services referred to in the present Library Act. Charges can be made for special services, which is allowed under the Library Act now in force.

Information provision for learners

Managing information is part of teachers' basic and further education. The teaching of this important skill permeates all subject curricula. Information services to comprehensive schools and upper secondary schools will be built on the library networks and know-how that already exist. Agreements will be made about the costs incurred. Parallel with local library services, virtual and targeted services for schools will also be developed.

Public administration

Central and regional administrations will support citizens' equal access to knowledge and information service within both learning and education. Greater emphasis will be placed on international influence and on public relations.

Challenges and needs for development

The library's role will become ever more diverse. There are problems concerning access to library services:

- How is the obligation in paragraph 16 (Cultural rights) of the Finnish Constitution (731/1999) to be fulfilled in a digital environment? Unless strong new measures are taken, the digital chasm will not disappear before 2010.
- Libraries and their resources are insufficient to enable them to realise the task of creating the citizens' information service, and electronic communication with the public administration, as one joint web-service.
- The present division of local authorities makes it impossible to produce in all places such library and information services that citizens in a knowledge-based society need; similarly, it is impossible to provide equal access to library and information services for the whole population.
- If we are to transform "book libraries" into hybrid libraries for the information society, three basic prerequisites are currently lacking: a holistic vision, an acceptance of responsibility for the development and the political will.

Personnel competence declining. General education level rising.

- The hybrid library needs highly trained personnel but the average educational level of public library staff has fallen. The knowledge-based society will place growing demands on library know-how.
- The population's rising average educational level will make new demands, both quantitative and qualitative, of library personnel's competence.
- Considering the needs of customers, the further education of library staff is insufficient, and there is a lack of management training.
- Library know-how is not generally appreciated (for instance, the skill to manage information is crucial for all learning, or when teaching methods change – many fail to realise this).
- Municipal salaries are uncompetitive. Low pay fails to attract skilled people to apply for work with local authorities.
- There is insufficient skilled staff to guide people in learning how to use web-services.

**Library systems are of poor quality.
Standardization is not applied.**

- Under a programme called Information Society Finland 1996-1999 the state supported public libraries mainly to develop web-services and produce contents – not to acquire computer equipment (as in the education system) nor for high-quality computerised library systems (as in the university libraries). The all too modest technological infrastructure now makes it difficult to utilise material within public libraries.
- Whereas university libraries have a common library system and a functioning network, most municipalities have problems with poor quality data systems and slow data communication. International standardization concerning the library world is not applied here. There are about 10 suppliers of systems for public libraries, so all data systems cannot be developed sufficiently. The aid for computerizing public and school libraries is insufficient.
- The problem is greatest in small municipalities, which are most in need of centralised web-services, exchange of information and access to electronic communication, for example.

Wanting: a national library network

- Poor quality data systems, unexploited standardization and lack of national coordination and steering – these factors have foiled the intended expansion of the library network into a truly national service that would work for all citizens in a comprehensive way.
- What is lacking is a channel for digital information service and electronic communication that would reach great parts of the population and combine many different kinds of services.
- Citizens are unequal with regard to interlibrary loans, because research libraries in certain locations make very high charges – even for free copy material.



Expert support given by library organizations is insufficient

- The organization of the present library network does not serve libraries or customers of small municipalities well enough. Regional and national expertise support is imperfect and unevenly distributed, partly because of insufficient resources.
- Finland lacks a system where state financed libraries are obliged to serve mainly small libraries and complement their collections, services and knowledge centrally and regionally.
- The facts that regional libraries and the Central Library for Public Libraries are city libraries, and that the National Library is part of the University of Helsinki, weaken their inclination to take responsibility. Decision-making is often inflexible in large organizations, and problems can arise if it seems that the cost of accommodating the needs of the region's libraries may be to lose part of one's own advantage.

Positive resource-steering by the state has its shortcomings

- The state is a significant financer of library services, but it lacks the means and resources, both provincially and centrally, to intervene when defects occur.

- With regard to financing basic services, there is no positive steering of resources to stipulate what the state input must achieve. Present steering potentials are limited to information steering and financing of the occasional project. These, and the present statutory state aid legislation, plus the Library Act, are insufficient even to ensure that people have an information service and access to other basic services, let alone to secure a sensible and long-term development of the entire library system and the library network. It is impossible to create a library service for the information society by relying on projects alone. In addition, the state aid system fails to support the launching of sensible new operating practices, such as centralised services.

The national administration lacks a responsible authority that would be nationwide and able to transcend sectors

- The administration has no coordinating unit/ authority/experts to take overall responsibility for coordinating and developing the national library network, web-services and information services for education. The central administration also lacks an operational authority to facilitate flexible cross-sector projects.

- Services produced centrally and intended for use by every public library depend on project finance from lottery funds; this adversely affects the development of these services. The use of project money has become distorted.

Information provision for education and pupils has been neglected

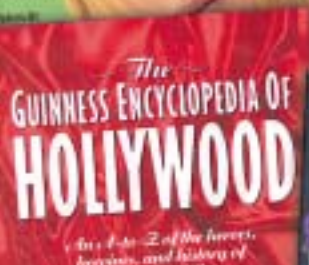
- The period of transition, which arrived in libraries during the 1990s with the information floods, the ever more diverse library material and the web, is only now on the threshold of schools and tuition.
- Many teachers have received no training in managing information, although this skill is of great help when teaching methods are being developed and changed.
- The growing demands of lifelong learning and voluntary studies generate increasing pressure on library services; this falls mainly on public libraries.
- There is no information service aimed at comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools and vocational education; the long-term development is lacking. Except for a few schools with library projects, pupils and teachers depend mainly on the services of public libraries.

While the education system's needs are growing explosively, the public libraries' ability to satisfy them has weakened.

- Although the Ministry of Education is responsible for both teaching and library sectors, resource allocation to the educational system is missing. As branch libraries and book mobiles have been axed, the situation has become critical.
- The school library concept is vague. Its contents and services are more than just walls, computers, Internet, projects and a class collection of one book.

The above-mentioned drawbacks lead, for instance, to the results that:

- overlapping work is done, wrong choices and decisions are made, investments are squandered, time is wasted on the unnecessary, and "new" projects are found that already exist,
- information exchange and retrieval, and the use of centralised services and electronic communication become problematic, or even impossible,
- library collections and databases are dispersed, with over 130 user interfaces for searches. Databases, material and library resources are too far separated,
- many libraries have search systems that no longer meet customers' growing demands and needs.



Measures and suggested steps

Library Strategy

The Library Strategy draws up strategic policies and suggested measures for the citizens' information provision. The emphasis is on particular obligations of the state and on public libraries which, for the people, represent access to knowledge and culture. Other libraries are mentioned when they interact with public libraries, either as service providers (The National Repository Library and the National Library, in connection with the University of Helsinki) or as collaborative partners whose information provision lacks long-term foundation and development (comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools and vocational education institutions).

Because public libraries are maintained by the municipalities, development measures succeed only through collaboration between municipalities and the state.

The Library Strategy is the foundation stone of the Ministry of Education's plan for operations and finance; it is crucial to deciding on targets for project finance. The Strategy is to be revised annually. It constitutes part of the Ministry of Education's Strategy 2010, and also the Strategy for the Cultural Information Society 2003-2006. The Strategy follows EU guidelines in matters concerning the information society, electronic communication, regional equality and developing libraries. It is in line with, for instance, the Ministry of Education's Information Strategy for Education and Research, and with its Strategy for Production of Contents. The aim is to offer all citizens equal access to culture and information sources, so public libraries should develop into hybrid libraries. It is guaranteed that the national library network is operating in a way that serves the citizens, regional and knowledge-based inequalities are eliminated.

First stage of the Strategy: the Action Plan

A first prerequisite for developing information provision for all is that skilled staff be available; then, an up-to-date standardised technological infrastructure must be in place for all types of libraries. After that, the emphasis falls on developing web-services that correspond to the citizens' need for information.

- Technological infrastructure up-to-date and standardization in use.
- Public libraries developed into hybrid libraries.
- Firm financial foundation laid for centralised and regional services: the state budget to include continuous, established, centralised and regional functions (financing of the National Library, The Central Library for Public Libraries and provincial libraries).
- Provincial joint library services established.
- The system of statutory state aid. Special objectives.
- Pedagogical information specialists. A new working pattern and a national responsibility for information provision aimed at pupils, and collaboration between school and library. The teaching of skills for mastering information is to be integrated in every subject on curricula.

Second stage of the Strategy: the Action Plan carried out

- Information provision aimed at citizens and tuition.
- Top expertise. Targeted services.
- New working pattern for further education.
- New concept for interlibrary lending activities
- Expanded tasks for the National Repository Library and the National Library with a view to serving citizens.
- More effective digitalisation of material.
- New working patterns for the library administration and network.
- Teacher training including information management. Information provision for pupils in comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools and vocational education.



Action Plan

With a view to securing citizens' access to knowledge and culture, and also to equal services and customer rights (the Finnish Constitution 731/1999, §16, Cultural rights) an Action Plan will be carried out during the next governmental term of office, through which will be executed the task of providing information to the population in a digital environment, as given by Parliament to the public libraries in 1998, and the proposals concerning improving access to knowledge and culture, as well as developing the national library network, mentioned in the Finnish Library Policy Programme 2001-2004.

Together with basic education, public libraries are the most important way for the public administration to realise the fundamental prerequisites for citizenship in the information society. In the information and knowledge-based society libraries are perceived as places where knowledge and culture flow freely, in contrast to the selective offerings of media and the educational system. Libraries are responsible for information provision for the citizens, and for access to public information and to metadata produced in the information society. Digital information provision

for citizens, library and information services, and electronic communication within the public administration will be developed towards a joint web-service.

Public libraries provide a central learning and culture service; they serve users in an individual way that has far-reaching consequences for how people learn, are taught and exercise active citizenship. Access to knowledge and culture is supported when public libraries are developed towards becoming hybrid libraries operating both as physical spaces and as virtual networks. To achieve this, further investments are essential in technological and administrative infrastructure and in the competence of the personnel.

Differences between regions and levels of knowledge, and differences between libraries are levelled out through the creation of centralised and regional targeted services, available via the web for common use, and through support given to regional library services. The individual library is backed up by these, and can concentrate on its core services and on serving its customers' topical needs. Centralised service saves time, work and money, and it minimises the amount of overlapping work done in different places.

Among the first prerequisites for levelling out regional differences are: access to fast data communication, availability of up-to-date technological infrastructure and employment of standardization. This makes information exchange and electronic communication possible.

Policy for division of labour between local authorities and the state

Tasks for municipalities

Taking care of basic services

- Library and information services are provided, according to the law, so that local citizens have access both to physical library services reasonably close to their homes, and to web and remote services.
- Established basic services are provided in accordance with the Library Act of 1998, particularly with respect to sufficient numbers of staff with library and information qualifications, and to the acquisition of renewed library material and equipment.
- Being responsible for ensuring that library and information services, as well as information provision for citizens and education, are

prominent in municipal information strategies, provincial programmes etc.

Skilled personnel

- Though staff employment is a municipal matter, the Ministry of Education emphasises the importance of qualified staff and expertise for realising the customers' right to skilful service, for developing library and information services of high quality, for levelling out differences between regions and knowledge levels, and for developing cooperation.
- To guarantee quality of service and optimal use of material resources, the Ministry of Education recommends increased collaboration between municipalities and the creation of joint library services, for instance district libraries, in case an individual municipality is unable to produce library services for the information society. The Ministry stresses that, irrespective of the form of collaboration, each municipality must have the services of university educated, qualified staff.

Information provision for learners

Information provision within education is, in practice, the responsibility of the education system, both in municipalities and nationally. Though

municipalities have the right and responsibility to decide on matters of information provision for pupils and their education, the Ministry considers it important that municipalities draw up clear plans to ensure that teachers and pupils gain skills to master information; that necessary material and equipment is acquired, that continuity can be guaranteed for those schools without their own, professionally developed library and that collaboration between schools and public libraries can be carried out in a way that satisfies both parties, that there is agreement on costs, and that the teaching of skills for mastering information is integrated in all subjects on the curricula.

Where comprehensive schools and upper secondary schools do not have qualified personnel to be responsible for developing library services, the Ministry of Education recommends that municipalities organize the service by employing a pedagogic information specialist for one municipality or regionally; by buying services, for instance from a public library, so that 1-3% of the running costs of the education service are allocated to the authority arranging the library services; by creating a school library that is professionally developed (for large schools).

The Ministry of Education stresses that information provision for teaching and learning should not be established or developed as something separate, but always as long-term collaboration with other libraries. There should be ability and readiness to make use of the existing library network, service and good practice, in a way that is appropriate to one's own needs. It is not profitable to start building new overlapping organizations and functions – to reinvent the wheel.

Measures for the state

Subsidising:

- fast data communication and high-quality data processing systems for libraries,
- high-quality and diverse material for libraries, including information from the public administration,
- access to national culture (expanded tasks for the National Library and the National Repository Library),
- the national library network's new structures, which are beneficial to citizens (centralised and provincial service, state administration)

Measures for the Ministry of Education, in respect of paragraph 16 of the Finnish Constitution 731/1999:

- Library services to be evaluated nationally as part of the evaluation of basic services.
- Customer rights and equal access to services to be specified in revised statutes; more steering on issues that guarantee access to information; development of the library network, with diverse materials and skilled personnel nationwide.
- To investigate the possibility of allocating state aid, in special cases, direct to the development of library services (centralised services, special assignments, a shared library system for municipalities, language proportions, for example).
- Through project financing, public libraries receive support for producing contents for web-services, for cooperation between municipal libraries and various administrative branches, for promoting written culture and both new and traditional literacies.
- Investigations and projects concerning current issues are commissioned quickly, and the results are used as a basis for decision-making and for national tasks that require a rapid response.

Library expertise and new operating structures for the state administration:

- To secure equal access to information and culture – information provision for citizens and education, in other words – library know-how and expertise is becoming ever more important within the administration.
- Along with the advance of networks, the need has emerged for a national role, more visible than before, concerning a holistic view of the library field, of measures that span different administrative branches and sectors, of long-term development and of building the national library network.
- Perceiving the national situation and development needs on the one hand, and recognizing the needs of libraries that require centralised services on the other, is best done in an operating structure independent from library organizations. New operating structures are needed, both for development and for operational tasks, through which national projects could be implemented flexibly.
- The position of library experts within the State Provincial Offices to be strengthened with a view to supporting the Ministry of Education's strategic goals. Regardless of how the regional

state administration develops, there is a need for regional library expertise within the state's provincial administration.

The benefits of state measures:

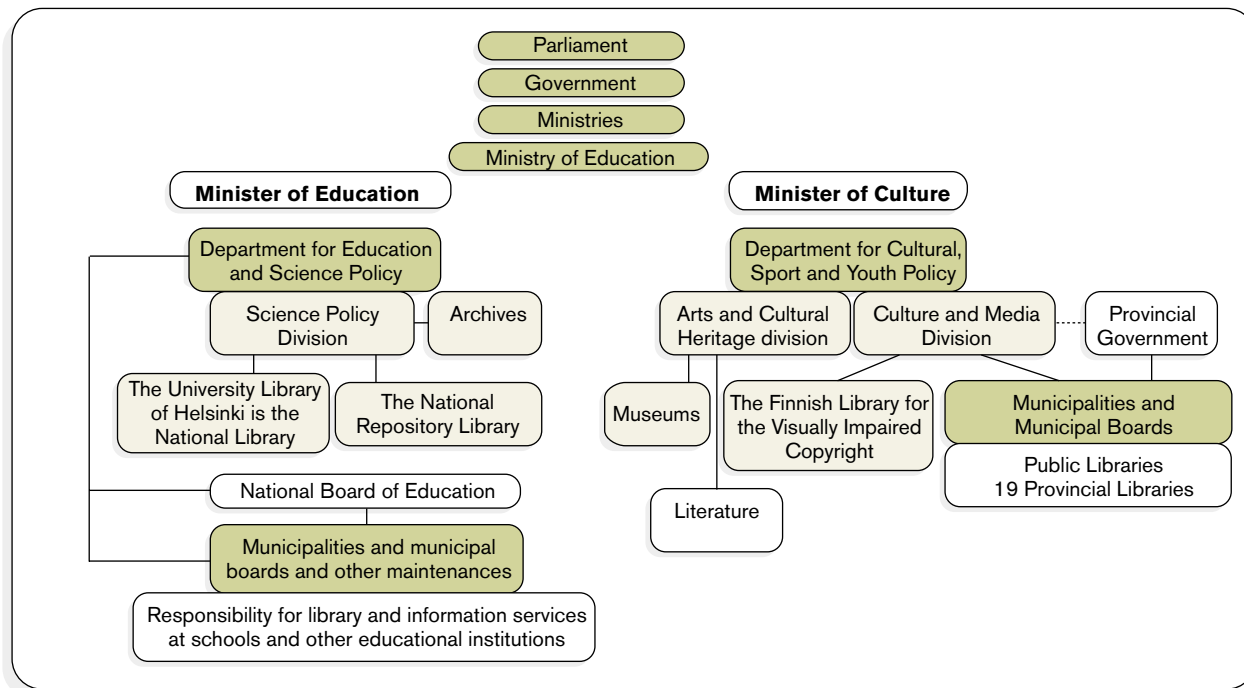
- Information displacement and inequality due to domicile, age, knowledge level or lack of means will be reduced, as will unequal library service development.
- The libraries will be strengthened in fulfilling their tasks of supporting the national identity, being expert on written culture and a window to internationalism.
- Equality among citizens in the use of web-services will be secured.
- New materials, services, and work practices will be spread equally to different parts of the country.
- Activities that transcend municipal and administrative borders will be promoted.
- Even small municipalities, sparsely populated areas and small organizations can be guaranteed high-quality library services and access to national material. With help from centralised services, individual libraries can concentrate on their most important tasks and on customer service for local people and organizations.

Effective, collaborative and centralised services, supported by the state administration and a functioning national library network, make it possible, in the face of increasing electronic material, to:

- avoid overlapping acquisitions and their associated costs,
- save the time wasted by work being duplicated in several places,
- escape a situation where similar development projects are carried out simultaneously in many places,
- prevent erroneous decision-making, and save state and local authority money.

The administrative authority for public libraries is the Ministry of Education. State Provincial Offices function as regional administrative units (Library Act 1998). The Ministry prepares government budget and statutory proposals concerning public libraries, clarifies policy regarding library and information services nationally, and steers the allocation of discretionary state aid, among other things. Cooperation is interactive with various players, and influence is exercised both nationally and internationally. The Finnish Library Strategy is being actively publicised.

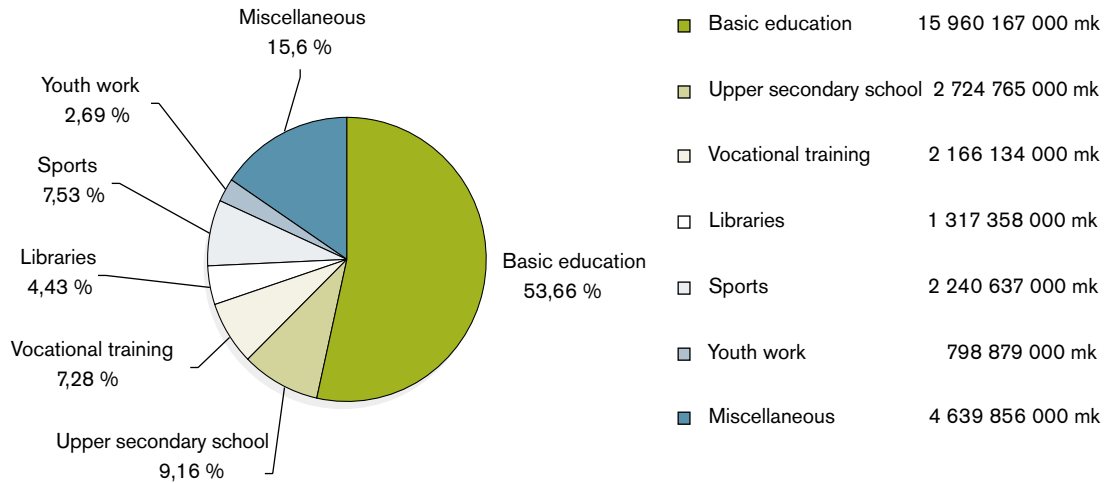
Administration of libraries, archives and museums in 2002



The State Provincial Offices give informative guidance and evaluate the region's library and information services, their accessibility and quality. Regional information which has been analysed by the Provincial State Office is relevant background information when national decisions are being made and measures taken.



Running costs for the municipal culture and education sector in the year 2000



Source: Statistics Finland

The financing model of the public libraries is built on municipalities. Each local authority is responsible for running its library service. Under specific legislation (act 635/1998, decree 806/1998), municipalities receive money from the state to finance the educational and cultural sector. Municipalities, however, have the discretionary right to allocate the state aid elsewhere, and not to libraries.

Besides the state aid towards running costs, which is paid to municipalities, the Ministry also grants 25-50 % to the construction of libraries and purchase of book mobiles. Even buying a book boat is seen as establishing a library, so state aid is given. In addition, discretionary subsidies of some € 3.9 million, mainly from lottery funds, were paid for special assignments and various projects within libraries. For services that the National Library and the Central Library for Public Libraries produced for general use in public libraries no additional money was received.

In 2002, the library allowance was estimated to rise to € 231.5 million. The state finances about € 89.5 million, of which state aid is € 85.6 million. Costs of public libraries are about 1% of the running costs of municipalities and 4.4% of the costs for the cultural and educational sector.

Further information

The website of the Culture and Media Division of the Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy at the Ministry of Education carries information about public libraries and their administration, economy, statistics and topical issues in Swedish, English, French and Spanish.
www.minedu.fi

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