

Quality recommendation for public libraries

Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2011:35





Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö
Undervisnings- och kulturministeriet
Ministry of Education and Culture
Ministère de l'Éducation et de la culture

Ministry of Education and Culture Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy
P.O. Box 29, FIN-00023 Government Finland
<http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut>

Graphic design and photos: Petteri Lehtinen
(Oranki Art, Pello, Finland 2010
Cover, Ninni Korkalo, "Steel hard", 2010
page 4, Jussi Valtakari, "Häiritty Koskikara", 2007
page 20, Päivi Lassheikki, "Kivipiirros", 2002
page 25, Aino Louhi ja Kaija Papu, "Maailman onnellisin puu", 2008
page 32-33, Anna-Maija Rissanen, "Matkaavat vuoret", 2010)

ISBN 978-952-263-085-8 (Online)
ISSN-L 1799-0343
ISSN 1799-0351 (Online)

Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2011:35

Table of Contents

Quality recommendation for public libraries 5

Evaluation of library and information services in Finland 6

Levels of evaluation, responsibilities and parties involved 6

Evaluation tool 7

Increasingly higher quality in library operations 8

Quality recommendations for library services 9

Administrator's service commitment for library services 9

Quality recommendations concerning services and their use 11

Quality recommendations concerning human resources and competence 13

Quality recommendations concerning collections 16

Quality recommendations concerning facilities 18

Quality management recommendation for public libraries 21

Finland, a Land of Libraries 26

Introduction 26

Impact of municipal and population structure 28

Finnish libraries 29

Public library legislation and central government administration 29

Financing of library operations 30

Centralised services supporting the library network and users 31

USRII USRII

Quality recommendation for public libraries

The quality recommendation for public libraries was published in Finnish in 2010 in the Ministry of Education and Culture publication series. The English version has been edited and compiled for an international readership.

The quality recommendation was prepared by a working group appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The working group included representatives of the state regional administration and libraries of various sizes, as well as university education and research in the library sector.

The appendix *Finland, a Land of Libraries*, contains background information presenting Finland in general and the country's libraries in particular.

The quality recommendation consists of five sections: administrator's service commitment for library services, library services and their use, human resources and competence, collections and library facilities. A brief description of quality management for public libraries will be presented at the end.

Evaluation of library and information services in Finland

Evaluation, and especially self-evaluation, has been a statutory obligation for Finnish public libraries since 1998, when a mention of it was included in the new Library Act. Pursuant to the Act, the “local authority shall evaluate the library and information service it provides. The purpose of evaluation is to improve access to library and information services and to promote their development. Evaluation shall monitor the implementation of library and information services and the quality

and cost-effectiveness of the services.” (Section 6, Library Act (904/1998) The Act also requires key evaluation results to be made public.

Libraries are required to develop the quality of services not only by library legislation but also by the national library policy, the Government Programme and policies jointly drawn up by local authorities. Recently, library service evaluations have focused especially on the impact of services and on the customer perspective.

Levels of evaluation, responsibilities and parties involved

Library legislation mentions three levels of evaluation, which also depict the distribution of evaluation tasks in the library sector. Local self-evaluation is carried out by the provider of library and information services, i.e., the municipality, while nationwide evaluation and national participation in international evaluations is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Local-level evaluation and the evaluation of individual libraries emphasise the quality and scope of services provided, as well as feedback from users. Municipalities are interested in the effectiveness and customer-orientation of service provi-

sion. Nationwide evaluation focuses on the scope and functioning of the library network, as well as on a general assessment of the availability, quality, cost-effectiveness and impact of library services. Regional state administrative authorities, in turn, monitor and evaluate the availability of basic services – which also include library and information services – in terms of the equality and legality of their implementation.

The Ministry of Education and Culture and state regional administration jointly handle the national basic statistics collection of municipal public libraries, the results of which have been

publicly available online since 1999. In all, comparable statistics on public libraries are available for a period of several decades. Information collected nationwide and analysed by library specialists in regional administration is used as a basis for local, regional and national development and decision-making, as well as for nationwide evaluation.

Prior to this quality recommendation, tools used in national, regional and local evaluation included statis-

tics and the quality recommendations of the library policy programme published in 2001. The 2007 results of the annual basic service evaluation performed by regional state administrative authorities showed that libraries need more support for their self-evaluation: despite the statutory evaluation obligation, few libraries regularly assess their services and their quality. The need to update quality recommendations was also stated in this connection.

Evaluation tool

The quality recommendation consists of quality descriptions outlining good and first-rate library service. These include:

- a quality description for decision-makers, discussing key quality factors from the administrator's perspective, as well as
- recommendations and depictions of good quality concerning services and their use,
- human resources and competence,
- collections and
- library facilities.

For each of these, the publication presents quality descriptions and recommendations, in addition to discussing

their implementation. The quality management recommendation prepared by the working group is also briefly described at the end.

The quality recommendation is a tool for the self-evaluation of public libraries. It helps the Ministry of Education and Culture to support and encourage libraries to develop their operations, taking into account the rights of library users. Ensuring good quality in library and information services leads to savings in time and money. Moreover, first-rate services enable positive and long-term social impacts. It must, however, be possible to prove the level of quality. The quality recommendation is one way to do this.

Increasingly higher quality in library operations

Published in 2009, the Finnish Public Library Policy 2015. National Strategic Areas of Focus defines the direction and goal of public library operations in Finland. Expressing the vision of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the publication serves as the foundation for statute preparation and state funding. Another of the policy's goals is

to ensure that information and culture continue to be available and accessible to citizens in a networked information, civil and learning society.

The policy emphasises the significance of high-quality services. It was used as a basis for preparing this quality recommendation.

Quality recommendations for library services

Administrator's service commitment for library services

Municipalities look after the educational and cultural fundamental rights of their residents by maintaining quality library services. First-rate library services that meet the needs of residents provide well-being, joy, experiences and knowledge to all age groups. They enable municipalities to strengthen their own cultural foun-

dation and prevent informational and social exclusion. The municipality ensures that all of the basic pillars of library operations (facilities and equipment, modern library system, up-to-date collection, professional staff and long enough opening hours) have been taken care of and that their volume and quality are sufficient.

In municipalities offering high-quality library services:

- The opportunities of libraries to increase the well-being of residents and make their surroundings more pleasant, enable lifelong learning and prevent exclusion are understood and utilised. Cross-sectoral cooperation within municipalities is flexible, and libraries participate in the development of, for example, well-being, learning and cultural processes.
- Service availability is also examined across municipal borders. Regional and district or cross-administrative networking is used to improve availability or quality. Clear agreements have been made on cooperation, and responsibilities for costs have been defined. Though online services are developed systematically, library services are offered as local services to residents. In sparsely populated regions, the physical service network offering is complemented with mobile library services. Local government ensures that libraries and their facilities are easily accessed.
- Library operations are granted appropriations, which correspond, as a minimum, to the per-resident basic price used when determining state subsidies to public libraries (55.50 euro in the 2011 budget). A financing level that corresponds to 1–1.5 per cent of the municipality's operating expenses secures the provision of quality services and maintenance of a constantly renewed collection.

- Services in Finnish, Swedish and Sami are provided on an equal basis, and the needs of other language groups are also taken into account. The municipality's multicultural nature is visible in the library.
- Library administration has been organised so that decision-making is supported by the highest library expertise and competence.
- The attractiveness of library jobs is ensured, and recruiting seeks the best available competence for library development.
- The local authorities sees to it that the personnel working in libraries and in library management participates frequently in systematically continuing education (at least 6 training days/person/year).
- Municipal libraries and their operations are evaluated from the perspective of the local operating environment, adopting an anticipatory approach and taking long-term impacts into consideration. Library services are included in local resident surveys.
- Participation in service development has been made easy for local residents and library users, and users are encouraged to get involved. Feedback systems are developed. The local government ensures that the opinions of children and young people are also taken into consideration. Services are marketed and made known to people.
- The municipality's internal expenses are allocated transparently and the library can operate in a cost-aware manner.
- The library's service and cost structure, financial performance, productivity and quality are monitored with versatile indicators. The administrator's key indicators for service provision include the number of per-resident physical visits, online visits, loans, library material expenses and operating expenses. Indicators are defined for user experiences (feedback in local resident and library user surveys) and for new forms of service (such as event production and the multi-service nature of libraries).

Quality recommendations concerning services and their use

Pursuant to the Finnish Library Act, public libraries are to advance equal opportunities in the fields of education and culture; literary and artistic pursuits; continuous development of skills, knowledge and civic skills; internationalisation; and lifelong learning. Activities also aim to promote the development of virtual and interactive online services and their content. Public libraries use their services to implement and strengthen the educational and cultural fundamental rights of all citizens.

In accordance with the Finnish Public Library Policy 2015, library services must be available where people move about, in physical as well as virtual spaces. Services must be offered along people's everyday routes, at an easy distance and at times suitable for users. For libraries to operate as open learning centres, they must develop new services, such as instruction in information management skills, as well as cooperate with municipal educational institutions as a part of developing learning processes in schools. Changes in the population and age group structures must be taken into account when designing services and activities.

The location of library and information services is a problematic recommendation and one difficult to measure. According to libraries, it is also a weak indicator for municipalities that differ in terms of their population, degree of urbanisation and size of service area. Some residents use the library situated along their way to work or shopping instead of the library located within a radius of two kilometres from their home, which was the distance used as a criteria in the previous recommendation. Because of this, the new quality recommendation approaches the matter from the library user's perspective.

In over half of the Finnish municipalities, less than half of the residents live within two kilometre distance from a library. What improves accessibility is that half of the libraries are located close to a school and nearly a fourth near a day-care centre. Nearly one-third of town and city libraries were open in accordance with the recommendations. Though weekend service provision has increased in other sectors, only six per cent of libraries keep their doors open on Sundays, and slightly over a third on Saturdays.

Basic service quality consists of an up-to-date and constantly renewed collection, modern library system, functioning online services, good facilities and skilled staff. Cooperation between

libraries provides added value to services. Library use is free of charge, but some performances may be subject to a fee equal to the cost price.

In a good and high-quality library:

- The service offering is versatile and in addition to physical and online services, it also includes services and events that emphasise library's content. Services are provided in cooperation with other parties and library users.
- Services are easily accessed. Most local residents live within two kilometres from a library or the library has good traffic connections and travel time is reasonable (less than half an hour). Especially in a view of children, the walking distance is reasonable as well as safe. Mobile library users have less than one kilometre to the busstop. Library services are also offered as home service to special groups, also transportation to the library is arranged. Library users can choose the type of transaction and service best suited to them: self-service and personal service options, online services and local services at the home library. These complement, but do not replace, each other.
- Service provision and marketing make use of regional cooperation and services centrally produced for libraries.
- Extensive opening hours advance library use. Libraries are open weekdays, in the evenings and on weekends. According to customer surveys, at least 80% of the respondents are satisfied with the opening hours. A variety of models have been tested for service provision, such as keeping the library open but only offering self-service.
- In addition to free basic services, fee-based special services, such as home deliveries of books, are also offered to users.
- The customer feels welcome. Services are developed from the customer's perspective, jointly with customers. Attention is given to the quality of customer service. Contact is maintained with local residents and library users in different ways. Interest is shown towards the customers' experiences of service quality, and customers are aware of different feedback options. The library monitors the opinions of library users – and non-users – by participating in local resident surveys or carrying out a standardised library user survey every two to three years. The opinions of children and young people are also taken into account. In user surveys, at least 80% of the respondents indicate they are satisfied with services.

- Material can be borrowed and returned as self-service, and personal customer service is provided by easily accessible personnel. Staff members move among library users.
- Services are marketed and communicated on a regular basis using different instruments and channels. Marketing is also handled through participation in various events and gatherings. The library works in a networked fashion and is present in virtual networks and the social media.
- Reading and other library services have been made attractive to children through cooperation with day-care centres and schools. Most school children are library users and instruction in library use and information management is a part of municipal curriculum. Separate user surveys are drawn up for children and young people.
- Services for young people have been developed in cooperation with youth work services and young people. The special needs of youth have been taken into consideration in the design and equipment of facilities, as well as in service provision.
- The use of high-quality library services is a part of people's everyday life, work and leisure time, and the services are used by 80% of local residents. At least half of the local residents are active library users. The quantitative performance targets for a good library are 10 physical library visits, 20 loans and 10 online transactions annually per resident. In 2010, each inhabitant visited the library on average 9.9 times and borrowed 18.1 books or material. The number of online transactions per inhabitant was 10.7.

Quality recommendations concerning human resources and competence

The sufficiency of educated and competent library staff is a key indicator of the quality of library services. The Library Act states that library and information service personnel must be available to library users. Provisions on the qualifications required of staff are issued by Decree.

Under the Library Decree, at least 70% of the staff of municipal libraries

must have completed studies in the field. At least 45% must hold a university degree and have completed studies in library and information sciences with a scope of at least 60 ECTS points. Moreover, a person responsible for the library or several branch libraries shall hold a Master's degree suitable for the duty, as well as have completed higher education-level studies in library and

information sciences. The Decree does not, however, issue provisions on the size or continuing education of the personnel. A decree amended in terms of the qualifications requirements took effect on 1 January 2010.

The development of the information society and the rise of citizens level of education, cooperation with schools, as well as networked activities call for specialised staff in libraries. However, the number of professional staff members with university-level education has decreased in many municipalities in recent years. In the near future, considerable numbers of library staff members with university education will retire, which signifies both a threat and opportunity to municipalities. If staff numbers are reduced and qualifications requirements lowered to achieve savings, service development will suffer. On the other hand, the re-evaluation of staff structure after the retirement wave and the implementation of any changes needed enable new development.

In 2010, libraries performed an aver-

age of 0.79 person-years per 1,000 inhabitants.

The required number of staff depends on the size of the municipality, but also on the structure of the library network, as well as on participation in regional and national development projects and online service provision. In large municipalities with more than 100,000 residents, less staff may be enough to secure services of high quality. In small municipalities, basic service level maintenance and service development may require proportionally more staff.

These days, staff members participate in continuing education less than recommended. In 2008, the number of days spent in continuing education was added as a nationally monitored key indicator to the statistics database for public libraries.

In most municipalities, continuing education accounts for less than four days per person-year, but there is great variation between municipalities and regions.

In a municipality offering high-quality library services:

- A sufficient number of staff and competence level secure the services that require specialisation and are needed by different user and language groups. Smaller municipalities can ensure the availability of expertise required for special tasks – such as children’s library operations, music library operations, services for the elderly, cooperation with schools and educational institutions, online services and electronic materials – through contract-based cooperation between municipalities.
- The number of staff has been defined taking into consideration the municipality’s size and structure, the library service network, duties, as well as the expanding and changing service offering.
- The utilisation of centralised services and opportunities presented by regional cooperation are taken into account in personnel management. The best way to ensure the provision and continuous development of high-quality services is to allocate at least 0.8–1 person-year(s) per 1,000 residents.
- Libraries have directors in charge of development. The management input acquired through municipalities’ mutual purchase contracts for management services is usually not sufficient.
- The functioning of service provision and its development options, as well as the personnel’s coping and security have been ensured – also in small libraries – by manning each individual branch library with at least two staff members.
- The staff’s marketing, event production and project competence is used to develop modern services.
- The development of staff competence is an important and recognised field of management.
- Competence needs are regularly surveyed and competence is developed with goal-oriented continuing education. The staff has access to different types of learning opportunities (levels, methods, time- and location-independent applications).
- The maintenance and development of staff competence is ensured by annually allocating to it at least six days per person-year.
- The entire staff has the opportunity to participate in continuing education.
- The staff is encouraged to maintain competence portfolios, and the increase in competence is taken into account when developing work content.

Quality recommendations concerning collections

According to the Finnish Public Library Policy 2015, a good library is characterised by expertise, specialisation and quality. Quality means, among other things, up-to-date material.

A good library provides a comprehensive collection of fiction, non-fiction that retains its useful value, magazines, music, movies and other recordings. It offers both print and electronic materials, though books continue to be central to library operations. Libraries form consortia in material acquisitions and improve transport services for library materials. The National Repository Library plays an important role in ensuring the availability of older material.

Libraries' material acquisitions began to shrink during the recession in the 1990s. In 2010, libraries acquired on average 339 new books per 1,000 inhabitants. Traditional materials are still at the core, with books accounting for some 83% of the acquisitions.

Big regional differences were also found in this respect. The volumes acquired depend, among other things, on the municipality's size, degree of urbanisation and service network. Urban municipalities made fewer acquisitions than rural municipalities. Monolingual Swedish-speaking municipalities made the biggest acquisitions, bilingual municipalities with Finnish as the majority language the smallest.

In small rural municipalities, the volume of acquisitions must be larger to secure users a quality collection of new materials. In big cities, in turn, acquisitions per resident can be lower and still ensure considerably more versatile collections. The mother tongue of local residents also affects the libraries' need for new acquisitions. Bilingual municipalities must provide materials in both languages. Municipalities of net immigration must also take into account the number of foreign immigrants and their need for materials.

Books formed 87% of the libraries' collections in 2010. They accounted for 83% of acquisitions and for 73% of loans. Adult material represented 71% and children's for 29% of library book collections. Adult material amounted to 60% of book loans.

In 2010, libraries acquired on average 16 magazine volumes per 1,000 residents.

Apart from new acquisitions, how up to date a collection is depends on discard rates, which are also surveyed in the annual basic library statistics. In accordance with international recommendations (UNESCO), annual book acquisitions and disposals should account for at least 8% of book collections. In Finnish libraries, acquisitions proportionally accounted for an average of 6.0% and disposals for an average of 6.5% of overall volumes in 2010.

In a good and high-quality library:

- The library has collection policy and it participates in regional or district cooperation concerning acquisitions and collections, as well as in joint evaluations of collections. The library considers its own collections to be part of the regional collection, in whose development all libraries take part as acquisition partners.
- The acquisition volumes of books and new publications are sufficient to ensure a versatile and extensive offering. The number of acquired volumes depends on the service network, clientele and expected demand of the municipality's library. A relatively good provision of new publications can be secured with 300–400 books per 1,000 residents. A small municipality needs a larger acquisition volume to ensure a good range.
- The match between demand and supply is monitored, for example, based on the delivery times of reservations.
- The renewal and up-to-dateness of collections is secured with sufficient acquisitions and regular, adequate disposals. The internationally recommended level is 8%. Another way to ensure that a collection is up to date is to monitor the proportion of new materials (less than five years old) in open collections, as well as their turnaround. According to international recommendations, new materials should account for 40% of open collections.
- Collections for children are kept interesting, diverse and attractive by annually acquiring at least one book for children and young people per under-15-year-old user.
- Materials are provided in different formats, including electronic ones. Residents are also offered e-materials licensed for national use.
- The versatility of magazine collections and their match with the needs of different user groups are secured by an adequate number of annual volumes. The collection of print magazines is complemented by offering access to online magazine portals. The basic collection consists of at least 50 ordered annual volumes. Bigger libraries determine the number of annual volumes in proportion to the population. First-rate magazine collections contain 15–20 magazine volumes per 1,000 residents.
- The integrity and specialisation of music, film, sheet music and other small collections is promoted through collection policies and selections.
- The expertise of staff and library users is made use of in the development of collections. The clientele is taken into account when making decisions on the focus of collections.
- The collections of the National Repository Library are mainly used to access older, infrequently requested material.

Quality recommendations concerning facilities

In addition to collections and a competent staff, a good library needs facilities suitable for its operations. The library is an easily accessible organisation open to all and promotes democracy. It provides physical facilities, versatile materials and local service alongside online and remote services.

The Finnish Public Library Policy 2015 anticipates that adaptable library facilities and personal service on both physical premises and online will continue to be seen as the strengths of libraries in the future. A good library offers facilities and services for study and work. It also provides a space for silence and concentration.

Libraries play also an important role as a meeting place. Libraries are developed into meaningful spaces suitable for leisure activities and independent study for all age groups. In sparsely populated, large municipalities, the mobile library service complements the library network and together with its online connections can serve as an important meeting place.

The 2009 basic service evaluation of library facilities found that the facilities are generally in good condition.

Over half of the libraries labelled their facilities as good or excellent, but one in ten considered them to be poor. Seventy per cent of the libraries find their location and accessibility to be good: 70% of local residents live within two kilometres of a library.

The use of facilities is efficient. During every opening hour, libraries are visited by an average of 40 users. The average annual expenses for facilities were 112 euro per square metre in use and 41 euro per opening hour, but there is great variation in this respect.

According to surveys carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture, more attention could still be given to the physical accessibility of libraries. A checklist has been drafted on this matter, and its measures can be used to ensure easy access to and in the library facilities.

In 2010, libraries had on average 93 square metres in use per 1,000 residents. In general, the target size of facilities is achieved well in sparsely populated regions. Municipalities of net immigration often have less space and show a clear need for additional spaces.

In a municipality offering high-quality library services:

- The library is located near or in connection with other services and forms a natural part of a functional entity.
- When designing facilities, the user aspect is more central than that of collections. For example, the need for a storage space has been reduced through cooperation between libraries. Repositories have been opened to customers.
- The library stands out from its environment, it is clearly signposted, the entrance is easy to find and accessible to all.
- The facilities and the various activities available are easy to find and understand. Signs and guidance are clear both indoors and outdoors.
- The facilities are in efficient use and can be used collaboratively. Library facilities are offered for different types of events, and this has led to a positive circle of activities. Access control systems can be used to make some facilities, such as magazine reading rooms, available for self-service.
- The security of facilities is ensured through planning and exercises.
- Efficient use of facilities is promoted with extensive and correctly timed opening hours and by keeping some of the facilities open later than others. Users have access to wireless networks, borrowable laptops, ergonomic workstations suitable for work, as well as printing options. The facilities can be adapted to various purposes of use.
- Accessibility and the ease of operation required by different user groups have been taken into account based on the international recommendations for making libraries accessible to persons with disabilities. Accessibility has been developed in cooperation with user groups and disability associations.
- The staff has big enough workspaces with ergonomic equipment and furnishing. The library is a modern and comfortable workplace.
- Art has been acquired for new buildings based on the percentage principle, meaning that one per cent of the construction expenses are allocated to art acquisitions. Library facilities are offered, for example, for the display of museum collections and, where possible, for different types of exhibitions.
- The space in use amounts to some 100 square metres per 1,000 residents. This has been found to be a suitable size in several construction projects. Municipalities with a small population usually need more space to ensure a versatile service offering.
- Good design and acoustic solutions have been used to create various sound zones, including silent spaces, in the library, and lighting can be adjusted to different needs.

- The furniture is regularly renewed and inspires people to relax, study and work.
- The functionality of facilities is regularly assessed, and any repairs and modifications are carried out based on the assessment.

Sustainable development has been taken into consideration in all solutions.



Quality management recommendation for public libraries

The purpose of the quality management recommendation drawn up in connection with the quality recommendation for public libraries is to encourage libraries to engage in long-term development of quality work and operations. The recommendation can be applied at the level of municipal

library operations or at the level of branch libraries, as well as in different types of libraries and in municipalities cooperating to develop their libraries. The recommendation targets both public officials and union representatives in library management, as well as library staff.

National quality management in public libraries

In Finland, the national quality management system for public libraries consists of national steering, as well as quality management in municipal library operations. National steering proposes general policies, sets general quality targets for libraries and ensures they are met.

Key steering tools include regulations on operations and financing, the library policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the state budget, the principles for financing operations, the qualifications requirements for library staff, as well as information guidance, which also involves regional administration.

Regional administration promotes

regional equality and development. Regional State Administrative Agencies perform a joint annual evaluation of basic library services.

Municipalities carry a great responsibility for the quality management of public libraries. Library legislation makes municipalities responsible for arranging library services and grants them a great deal of decision-making power in matters related to service provision, use of funding for library operations and quality management. Legislation obliges libraries to evaluate their own operations and participate in external assessments of their activities.

Recommendation for quality management in public libraries

The quality management recommendation looks at the quality management of libraries based on the features of a well-functioning organisation.

1. Libraries examine their operations as a whole

Libraries have a documented operating system that includes process descriptions and which is used to ensure the achievement of targets and goals, as well as to evaluate and improve operations. Using the operating system, libraries can also inform users, staff and key stakeholders about the values, objectives and targets guiding operations.

2. User-orientation is at the heart of development in libraries

User-oriented libraries monitor and anticipate the satisfaction, dissatisfaction and expectations of user groups and develop operations on the basis of the results. A well-functioning library is networked and cooperates with others. Work with users is valued, and users are provided with opportunities to participate in the planning of operations. There are many channels for user feedback, and it is used in service development.

3. Libraries are managed

Libraries are developed systematically. Management has defined a clear direction and vision for the organisation, making use of regularly collected facts and evidence about the operating environment and changes in it, as well as the library's own operations. The tasks and objectives, as well as the values and principles guiding operations, are defined jointly with the staff. Management, as well as the achievement of the vision, values and strategic targets are regularly assessed.

4. Libraries are results-oriented

Libraries have clear and realistic objectives. Their achievement is monitored and evaluated systematically and in a goal-oriented manner. Libraries collect

diverse information about results, analyse the results and compare them to the goals set.

5. Libraries learn

To answer changing user needs, libraries must engage in continuous learning and development of operating processes. An operating culture that boosts learning, development and creativity enables the staff to keep up with devel-

opment in the field and enhance their own competence. It is allowed to make mistakes and learn from them; the staff receives support and encouragement.

6. The staff forms the foundation of the library

The local government ensures that the basic criteria for educational qualifications defined in legislation are met. Libraries are aware of the staff's current and future competence needs and encourage employees to develop and utilise their competence. Librar-

ies draw up plans for the well-being, safety and equal treatment of the staff and keep the plans up-to-date. Regular performance reviews and appraisals are held in all operating units and with all personnel groups.

7. Processes function in libraries

Descriptions have been made of library processes, and the related goals and responsibilities, as well as the steering and monitoring mechanisms are clear. Processes are regularly evaluated and improved using follow-up information,

feedback, best practices and changes detected in the operating environment. Libraries also participate in large municipal processes, such as those related to learning, culture and well-being.

8. Libraries cooperate and work as partners

To develop services, prevent exclusion and advance community spirit, as well as to support and deepen their own competence, libraries actively develop

partnerships and form networks with other libraries; cultural, educational, youth, and social services; NGOs; and local businesses.

9. Libraries carry their social responsibility

The emphases of social responsibility are defined in library strategies and action plans. Library operations are ethically and ecologically sustainable. Libraries strengthen social inclusion and citizens' abilities to assume social responsibility by communicating open-

ly, responsibly adhering to regulations and taking care of the safety and healthiness of library facilities. Libraries ensure that all operations comply with ecologically sustainable development.

10. Libraries carry out self-evaluation

Libraries have drawn up and described an evaluation system and an evaluation plan, which are used to create uniform principles for the evaluation of operations and units, as well as to ensure that they have collected and documented information about needs related to various evaluations.

Library users and stakeholders are

able to give continuous feedback on operations and results, which tells libraries about their success. Libraries use national quality recommendations, as well as comparison data from other organisations. They publish information about the evaluation results, as well as the development plans made on the basis of the results.



Finland, a Land of Libraries

Introduction

Finland, a Land of Libraries is a short introduction to Finland, the Finnish library system and especially the environment in which public libraries operate.

Finland, a Land of Libraries briefly describes Finland as a country: geographical conditions, urbanisation and population structure also affect the

operating conditions of libraries, as well as the demands set on library services.

Finnish library legislation, as well as the administration and funding of libraries are also handled in this publication, rounded out by a survey of centrally produced services for libraries and users.

Finland in a nutshell

- sovereign parliamentary republic since 1917
- population 5.4 million, annual growth 0.5%
- 1 million people in the metropolitan area (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa)
- average density 18 people per sq. km
- life expectancy men 76.5 and women 83.2 years
- average household size 2.1 persons, 55% of households live in single-family houses
- 90% speak Finnish, 5.4% Swedish
- 78% Lutheran, 1% Orthodox
- 78% of population aged 25 to 64 have completed upper secondary or tertiary education, 35% have university or other tertiary qualifications
- 88% of households own a personal computer, 78% have broadband
- 91% own a digital television
- 99% of households have cell phones of which 36% are smart phones
- 85% of women between 25 and 54 employed outside the home
- unemployment rate in July 2011 6.9%
- area 390,920 sq. kilometres, 9% of which is fresh water
- 68% of the country covered by forests
- 188,000 lakes
- cross domestic product per capital 2010 (Nominal) 33,600 euro

Finland's 842 public libraries were open for 1,393,802 hours in 2010. The country's 154 mobile libraries served customers at 12,606 stops. Each of the 5.3 million Finns visited libraries an average of 9.9 times over the year and borrowed 18.1 books, audiovisual recordings, or other items. The libraries' online services received 57 million visits in 2010. The activities were handled by a group of library employees whose work corresponded to 4,700 person-years on an average budget of 56 euro per inhabitant.

Measured using the indicators for availability of information and quality of services defined in 2001 in the library policy programme for 2001–2004, Finnish public libraries perform excellently in terms of library visits (recommendation: 9 visits per inhabitant) and lending volumes (18 loans per inhabitant). The quantitative targets defined in the new quality recommendation are also met well in this respect. While many of the other target levels were not achieved, the working group that drew up the quality recommendations underlines that the recommendations represent excellent quality.

According to the 2008 community survey, local residents were satisfied

with the services provided by municipalities. Library services were the source of greatest satisfaction, with 75% of residents pleased with them. According to a recent research project carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the University of Tampere (*The role of public libraries in citizens' activities, 2011*), local residents considered libraries to have succeeded quite well or better in fostering interest in literature and art (86%), as well as in advancing lifelong development of knowledge (77%) and skills (61%). Residents also felt libraries had done quite or very well in promoting equal access to information (87%), lifelong learning (80%), democracy (64%) and well-being (73%).

National library customer surveys (2008 and 2010) also indicated that respondents felt libraries had a significant impact on many spheres of life. Over 70% of the spring 2010 respondents (13,000 in all) said libraries had improved their quality of life somewhat or considerably. As for supporting cultural pursuits, 60% found libraries to play a significant role.

Impact of municipal and population structure

The Finnish municipal structure has undergone many changes in recent years. There have been mergers between municipalities, and in 2011 the number of municipalities totalled 336. The populations of municipalities in mainland Finland range from 590,000 in Helsinki to 804 in Suomenniemi. Municipalities with fewer than 6,000 residents account for slightly over half of Finnish municipalities and 10% of the country's population. Finland only has eight cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants.

There are also big differences between the areas and population densities of municipalities. In terms of area, the smallest municipality is Kauniainen (6.0 km²), located in the greater Helsinki region. The largest municipality, in turn, is Inari (17,334 km²), in Lapland. The most sparsely populated municipalities, Enontekiö and Savukoski, are also located in Lapland. Both have no more than 0.2 inhabitants per square kilometre. Compared to the rest of Europe, Finland is sparsely populated (with only 17.6 people per square kilometre), but in terms of area (390,920 km², of which 303,909 km² is land)

it is a relatively large country, which poses challenges to the accessibility of library services.

In a sparsely populated country, ease of access is a key factor in terms of the quality of library services. Finland has many municipalities whose residents are far away from libraries. The number of such municipalities is relatively the largest in Lapland and Eastern Finland. While residents in Southern Finland live a walking distance from a library, in Lapland the nearest library may be dozens of kilometres away.

However, the availability of library services also depends on the number of library units, their opening hours and the offering of mobile library services, for which service targets have also been defined.

Thirty-one of the municipalities in mainland Finland¹ are bilingual, with either Finnish or Swedish as the majority language. There are also three monolingual Swedish-speaking municipalities on the mainland. Bilingualism and the increasing number of immigrants contribute to the development of library services.

¹ The statistics for municipalities do not include the autonomous region of Åland (16 municipalities).

Finnish libraries

The Finnish library network comprises:

- public (i.e., municipal) libraries,
- university, polytechnic and special libraries (academic libraries), as well as
- student libraries in schools and educational institutions.

The National Library of Finland, which operates as an independent institute of the University of Helsinki, provides national library network services to all library sectors, in addition to being responsible for collecting, preserving and making accessible Finland's national literary heritage and its own academic collections.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has a library, archive and museum administration group to coordinate library-related matters. The Division for Cultural Policy of the Department of Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy at

the Ministry of Education and Culture is in charge of matters related to public libraries and the performance guidance of Celia Library for the Visually Impaired.

The Department of Education and Science Policy, in turn, handles matters related to polytechnic and university libraries, as well as the performance guidance of the Finnish National Library and the National Repository Library.

The National Board of Education administers matters related to the libraries of other schools and educational institutions.

University libraries are public research libraries and open to all users, not only university students and staff. The Library of Parliament and the National Library of Finland are also freely accessible to all citizens.

Public library legislation and central government administration

Finland's first Act on public libraries was enacted in 1928. The Library Act currently effective, the third in order, is from 1998. The newest Act obliges municipalities to arrange library and information services independently, partly or wholly in cooperation with other municipalities, or in any other way. Library users must have access

to library and information service personnel and to continually renewed library material and equipment. As a rule, local residents use and borrow the collections of their library free of charge.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is the national administrative authority for library and information

services. It draws up the national library policy and prepares the budget proposal and legislation in its administrative branch for Parliament. The actual implementation of library services is the responsibility of municipalities.

Regional state administration is handled by the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, which are tasked with the promotion of municipal library and

information services pursuant to library legislation. Regional administrative authorities also assess the availability and quality of library services, as well as advance regional, national and international development projects in the library and information service sector. In regional administration, library matters are handled by experts who have completed studies in the library and information service sector.

Financing of library operations

Public library operations are financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and local authorities. Municipalities get state subsidies for the purpose of arranging library operations (Based on the Act 1704/2009). They may allocate the received calculatory state subsidies as they see fit. According to estimates, an average of 1% of the annual budgets of municipalities has been allocated to library operations in recent years.

The Ministry of Education and Culture also assists municipalities in the construction and renovation of libraries, as well as in the purchase of mobile libraries by 25 to 50 per cent, as specified in the four-year funding plan. State

grants are issued in the Act 1705/2009 and Decree 1766/2009. These state subsidies to the municipalities are granted by Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (6) in compliance with the plan confirmed by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Moreover, the Ministry grants aid for special duties performed by libraries such as functioning as a Sami library, provincial and central library or multilingual library, or for administering centralised online services, as well as for various trial and development projects (Based on the Act 1705/2009).

Centralised services supporting the library network and users

The Ministry of Education and Culture supports municipal libraries by financing many centrally produced services.

Eighteen of the public libraries also function as a **provincial library**. Under the Library Decree, provincial libraries support the information and interlibrary lending services of public libraries in their region; develop information services and introduce library personnel to new forms of library work and development projects.

The Helsinki City Library functions as the **national central library for public libraries**. Under the Library Decree, its duties include:

- acting as the national interlibrary lending centre for public libraries
- promoting collaboration between public libraries and between public and academic libraries
- developing common methods and instruments needed to organise library and information services (Library Decree (1078/1998), section 1)

Under an assignment from the Ministry of Education and Culture, the central library for public libraries also maintains joint, centrally produced services, such as **public library online services (www.libraries.fi)**, develops the clas-

sification system and functions as a multilingual library.

In other words, the Ministry finances the joint online services of Finnish public libraries, freely accessible to all. For libraries, the Kirjastot.fi/Libraries.fi site is a cooperation forum, an instrument and source of professional information, a channel to library services accessible online, as well as to information search online. The services are produced in three languages (Finnish, Swedish, and English) in cooperation with the libraries. Libraries.fi also incorporates a development unit, **labs.kirjastot.fi**, which creates trial versions of online services and participates in cooperation projects with other online service developers and research institutions.

The National Repository Library, which operates under the Ministry of Education and Culture, receives and stores material transferred from academic and public libraries, lends it to those in need of it, as well as participates in the development of interlibrary operations and advancement of collaboration between libraries.

Under the Universities Act, **the National Library of Finland**, an independent institute of the University of Helsinki, develops and provides national services to university libraries, public libraries, polytechnic libraries and spe-

cial libraries, as well as promotes domestic and international cooperation in the library sector. Of the National Library's projects and services, especially the **National Electronic Library, FinELib** and the **National Digital Library** are relevant to public libraries.

FinELib, which operates as a service unit of the National Library, is a consortium comprising universities, polytechnics, research institutions and public libraries. FinELib centrally negotiates licensing agreements to electronic materials for its members. The approach aims at cost-effective solu-

tions that are appropriate in terms of overall economy. The Ministry finances university, polytechnic and public library operations.

The National Digital Library is a content and service structure of the Ministry of Education and Culture, where libraries, archives and museums, as well as other organisations preserving national cultural heritage, can collaborate. The National Library is in charge of maintaining the National Digital Library's customer interface. The project also involves public libraries.



Information about libraries

Ministry of Education and Culture -

<http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/?lang=en>

Libraries.fi – a gateway to Finnish libraries -

<http://www.libraries.fi/>

Finnish Public Library Statistics -

<http://tilastot.kirjastot.fi/en-GB/>

National Library of Finland -

<http://www.nationallibrary.fi/>

Finnish Library Association -

<http://kirjastoseura.kaapeli.fi/etusivu/seura/international/english>

Library Act -

http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Kirjastot/linjaukset_ja_hankkeet/Liitteet/Library_Act_2010_eng.pdf

Library Decree -

http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Kirjastot/linjaukset_ja_hankkeet/Liitteet/Library_Decree_2010.pdf





Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö

Undervisnings- och kulturministeriet

Ministry of Education and Culture

Ministère de l'Éducation et de la culture

ISBN 978-952-263-085-8 (Online)

ISSN-L 1799-0343

ISSN 1799-0351 (Online)