

# Finland is one of the top countries in the world in the field of **library services**



City Library of Kerava. Foto: Juha Tuomi /Rodeo.fi

There are **738** main and branch libraries in Finland.

Libraries have an important and versatile cultivating and cultural role in Finland. Libraries provide everyone with equal access to culture and information and support civic knowledge.

In Finland, libraries are used in a versatile manner. They are used not only to obtain information or to utilise and borrow materials but also to spend time, meet people and act together. Library premises are increasingly used for recreational activities, studies and work, and a range of different events is arranged at libraries. For this reason, libraries are these days called ‘citizens’ living rooms’ – or, along with the increased immigration to Finland, ‘multicultural living rooms’.

### **FINNISH LIBRARY NETWORK CONSISTS OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF LIBRARIES**

The Finnish network of libraries consists of public i.e. municipal libraries, research libraries (university libraries, libraries

In Finland, the number of library visits and items borrowed per capita is among the highest in the world.

of universities of applied sciences and special libraries), and libraries located at schools and other educational institutions. Municipal libraries and research libraries are open for everyone.

The collections and information services provided by the public libraries are considered to be part of society’s intellectual capital, which is why the

basic services are free of charge for all users. Under the Library Act, every Finnish municipality must provide library services that meet certain standards. Public library services, as all other public services, must be equally accessible to everyone.

Public libraries utilise digitalisation in their service production and development of operations, and they support and guide library users in managing the digital environment. As part of the project for the digitalisation of public services, metadata and system services have been introduced to guarantee the interoperability of libraries.



5 442 837

Population mainland Finland



738

Libraries



140

Mobile libraries



1 994 674

Borrowers



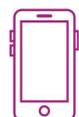
49 369 464

Library visits



67 944 365

Book loans



44 313

eBooks

## **LIBRARIES ARE ACCESSIBLE**

### **TO ALL**

The Finnish system of municipal libraries is of high quality by international standards. There is a total of 738 main and branch libraries in Finland. Up to 70 per cent of Finns live within three kilometres from a library, and 93 per cent of Finns have at most 10 kilometres to the nearest library.

Furthermore, mobile libraries – a total of 140 – complete the network of library services. Mobile libraries have long traditions in Finland, as the first mobile library started its operations as early as in 1913.

Mobile libraries serve users of all ages and provide an opportunity to use library services also for those who for one reason or another cannot access a regular library. Mobile libraries stop at agreed places usually once a week.

## Finland is one of the top countries in the world in the field of library services.

In Finland, the number of visits to a library per resident and the social appreciation for libraries are among the highest in the world. Library services are among the most frequently used municipal services, and the users come from all age groups. Almost 80 per cent of municipal residents use library services. In 2015, the number of library visits per resident was over 9 and the number of items borrowed over 16. The number and variety of electronic materials and services are on the rise. Municipalities used an average of EUR 58.30 per resident for the production of library services in 2015.

## **MINISTRY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR LIBRARY POLICY**

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the national library policy in Finland. The key objective for the policy is to promote citizens' cultural rights and



Skidi, mobile library for children. Foto: Helsinki City Library

## **Mobile libraries stop at predetermined places once a week and provide an opportunity to use library also for those who cannot access the regular libraries.**

access to information and culture.

The national library policy is implemented by applying different steering measures and by funding the development measures of public libraries. The key steering measures applied by the Ministry are enforcement and development of the Library Act.

The Library Act has been revised recently and the amendments will enter into force in 2017. The objective of the revision of the Library Act is to strengthen the operational preconditions of public libraries and to promote active citizenship, democracy and lifelong learning. The revised Act also takes account of the changes in the municipal and regional structures in Finland. The number of municipalities has been high in Finland, but many smaller municipalities have merged in recent years. In addition, changes in the age structure, internal migration and immigration affect the activities of public libraries. As a consequence, libraries are required to provide activities and services that are more pluralistic and multicultural than before.

## **LIBRARIES ARE FINANCED BY THE MUNICIPALITIES AND THE STATE**

The operating costs of libraries have on average constituted less than one per cent of the total expenditure of municipalities. Municipalities are

responsible for arranging the public library services. Library services are financed by the municipalities and the state together. The government funding is based on central government transfers to local government.

The purpose of the system of central government transfers to local government is to guarantee the availability of public services and to balance out the differences between municipalities when it comes to the costs for arranging the services.

In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture grants discretionary government transfers to support the production of national online services and other library projects of national significance. This funding has been used to create, for example, a set of online library services ([www.libraries.fi](http://www.libraries.fi)), which is open for everyone and provides access to all library services.

Discretionary government transfers are also used to finance the development of regional library operations. Moreover, transfers are used to support the attendance to the national special tasks. These include the Multilingual Library, the Saami Library, the Russian Library, and the Sign Language Library. ●

Source for statistics:  
<http://tilastot.kirjastot.fi/?lang=en>