

Finnish Public Libraries in the 20th Century

Edited by
Ilkka Mäkinen

Electronic publication
ISBN 951-44-5481-2

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Distributor

TAJU, Tampere University Sales Office

P.O. Box 617, 33101 Tampere, Finland

Tel. + 358 3 215 6055, Fax +358 3 215 7685

Email: taju@uta.fi

<http://granum.uta.fi>

Layout and cover by Terhi Malmi

Cover picture: Viipuri City Library, Alvar Aalto Foundation

ISBN 951-44-5171-6

Tampereen Yliopistopaino

Juvenes Print Oy, 2001

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Preface

The 20th century was a great period for the Finnish public libraries. Even if one should be mistrustful of institutional success stories, it is difficult to interpret the facts otherwise: public libraries in this northern corner of Europe have risen from somewhat modest origins onto a level of excellence virtually unparalleled in the world, even among our Scandinavian neighbours or the USA. Libraries are generally good and they are intensely used; people visit the library as naturally as they go into their own living rooms. It has not always been like that.

This book endeavours to give answers, why and how this phenomenal development took place. Originally most of the articles in the volume were papers presented at a library history seminar in Helsinki City Main Library in 1998. The seminar was organized by the Research Group on Library History of the Department of Information Studies, University of Tampere. The papers by Eija Eskola, Marjatta Hietala, Sven Hirn and Pirjo Vatanen were then published by BTJ Kirjastopalvelu in Finnish with two additional articles by Tuula Haavisto and Ilkka Mäkinen in a volume entitled “Kirjastojen vuosisata. Yleiset kirjastot Suomessa 1900-luvulla” (A Century of Libraries: Public Libraries in Finland in the 20th Century). Now these articles have been revised, partly rewritten and translated into English. Two of the articles (by Sven Hirn and Tuula Haavisto) have been translated by Virginia Mattila; for the rest the translation process has been two-phase: the authors or the editor have made a preliminary translation which Virginia Mattila has checked. I take great pleasure in thanking Virginia for her important contribution in the production of this book.

Together the articles cover the history of Finnish public libraries during the 20th century more thoroughly than any previous book. There is, however, considerable activity at present in Finnish library history. Those who know Finnish and Swedish can read the promising library history works, dissertations and histories of individual

libraries, of the recent years; many of them are included in the references of the articles in this book. We can see the groundwork of a general work on Finnish library history emerging. It will be the task of the coming years to realize the vision. This book gives interested people in other countries an opportunity to inspect the construction site. During recent years we have witnessed growth of broad interest in the gathering of material, oral and written tradition in the field of libraries. The Finnish Library Museum will be opened in a year or two. There are many things to be proud of, and a few things to regret, in Finnish library history, but in any case those librarians and friends of libraries who have toiled for this aspect of our culture deserve their tribute.

I am thankful that the authors have shown great patience and cooperative spirit during the long editing and translation process. I also thank the Finnish Library Foundation and the Kordelin Foundation for their financial support, and the Tampere University Press for publishing the book.

Lempäälä, June 15th, 2001

Ilkka Mäkinen
Editor

Marjatta Hietala

Foundation of Libraries in the Historical Context

England as a Vanguard

In the following I will look at libraries as a part of the development of services and their foundation in different countries. If human needs are divided into primary, secondary and tertiary needs, libraries would be classified as tertiary. According to a sociological classification used by Erik Allardt, human needs are divided into dimensions of having, loving and being. Assigning libraries to the last dimension, would imply the need to develop oneself. As an urban historian I have observed that when urbanization was at its most rapid, the cities invested first in infrastructure, water, sewage, communication and education. After these institutions were accomplished and housing problems solved, the decision-makers had a chance to invest in recreational services. During the last century it was common to classify libraries as recreational services.

The public libraries originated in the Anglo-American world. In England the first public libraries were founded in Bristol in 1464, in London 1425 and in Manchester in the fifteenth century. Large scientific libraries were the core of the development in Oxford, Cambridge and Dublin. The crucial year for the English library system was 1753. Then Parliament decided to buy a manuscript collection, which was added to the book collection from the eighteenth century. The British Library was born. The British Library's reading room was opened to the public in 1867.

In the United States the first local school library was founded in 1835 and the first public library was founded in Boston in 1847.

Many public libraries came into being in Germany and were influenced by the English and American models. Several scientific

libraries came into being in scientific institutes, universities and research departments. These scientific libraries took care of the old archives of churches and monasteries. The third type is those libraries founded by parliaments, statistical offices and courts. It was as early as a hundred years ago that interlibrary loans and advice services were used in German libraries. The private collections of civil servants and trustees were considered important in the decision-making process. That is why town councils and indeed even some boards had their own libraries at the end of the 19th century.

In Italy the libraries were originally founded in monasteries and churches that kept manuscript collections. In France the birth of the public libraries was connected with the Revolution. With the law of Nov. 2, 1789 the National Assembly declared that church property was now national property, and in 1792 the libraries of exiled and convicted nobles were declared the property of nation. The valuable manuscript collections were placed in the national library of France, the former royal library. Already at the beginning there were 300 000 manuscripts. Very soon the departmental libraries developed into proper lending libraries, where ordinary citizens could borrow books. The density of libraries is demonstrated by the fact that there were 82 libraries in Paris alone in receipt of public funding.

Already at the beginning of the 20th century Adolf Damaschke emphasized in his study *Aufgaben der Gemeindepolitik* the importance of human capital. In this he included public libraries, reading rooms, scholarly lectures, theatrical performances and various exhibitions. During the 19th century civic libraries were founded in all major towns in Germany. Different undertakings for establishing civic libraries can be seen as the reaction of towns to existing needs. Municipal administration and the administration of justice were also considered to need academic literature and for engineers in particular it was thought to be important to keep abreast with the latest construction technology. Many civic libraries began as monastic or church libraries, whereas some were indebted to a few enlightened burghers, such as Professor Ferdinand Wallraf, for the donation of their valuable book collections to the city of Cologne.

Such old established libraries operated mostly in old administrative and commercial centres as well as in some former Hanseatic towns. Many of them were established already before the 18th century (e.g. Augsburg 1562, Bremen 1660, Danzig 1591, Frankfurt am Main 1668, Halle 1615, Hamburg 1529, Hannover 1440, Königsberg 1540, Magdeburg 1525, Nuremberg 1583) and the library in Düsseldorf in 1770. Many of these libraries were subsequently also quite successful in increasing their stock of books. Consequently the biggest libraries, measured by the number of volumes in stock, were in those cities which had also demonstrated exceptional activity in other areas regarding the development of the town, cities such as Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Cologne, Mainz, Breslau, Bremen and Wiesbaden. The industrial cities, led by the textile cities, were active in the establishment of municipal libraries during the 19th century and in the early years of the 20th century (e.g. Aachen 1831, Chemnitz 1869, Elberfeld 1901, Breslau 1865, Dortmund 1870, Essen 1905). Düsseldorf was the first German city to open a public reading room adjacent to the civic library.

This short outline of the development of civic libraries, however, reveals only a small part of the general enthusiasm for establishing libraries. In many cities there were also *public libraries* and reading rooms launched by state funds as well as libraries run by private associations.

The idea of reading rooms was launched in Germany on similar lines to the big cities of the United States and Great Britain. In Germany reading rooms were established according to the Anglo-American model in connection with public libraries for all the inhabitants irrespective of their occupation. Elberfeld, Charlottenburg, Düsseldorf, Dortmund, Dresden and Brunswick were among the first cities to establish extensive public libraries with reading rooms. It was considered that reading rooms offered a viable option for the workers to spend their leisure time and stimulate their interest in culture as well as to refine their tastes and habits.

Finland

The Lutheran religion encouraged literacy among the people. It even became a precondition of confirmation and marriage. It was the duty of the parish clerk to provide tuition in reading for local youth. The result was that by the 1720s about 30 % of the population of Sweden-Finland were literate. The clergy had a prominent position in the Finnish system, not only to presiding over the secular communal councils that repaired roads and bridges and organised relief for the poor, but helping to strengthen the foundations of local self-government. It was the local clergy that undertook to promote agricultural innovations. They not only preached but also practised these new methods on their own estates. The clergy and the parish clerks had an exceptionally strong impact on modernization. The church required literacy of those embarking on the path of matrimony. Education in church-run parish schools or by paid teachers became quite common in the 18th century. The common people learned to read in Finnish by studying the fundamental teachings of Christianity, but the ability to write was not included in the curriculum.

Well-to-do farmers were eager to send their children to school. Students from the agrarian backgrounds were sent to European universities as early as in the late Medieval period. In early modern times the church offered a career for the educated sons of farmers, particularly when the salaries of parish clerks/pastors fell during the 18th century. In the 19th century a career as an official of the state or municipality was very highly appreciated.

Education and the development of a sophisticated education system began to create opportunities for increasing social mobility. It also gave Finns a strong drive for innovations. The popular education of the common people was the task of various professional groups. Many argued that the whole nation should be educated and enlightened.

It is true that the Finnish-speaking population was under-represented at the secondary schools throughout the 19th century and as far as higher education was concerned their number was even smaller. The turning point was the beginning of the 20th century when the number of Finnish-speaking pupils began to increase. While the

ratio of Finnish-speakers to Swedish-speaking pupils in the secondary schools was 2,000 to 5,000 in the period 1879–1880, the figures had become reversed in the period 1920–1921 to 22,600 Finnish-speakers as opposed to almost 9,200 Swedish-speakers. For the majority of the people a great change in the education was brought by the primary school.

Already the Finnish Economic Society (est. 1797) campaigned for the education of the people in order to promote the economic activities of the agrarian population. The Society emphasized that the education of mothers would promote these aims because they then would be able to set higher standards for their children. When local state elementary schools were established in the 1860s, the admission of girls was a fairly straightforward process. Because of the sparsely populated regions co-education was gradually introduced in Finland. During the period of autonomy (19th century) municipalities were allowed to decide themselves whether or not to establish schools entitled to state aid. By the end of the century this became obligatory. Voluntary elementary schools were founded all over the country. When universal compulsory education was introduced in 1921, it did not mean a great change, because already in 1920 the literacy rate of the population was 70.1 %, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. The Development of literacy in Finland among the Lutheran population (over 90% of the total population).

Year	Number	Illiteracy %	Ability to read %	Ability to read and write %
1880	1,592,593	1.3	86.3	12.4
1890	1,866,422	0.1	78.0	21.9
1900	2,177,633	0.8	60.6	8.6
1910	1,840,270	0.6	44.1	55.3
1920	2,018,554	0.6	29.3	70.1
1930	2,285,915	0.7	15.2	84.2

Source: Official Statistics of Finland VI, Population 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

In 1874 the *Society for Popular Education, Kansanvalistusseura* was founded and associations sprang up across the country. The activities of rural associations and public meetings created new forms of social communication between a prospering peasantry and the old gentry. The leader of the Fennomans (the national movement of the Finnish people), Yrjö Koskinen, emphasized the role of new associations and public meetings in generating public opinion as evidence that the Fennoman intelligentsia represented the “will of the people”. According to Koskinen, improved education among the ordinary people narrowed the gap between them and those who were active in the intellectual community.

From the late 19th century onwards, popular education was meant to apply to all sectors of population. The first libraries were founded in the rural areas at the beginning of the 19th century, but already during the 18th century Lutheran churches had owned collections of books and Bibles to be lent to the common people. Following the model of Sweden and Germany, reading societies and libraries were founded by the educated people for their own use in the 1790s in prosperous coastal towns in Finland. The merchants of individual towns as well as professional groups and officers established libraries, while the foundation of public libraries became common in the whole country from the 1860s onwards. After the 1860s the enthusiasm to found libraries increased remarkably and this trend continued until the beginning of the 20th century. During the period 1860-1862 approximately a hundred new libraries were established and by the end of the century there were almost 2,000 libraries for the common people.

In addition, many associations had libraries of their own. As an example it can be mentioned that even the country's youth associations had 390 libraries in 1905. A similar tendency can be seen in the founding of bookshops. While there were 16 bookshops in 1859, their number had increased to 56 in 1900, averaging 1.5 bookshops for each town in the country.

Ideological Factors behind the Foundation of Libraries

Libraries are among those recreational services that were founded for ideological reasons in the 19th century cities. There were many migrants coming into the cities. A German researcher, Jürgen Reulecke, has described the urbanization at the end of the last century: “The whole of Europe was on the move.” For example in German cities 50 % of migrants moved to different cities during the same year. When there was demand for labour force, there was demand for servants, particularly for the bourgeoisie of the city. In 1860 there were more women working as servants than as factory workers in Stockholm, which means 12,000 to 13,000 women. The decision-makers had to consider something to do for this big group. Laziness was the mother of all vices. Education and upbringing became the central focus. Sunday schools were started to raise the educational level.

On 14 May the British House of Commons appointed a secret committee to find out how to promote the public library movement in Ireland and in England. The proposal that in the end led to the passing of the important Libraries Act was the following: If there were more than 10,000 people in a town, a certain library rate (or penny rate) could be collected to promote the functioning of libraries. The towns were encouraged to borrow money for the building of new libraries. Manchester was the first to adopt this change.

The reading room was a novelty in the 1850s' library. This was the beginning of a new option for people's leisure time. The interest of decision-makers was to get the workers off the streets and into better hobbies. Henry Caldar Marshall presented the following thoughts in the Manchester Student Society Dec. 9, 1890.: “The public libraries are a necessity, not just the borrowing section but the reading rooms. I would like to add a leisure room to every library, where chess and other games could be played and different drinks could be brought. There we will look at the inhabitants of big cities. How is their social life? I mean the working class and the lower classes. Let's not forget that they are human beings as well. How are they spending their time? They are walking on the streets. Why, we wonder. Because they haven't been taught better man-

ners, and why is that then? Because there isn't enough things to do for workers in the big cities. I hope that soon there will be the house I was describing in every region of the United Kingdom. By directing the people for reading books they get the nutrition they need on their way to road of morality. Museums of South Kensington and Bethnal Green show the way to better morality.”

Art galleries and museums are there not just to reflect the status of the donator but are meant for the people, who can't travel themselves but would like to know something about the outside world. Asa Briggs thinks that this was the reason behing the establishment of art galleries. The libraries fulfil this in a sense as well.

In a German reference work, *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, the development of libraries has been described from the viewpoint of public services. Libraries have been seen as cultural institutions. The task of libraries was to make people more civilized.

At the turn of the century the *Kommunale Rundschau* published a series of articles intended to promote the idea of establishing of civic libraries in Germany, because, according to the writer, H. Düring, so far the cities had paid too little attention to this matter. Düring emphasized particularly that the civic libraries could be expect not only to provide information but also contacts abroad. This interesting aspect demonstrates well the pressures prevalent in Germany to keep in touch with the latest developments. According to Düring a municipal library could be established with even small capital outlay because it was likely that various departments of the civic administration already had a number of interesting and valuable volumes.

The advocates of municipal libraries had mainly three groups of potential customers in mind:

1. the decision-makers
2. the inhabitants of the city who were devoted to self-education and self-improvement
3. tradesmen and industrial entrepreneurs in need of professional information on legal and political matters. Therefore the literature required by different occupational groups should be available.

Düsseldorf, an innovative city at the turn of the century, was the first in Germany that to open a reading room in connection with a public library. Charlottenburg, Dortmund, Dresden and Brunswick followed the example of Düsseldorf. This trend was similar to English and American attempts.

What about the users of libraries? In his research Thomas Kelly has proved erroneous the currently prevailing scholarly opinion that public libraries were primarily for the working class. According to Kelly the true picture is much more subtle than previously assumed. It is true that everywhere labourers, artisans, clerks and shop assistants, that is, the working and lower middle classes are recorded in considerable numbers and infinite variety. But everywhere there was also at least a sprinkling, and often considerably more than that, of readers from the higher classes.

Here is, as an example, the list of the Manchester lending library that has been quoted. It contains, among its total 33,026 readers, 86 accountants, 111 architects, 2 authors, 1 banker, 2 barristers, 139 clergymen, 4 editors, 40 gentlemen, 3 lecturers, 6 librarians, 56 medical men, 39 military men, 35 missionaries, 2 professors, 1 publisher, 108 schoolmasters, 20 schoolmistresses and 18 solicitors. According to the returns of the Leeds library 81 per cent of its customers were from the working class and 19 per cent had professional or middle class backgrounds.

In Germany there were significantly more public libraries in the large non-industrialized centres; when measuring the use of libraries by the number of borrowers and the number of libraries per borrower the results indicate that the library services increase in line with the size of the centre. In 1910 a total of 329 German towns and cities were known to have public libraries and 168 to have reading rooms.

From the foreign observer's point of view new ideas introduced by German cities were most interesting as far as library services were concerned. For example Munich launched the first public music library due to "music author" Marsop. It started to lend out collections of music in the same way as books. The successful model of Munich was followed by Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Charlottenburg, Kassel and Stuttgart. In Berlin one of the public reading rooms

was reserved for children from six to thirteen years. Children's reading rooms were common in English and American cities. Children were allowed to use the adults' reading rooms at the age of fourteen. In many other German towns, children were provided for in a similar way by school associations subsidised by the local authorities. One purpose was to get children off the streets and to awaken their interest in literature.

As regards other cultural services, foreign observers were impressed by the way many towns regularly arranged winter courses of popular lectures on scientific, literary and historical subjects and still more assisted associations and institutions which in one way or the other aimed at bringing knowledge of this kind within the reach of the working class.

An Example of the Use Made of the Libraries

In the United Kingdom libraries and art museums assumed a defined position in municipal services. The following 16 cities had established public libraries, museums and art galleries by 1912. The following figures show that issues of books per inhabitant were greatest in Cardiff, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Dundee. This may indicate that the population particularly in industrial cities and in some Scottish towns were actively using the services of public libraries (see table).

Issues of books per head of the population in library areas in 1875–1877 were 0.93 in England and Wales whereas for Scotland the corresponding figure 1.23. In 1913–14 the figure for England was 2.27, for Wales 1.43 and for Scotland 2.22.

Issues of books per capita of population in some cities and towns in the U. K. during the year 1912–1913

London	1.70
Birmingham	2.18
Liverpool	2.34
Manchester	2.51
Sheffield	1.41

Leeds	2.48
Bristol	1.15
Newcastle	1.83
Cardiff	3.71
Swansea	1.94
Glasgow	1.67
Edinburgh	2.34
Dundee	2.14
Aberdeen	1.60
Belfast	1.13

Source: Comparative Municipal Statistics, Vol. 1912–1913, pp. 50–51

Dawson has presented some comparative estimates of the expenditure in some German cities (Aachen, Düsseldorf, Essen, Kassel, Chemnitz, Danzig, Frankfurt am Main, Mannheim). In some British cities (Leeds, Cardiff, Dundee, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, Huddersfield, Newcastle, Leicester, Salford, Bradford, Bolton, Sheffield and Bristol) they had invested per inhabitant in various leisure time services such as libraries, arts and science, theatre and music etc. exclusive of all expenditures on schools in the year 1912.

According to Dawson's results as far as the libraries were concerned, the average expenditure per inhabitant in Britain was 6.7 pence and in German cities a mere 2.9 pence (in money of the year 1914). The reason for this is that in Britain there were collected a special "penny rate" for libraries. On the other hand the German cities could collect amusement tax. Dawson's table indicates that the German cities were much more willing to invest in other types of recreational services than the British towns and cities. The expenditure for art and science in the German cities was 8.9 pence while the British cities provided for their inhabitants with arts and science services to the tune of only 3.4 pence per inhabitant. The respective figures for theatre and music were 15.3 pence in Germany and in Britain a minimal 0.6 pence.

Conclusions

The development of libraries is connected with the rapid urbanization process in the western world. We have seen how multidimensional process the birth of libraries was. The function of libraries and reading rooms was not seen only to keep people off the streets and civilize them, but as an essential part of the decision-making process. Town councils founded libraries of their own in order to serve their civil servants and trustees to keep up with the time and to be aware of the latest knowledge in various administrative sectors. This was important for the diffusion of innovations.

Many of the services associated with recreation were considered by contemporaries as necessary in order to keep the working classes off the streets, as the establishment of reading rooms and libraries shows. The fear of harmful influences of large cities, alcoholism, crime and prostitution awoke the decision-makers to the need to consider measures for directing people towards more healthy ways of living. Parks, sports grounds and private gardens were means to divert them from undesirable tracks. Services aimed to improve recreational activities were partly based on an assumption about the hereditary nature of criminality.

When we are looking at various functions of libraries we must keep in mind their cultural function. This emerges from the physical structure and the appearance of monumental buildings in towns. The form of building and place where the building is built tell us the values and appreciation of a certain service or institute attached to that service by planners and decision-makers. The splendid library buildings can be compared to theatres and churches. Inside the building the user is uplifted and can concentrate, feeling that knowledge and books and manuscripts represent something valuable and enjoyable in your life.

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Kirjastolehti

Suomen Kirjastoseuran julkaisema.

5:5 vuosik.	Lehti ilmestyy 10 kertaa vuodessa, kukin numero noin 24 sivun suuruisena. Tilauhintaa 2 mk vuosikerralla; Suomen Kirjastoseuran jäsenet saavat lehden ilmaiseksi.	fielmi—maa- liskuu
2:nen n:o	Toimituslaitteen on varminnin tavattavana kello 11,30—12,30 ja 3,30—4,30 päivällä. Toimituksen osoite: Tehtaank. 54 d, puh. 59 59.	1912

Kertomus kirjasto-opintomatkastani etupäässä Pohjois-Amerikan Yhdysvaltoihin.

I.

Lukiessani kertomuksia kirjastojen kehityksestä ja nykyisestä asemasta Pohjois-Amerikan Yhdysvalloissa oli monesti tehnyt mieleni joskus itsenikin nähdä noita laitoksia sekä yleensä tutustua tarkemmin amerikkalaiseen kirjastoliikkeeseen. Suuresti oli siis minusta mieleen, kun virkatoverini, tohtori Väinö Voionmaa, tammi-kuun lopulla 1911 ehdotteli, että koetettaisiin hankkia minulle apuraha opintomatkaa varten etupäässä Pohjois-Amerikan Yhdysvaltoihin ja kun sitten myös Kansanvalistusseuran Kirjastovaliokunta ja Toimikunta olivat sangen suosiollisia tehtyä ehdotusta kohtaan. Vaikkakin tiesin, ettei nykyisissä oloissamme näyttänyt juuri mahdolliselta saada kokoon sellaista apurahaa, joka korvaisi kaikki niin pitkän matkan kustannukset kuin aikomani matka Yhdysvaltoihin oli, ajattelin, että kun kerran oli tarjoutunut mahdollisuus hartaasti toivomani matkan suorittamiseen, oli minun sitä kaikesta huolimatta käytettävä hyväkseni.

Kun vihdoin keväällä olivat apurahat tiedossani ja sitäpaitsi Kansanvalistusseuran puolesta oli hyväntahtoisesti myönnetty minulle lomaa virastani elokuun alusta vuoden loppuun, olivat matkani välttämättömimmät edellytykset olemassa. Muut asiat oli siten järjestettävä niiden mukaan.

Seuraavassa koskettelen etupäässä vain matkani ulkonaisia vaiheita, koska mielestäni kaikkien asiain soveltaminen tähän paistuttaisi kertomukseni laajemmaksi kuin on tässä yhteydessä suota-

First page of the report on his study tour to America by J. A. Kemiläinen, published in *Kirjastolehti* (Library Journal) in 1912. "While reading stories about the development and present position of libraries in the United States of North America, I began to warm to the idea of seeing those institutions for myself and in general of becoming better acquainted with the American library movement."

Covers of the Finnish and Swedish versions of the statistical survey on the Finnish public libraries in 1902 compiled by L. Schadewitz. Many publications in the library field were published in both languages.





The influential books by Valfrid Palmgren and A. S. Steenberg were also published in Finnish translation (1910 and 1908).



The first building of the Helsinki City Library, opened to the public in 1882 and still in use as a branch library.
Photo: Helsinki City Museum/Erik Sundström (1914)



Turku City Library, completed in 1903, photographed in 1992. There is an ongoing planning process to build a new main library for the city, but the old building will be integrated into the future library complex.
Photo: Turku City Library

Pirjo Vatanen

From the Society of Estates to a Society of Citizens: Finnish Public Libraries Become American

“To what extent have the libraries of the largest towns in our country risen to a satisfactory level, that may decide those who nowadays have the possibility to follow their work, but elsewhere all around Finland we are in this respect miserably backward. The important thing would be to get more exemplary libraries. We need also well-equipped small libraries. What would be the way to make the town councils to understand that this is a matter that deserves investments besides the primary schools, electricity and water pipes,” wrote A.A. Granfelt, the former secretary of the Society for Popular Education in 1913 in the journal *Kirjastolehti* [Library journal]. Here we have as in a nutshell the main spiritual and material elements of modern urban life. The library that Granfelt was referring to was essentially similar to the public libraries of today. He had devoted a much of his energy to introducing libraries of this kind into every municipality in Finland during the time he was working in the Society for Popular Education.

The present concept of the public library as a channel for all citizens to obtain information, skills and recreation began to spread in the public awareness during the 1890's, a decade which in many other ways was the beginning of modern Finland. It was an important period from the point of view of the birth of the civic society: the pressures of Russification increased political awareness and the great economic boom made possible many kinds of social and economic activities. Ideas and innovations spread and a national and political awakening bore fruit in wide circles of the population,

when literacy improved and the standard of living rose increasing among other things the circulation of newspapers. Social movements gained new members, cultural institutions were created and received support. A public library system was one of the things that began to take shape. The society under transformation needed a new kind of library.

Changes in attitudes towards the library were a part of the process of nation-building and in the general trend towards more liberal and democratic views. Even the library was seen as a tool in raising the level of education of the people and supporting the goals of the social movements. The model was provided by the American public library.

The American Public Library Movement started in Boston at the beginning of the 1850's. From there it spread to the rest of New England, where the states in rapid succession passed library laws, and then to the other parts of the United States. The Library Movement was based on an optimistic faith in education and a belief in the ability and desire of the people to develop through self-education. The public library was supposed to serve all citizens regardless of age, social class, wealth or opinions. For that reason the use of the libraries should be free and their maintenance an obligation of society. Even if donations were an important source of financing, libraries were in principle run on tax revenues, because in that way the economy of the libraries was secured at the same time as the patrons were committed to them as owners. A logical consequence of this was that the patrons had a right to acquire the books they wanted, even if the libraries as tools of education maintained their standard. Only books that were judged low-quality and harmful were to be abolished from the collections. The libraries, in fact, should not contain books that nobody read, however high-quality they otherwise might have been. Books that were considered difficult were purchased, because it was believed that people could be educated to read them and on the other hand, even lighter books were tolerated as a way to more valuable reading.

To attain the goals of the Library Movement a corps of trained librarians and an advanced library technology were needed. In fact

its position was not consolidated until the American Library Association, ALA, and the Library Journal were established during the 1870's, and the first library schools were created towards the end of the 1880's. At any rate, many of the features that have been considered essential for the American Public Library Movement, such as separate children's libraries and open access, did not become general before the 1890's.

In Finland many of the principles of the Public Library Movement were known before from the practices of European forms of libraries, such as reading societies, commercial lending libraries and libraries for the common people, the so-called "people's libraries". The innovation was that people from all social classes had a common library, where the new principles were applied.

"Prologue"

Educated people living in Finland had received information about American libraries already a hundred years before the Bostonian innovation from a book by the Finnish P.A. Kalm describing his voyage to North America. He described the library in Philadelphia, originally established by Benjamin Franklin in 1731. Franklin was an example for the popular educators, of how talent and desire for learning can lead far even from modest origins and at the same time he was an American democrat of the best kind. He was often written about in the papers and his popular album *The Way to Wealth* (originally published 1758) was also published in Finnish translation (1832) and was probably also read widely in Swedish translation.

Knowledge about America expanded in the mid-1800's, when contacts became more frequent through better communications. Liberal leaders of public opinion valued American ideas and institutions and regarded America as the land of opportunity and freedom. The Finnish national movement that was socially progressive but culturally conservative was more reserved: immigration, commercialism and the darker sides of American society were criticized, but the American system of primary schools especially pleased them. When Finnish cultural life towards the end of the century became

more international and sources and subjects of the foreign news in the Finnish newspapers became richer, they started to widen the coverage of American cultural life from primary schools towards libraries.

Concrete information about the new American library movement started to appear in the newspapers during the 1870's and then the American-travellers also began to direct their attention to libraries, even if they were not yet the primary targets of study tours. For example Felix Heikel, who was active on the governing board of the Helsinki popular library, on his trip to America, financed by the University and the state, was supposed to observe the American public school system, but in his travel report (1873) he also described many other institutions and aspects of the American life. About the Boston Public Library he wrote that it was built because school and diplomas are only the beginnings of learning and the rest is self-education. The library, a stately building, was visited by both the high and the low profiting from its large collections that contained reading material for everybody. The library was not a speciality of Boston alone, but most of the towns in New England had one, naturally on a more modest scale.

The Public Library Movement was originally an urban phenomenon and in Finland the genuine development of libraries also began in towns. Towns could afford libraries and there were also more people who needed a library than in the rural areas. The popular or "people's" libraries that had been established to benefit the poorer sections of the population were developed further to serve all townspeople. In Helsinki the start of the development towards a public library can be seen in the establishment of a reading room in connection of the popular library 1871.

In December 1870 Dr. Otto Donner spoke at a social evening where money was collected for the library of the Helsinki Voluntary Fire Brigade. He referred to a widely known fact that often libraries after a lively start tend to fall asleep. He did not, as usual, see the reason in the small size of the collection or insecure finances, but in the organizational stiffness, by which he meant regulations, fees, opening hours and other practical obstacles. The most

important hindrance was, though, according to him, the fact that social classes had separate libraries. In America, where the libraries were best developed, an idea had emerged that the liberal principles of American society should also be applied to libraries. The speaker mentioned especially the reading room that functioned well in America. This gave the well-known writer Zachris Topelius the idea of developing in an article in the journal *Uusi Suometar* a plan to acquire a reading room in Helsinki to stimulate the languishing people's library.

The reading room of Helsinki aroused interest in Turku as well. This was the second largest town in the country and the former capital. The journal *Sanomia Turusta* published in 1873 an article, where the well-to-do of the town were exhorted to open their purses in order to give Turku a reading room similar to that in Helsinki. The article was part of a wider campaign to reinvigorate the slumbering people's library, because it was a shame that the library was in bad condition in a town that, after all, had long cultural traditions. During the debate America was referred to as a model of popular education, where in each town first a church, a school and a newspaper were established, whereas here it was the distillery that seemed to take precedence. The reading room in Turku was initiated at the same time as the people's library was taken into the civic authorities' possession in 1878.

Reading rooms in connection with the library can be regarded as the first concrete signs of the American influence, even if a reference library was not always attached to them. By the year 1905 every Finnish town seems to have had a reading room.

On the other hand we cannot regard the first cases of the use of American library technique as signs of a fundamental change in the Finnish library world, even when the techniques were applied in the professional circles long before the end of the 19th century. For example, the decimal classification introduced by Valfrid Vasenius at the beginning of the 1880's in the Swedish Lyceum of Turku was a separate phenomenon, where Dewey's famous classification, central in the arsenal of the Public Library Movement, had hardly anything to do. Even Vasenius himself chose another, much more

simple classification in his guidebook for popular libraries published in 1891.

During the 1890's American libraries started to attract more interest in the press and other contributions concerning libraries were also beginning to come closer to the American spirit. The library movement on the other hand was only one form of popular education among others and as a whole it was not publicized too widely, even if the debate was fairly positive in tone. There were cases when there was a lack of understanding. The potentially library-friendly newspaper *Päivälehti* (The Daily) that had even published contributions on the American libraries exchanged critical remarks with Granfelt, because in its opinion there were not enough resources for all, even if useful, cultural institutions and folk high schools surely were more useful than libraries. If the editor had in mind the then existing people's libraries, it is no wonder that he thought as he did. It took an idealist like Granfelt to see that there was a demand and a possibility for a library system in the American spirit.

I. The Society for Popular Education leading the library movement

Municipal library network

At the turn of the 20th century there were approximately 2000 small people's libraries in Finland. Their ownership varied, even if the trend was leading towards a municipal or municipally supported library model. More than half of the libraries contained at the most 200 volumes and a library with a stock of a thousand volumes was a rarity in the rural areas. School libraries or libraries at schools had a certain juridical legitimation in a paragraph of the Statutes on Elementary Schools from the year 1866, a paragraph that was eagerly referred to during the early years of the Finnish library movement. It was, however, not schools and school authorities that became the central actor in the library development, but the Society for Popular Education. It that had been established by the Finnish nationalist

political circles (the so-called “Fennomans”) in 1874 to produce and distribute cheap, popular literature and to awake the desire for knowledge and culture among the people. People’s libraries fitted well into the programme of the Society as channels for distributing literature. Supporting libraries and initiating library interest, where the library still was missing, became an important part of the Society’s work. Libraries of the American type could not be maintained without stable finance and cooperation. A suitable start for a library network were libraries owned and supported by the municipalities.

The idea of a municipal library network already emerged in the book *“Tietoja ja mietteitä Suomen kansa- ja lastenkirjastoista”* (Information and thoughts on Finnish people’s and children’s libraries) that the many-sided educator and pioneer of libraries Kaarle Werkko published in 1879. It did not, however, become the official library policy of the Society for Popular Education before 1899, when a plan adopting it was approved at a meeting of the Society. The goal was a municipal library network, which consisted of a main library and branch libraries as well as children’s libraries. There were ideas to make district libraries ambulant as was done in America, because eager readers soon read through the stock of a small standing library, but the existing libraries were usually standing ones and they had their proponents among the membership of the Society. The ambulatory system did not in practice spread widely. It was thought that at least schools had to have a standing library. The third category of the model, the children’s libraries at schools, were the predecessors of both the libraries for the primary school pupils and of the children’s departments of the public libraries.

The Society for Popular Education tried to advance the spreading of its model by supporting municipal main libraries, but the progress was slow. When in 1905 the Society announced with a circular to municipal boards and newspaper announcements that it would primarily support main libraries, it received 148 applications, which meant that less than a third of the municipalities had applied. When among the applications those who did not comply with the criteria were discarded, there were only 53 municipalities left. The result can be regarded both as a proof of the poor state of the municipal

libraries and as a sign of the unfamiliarity of the idea of municipal library network. In 1908 Granfelt wrote in *Kirjastolehti* that “there is a great obstacle. Every municipality has several libraries, there are several villages with a library in each one of them. And when the municipality allocates, say, five hundred or a thousand Marks for its libraries, well, is it so difficult to understand that it would be better to give the whole sum to a single library than to split it evenly among all of them? Hardly! We are all of us equally good, there is a demand in every library for 50 or 100 Marks, and all libraries remain poor, neglected, insignificant. Are we ever going to have the chance at least to see what a well-managed, fully-fledged people’s library should look like? Are the divided and short-sighted library interests in the municipalities going to keep our libraries in this wretched state for a long time to come? ”

The article contains the essential elements of Granfelt’s American-influenced library view, which was rather far away from the ideas in the municipalities. But after all there was a process going on towards a common ground for a municipal library system.

The Library Committee of 1906

At the beginning of the 20th century it was Norway that had the most well-developed library system among the Scandinavian countries. There the development had been enhanced by the system of state subsidies beginning already in 1839, but the true library movement was started in the 1880’s by the leaders of public opinion who had visited and studied in the United States. The most advanced library was the Deichman Library in Kristiania (since 1924 Oslo) led by Haakon Nyhuus, but even other bigger towns had American-trained librarians. At the beginning of the 20th century a national centralized library system was created, where the books were purchased collectively with the aid of ready-made catalogues and sent to the libraries ready for lending. The system was voluntary – the only condition for receiving the subsidy was that the municipality itself supported its library – but the results were impressive. At a relatively low cost it was possible to raise the level of libraries and

many of them were, according to a Finnish observer, William Sippola, developing into real citizen's libraries. Originally a primary school teacher, Sippola made a study tour in Scandinavia in order to observe the libraries in connection with the work of the "Committee on People's Libraries" of 1906. Norway was understandably the main target of the tour. Sweden, historically and culturally close to Finland, was not ahead of Finland in library matters and even Denmark was still at the beginning of its development.

The appointment of the Committee on People's Libraries ended the first phase of the establishment of the Finnish public library movement. It can be regarded as an official recognition in an altogether different manner than the earlier state subsidies for library promotion received by educational organizations. However, in the composition and work of the committee a tension manifested itself that was emerging between the primary schools and the libraries concerning the nature and administration of the libraries in schools. The diversification of Finnish literature made specialization of the Finnish libraries possible. It was no longer self-evident, in the light of examples from foreign countries, that the best way to manage the libraries was in connection with the schools. On the other hand there was a readiness to leave the children's libraries in the custody of the schools and the school building was still a natural place to have a library for adults. The teachers were also regarded as suitable to function as librarians.

The initiative to appoint the committee came from the National Board of Schools, where a number of people interested in libraries were working. The government (Senate) asked the Board to ask the Society for Popular Education for suitable persons as members of the committee, because it considered the Society an expert in library matters. The members proposed by the Society were acceptable for the Board as well, but it wanted to have its own representative in the chair. However, the member proposed by the Society, Theodor Schwindt, Ph.D., was nominated as chair; the rest of the members were the chief of the Helsinki People's Library, Hugo Bergroth, Kyösti Kallio M.P. (later prime minister and president of independent Finland), Sippola and Granfelt.

The propositions of the committee did not after all include a leading position for the National Board of Schools as it had hoped, but a distinct authority for the libraries was recommended, the main task of which it would have been the distribution of the state subsidies. The proposals followed the American-influenced line of the Society for Popular Education; the influence of Sippola's study tour to Norway was evident. The subsidies proposed by the Committee were meant to direct and persuade the municipalities to invest in their libraries. The aid given in the form of books presupposed from the municipalities a contribution of their own and the fulfilling of certain preconditions. The costs of the municipal main libraries to be covered by the subsidy, besides buying books, also included the salary of the librarian.

The committee proposed that each municipality and town should have at least one good library, the main library, that could support the libraries in schools with ambulatory collections. It was appropriate that at the school there was also a library for adults in the care of the teacher, but in any case the school library, even if small, was necessary as a tool for teaching, if there was another library in the school building or elsewhere in the school district. An extended school library or another library in the school district was named "the district library" by the committee. According to the committee the time was not yet ripe for regional central libraries, where one could obtain books that were lacking in the library of the municipality. Good libraries in the municipalities were the first priority.

According to the committee, while determining what would be the best way distribute subsidies, one should take into consideration that the local interest in libraries should not be smothered through too strong an intervention by the state. That would be counterproductive, which meant that the state should restrict its influence to the assisting and counselling support, which would not prevent the work of local enthusiasts, unless "through their actions an overt contradiction with the principles approved by the society should arise". The state could promote library matters by taking care of the training of librarians and compiling statistics so that the development could be monitored. New trends in the field should be able to

spread freely. The committee thus took a stand for a free, independent library system, but of course no wild licence was meant: the municipal subsidies should be paid from regular tax-money and not through a special tax and the state aid should prevent disintegration and support the creation of municipal main libraries.

Book selection

Book selection, together with the establishment of libraries, was one of the first themes of the library discussions, and understandably it played an important role, when libraries were mentioned as promoters of literacy. For a long time there was a great concern about the scarcity of Finnish-language literature. It was difficult to obtain new books, and indeed simply to obtain information about them. There was also the fear that people would get in hold of unsuitable reading. Lists of books suitable to people's libraries were produced to help in the selection process. The Society for Popular Education took the production of such lists into its programme.

A collection based on the American library principles could not be created with too strict selection criteria. Views concerning selection began to be more liberal during the 1890's. A list of recommended books appeared as an appendix to the guidebook in librarianship by Valfrid Vasenius (1891). It aroused critical reactions, because the newest realistic proseworks were not included. The Society for Popular Education appointed a special committee to compile a list of recommended books. The new edition covered the Finnish-language literature more completely.

The Committee on People's Libraries crystallized the prevailing view on book selection, which the Society of Popular Education could also approve. The Committee defined that an institution could not be regarded as a public library, even if it had a rich collection and was free for everybody to use, if it excluded "valuable works contradicting the views of the party or sect that maintains the library". This did not mean that everything available should be included in a library. "Obscene, criminally agitating books and also otherwise substandard literature" should be kept about of the li-

brary, the purpose of which was not collecting everything as in a museum, but to serve practical needs by offering useful reading. "The space, resources and purpose of the library do not allow that inferior reading material is gathered there."

The statement becomes understandable in the light of the discussions at the national library conference of 1905. The literary researcher Viljo Tarkiainen spoke on book selection. According to him borrowers' wishes should be taken into consideration and all kinds of one-sidedness should be avoided. The general principle ought to be that books should be good, which means that they should promote the intellectual development of the readers and so raise the cultural level of the whole nation. On the other hand there were books that were obsolete as regards the language and content or too ostentatiously didactic. In selecting *belles-lettres* there was hardly need to leave out any original Finnish book as "obscene". Some participants in the discussion were of the opinion that Tarkiainen had taken an excessively academic aesthetic angle on his topic; they said that the people knew as their own many of the books that he considered obsolete or too didactic.

The opinion of the meeting can be criticized as conservative and paternalistic, but it is clear that as long as there were shortcomings in the reading capabilities and level of knowledge of the population, promoting popular, easily comprehensible literature had practical grounds as much in the field of *belles-lettres* as in non-fiction. Still, this was not a concession to vulgar taste. The scale tipped in favour of the view that Tarkiainen evinced during the 1910's, when the library movement also otherwise changed its course towards professionalism. The content of the collections changed and thereby also the way of understanding library.

The *belles-lettres* as a tool of intellectual development and the economic as well as vocational benefits of reading played an important role right from the start in the discussions on book selection. Social awareness and the literature it required gained importance when political changes gave a special emphasis to the effectiveness of civil education. Even if Finland was still a grand-duchy in the Russian empire, it was allowed to adopt a very progressive elec-

toral law with a universal suffrage that, as the first country in Europe, was extended to women as well. This became possible as a result of the political upheavals of the year 1905. A circular of the Society for Popular Education in 1905 gave arguments for developing libraries in the following manner: "Now is the moment, when we have to develop our libraries vigorously... Civic freedom has been given to the Finnish people. Our nation is allowed to govern itself.. But when we have this 'one man, one vote' right, then must each and everyone in the great masses of voters wage the tasks that are to be solved. Loudmouthed leaders will appear everywhere, one calls hither, one calls thither. Is the Finnish nation ripe to decide in the most important things, what will be the best course of action?... Where do the ordinary people get the literature that they at a particular moment need to become acquainted with the matters? Let our point of honour be during this birth-year of our civic freedom to increase much more than usual the stocks of our people's libraries."

The connection between the libraries and democracy was one of the central arguments of the Public Library Movement. The people were seen as active participants with a need and a right to information. The view that combined libraries and the raising of the cultural level of the nation with the maintenance of peace in the society became more widespread in Finland especially after the general strike (1905) and the first elections under the reformed electoral law (1907) had shattered the idealistic image of the people that educated groups had cherished until then.

The book selection principles of the American Library Movement seem modern, but the contents given to them was dependent on the person who applied them. Even in the progressive town libraries practices were liberal only in a relative sense. For example the ideas of inferior literature and propaganda were variable and changed in the course of time. High-quality books could be excluded from the collection on moral grounds or an excessive demand for neutrality could lead to decisions that bordered on censorship. Freedom, variety, high standard and impartiality are difficult to combine and problems also arose in America. In Finland the people's

libraries that strove to serve all did not purchase socialist books, because they were considered propagandistic, which was one of the reasons that led to the establishment of separate libraries for the working class movement.

Training of librarians

K. J. Werkko proposed already in 1892 that a special library association should be founded to strengthen the status of librarianship. The proposal did not result in the founding of a society, but still it had the effect of intensifying the activity of the Society for Popular Education in the field of libraries. A Library Committee was appointed for the Society and it was decided that a special meeting of librarians should convene in connection with the Jubilee Conventions of the Society arranged every third year. The Committee produced model rules for local libraries, it strove to make the support for libraries more regular, it also developed a model for a municipal library network and arranged the production of the new guidebook on librarianship. The guidebook was written by Granfelt with the aid of Sippola, who was interested in library techniques. The book was finished in 1905; its ideological content and technological orientation are clearly influenced by American ideas.

At the library meeting of 1905 in Tampere, where the guidebook was presented, Sippola proposed that librarianship should be taught at the elementary school teachers' training colleges. In that way librarianship would be standardized in the country and new work practices could be taught to a large number of future librarians. According to him the management of libraries could be regarded as teachers' duty, deriving legitimation from a paragraph in the Statute on Elementary Schools of 1866. Paragraph 125 of the Statute stipulated that it was the duty of the teachers also to give educational advice to other inhabitants of the school district than pupils; most often this was understood as a way to arrange continuing education. Sippola also proposed that the lecturers at the teachers' training colleges should undergo courses in American library technique. The proposals were unanimously approved.

The Library Committee of the Society for Popular Education was urged by the meeting to bring Sippola's proposals to the National Board of Schools. There and at the colleges the proposals also met with a positive response. A couple of the teachers' training colleges, though, commented that there was no need for a special counsellor in library education, as was also proposed, because the management of a library is so simple! Despite the positive reactions, the matter did not after all proceed further before the Committee again took it up.

In 1909 the Senate allocated grants for the pupil libraries at the training schools in connection with the teachers' colleges. The National Board of Schools was also ordered to submit a proposal on how to organize the teaching of librarianship at the teachers' colleges. Librarianship became one subject of instruction more in the already full curriculum of the colleges, but it nevertheless included both theoretical and practical training. Special courses were also arranged for the librarians of the colleges.

Librarians of the colleges convened in January 1911. The speakers were leading experts in librarianship. There was no discussion about the goals of the teaching of librarianship at the colleges, but the minutes of the meeting seem to reflect a certain bias among the participants towards school libraries, whereas the speakers seemed to put more emphasis on the public libraries. This meeting in any case meant a further expansion of the knowledge of American library techniques. The amount and range of education in librarianship at the colleges was not satisfactory from the point of view of those who worked for popular education. In any case it was not insignificant that the number of elementary school teachers that received at least some training in librarianship rose over 2300 before the beginning of the 1920's.

Besides the education at the colleges, there were only sporadic short courses in librarianship available. The need was nevertheless acute, because those already working as part-time librarians and those who did not receive education at the colleges needed training.

The Society for Popular Education tried to start the training of librarians in the form of independent courses in 1905 and 1908. This

trend was enhanced by the fact that librarians started to organize themselves and one of their goals was to improve their professional skills. Because of the lack of money the courses were short, only a few days or a week at the most.

The most important and longest course was arranged by the Society for Popular Education in 1912 at Tuusula (near Helsinki). There were 41 participants, the majority of whom were already working as librarians. Courses for Swedish language librarians were arranged by the society *Svenska Folkskolans Vänner* (Friends of the Swedish Elementary School) that also in many other ways supported the libraries for the Swedish-speaking population. Einar Holmberg worked as the library advisor of the Society at the beginning of the 1910's.

The professional standard of librarians improved only slowly despite the efforts of the societies. Short courses could only be a temporary solution if the distant goal of full-time librarians was to be pursued. Only when the State Library Bureau was established in 1921, did the training of librarians enter a new phase. An important step was in any case taken slightly earlier, when the first training course for full-time librarians was realized in 1920. The three-month course was called the Kordelin Course, because the newly established Kordelin Foundation – a legacy of a businessman killed in the skirmishes before the Civil War – financed it. The Foundation, focusing on popular education, had chosen the public libraries as one of its chief areas and decided to establish a library school. The course of 1920 remained the only one realized, because the State Library Bureau was to take the responsibility for library education. Another reason was that the demand for full-time librarians did not increase, because the municipalities were not obliged to establish libraries when library matters were organized in the early days of Finnish Independence.

One of the most important things about the Kordelin Course was probably that Ms Helle Cannelin (since 1938 Kannila), who served as teacher on the course, gained experience in library education and realized that there were great gaps in the professional literature. She was to be responsible for the education of librarians

in the years to come, first as the chief of the State Library Bureau (1921) and after 1945 as the lecturer in librarianship at the College of Social Sciences. Already in 1922 the first edition of her Guide to Librarianship (*“Kirjastonhoidon opas”*, latest edition in the 1960’s) was published as well as a textbook in reference work *“Kirjat ja tiedot”* (Books and information).

Even the training arranged by library authorities remained on the level of separate four-month courses until after the Second World War, when regular training was started at the College of Social Sciences. In addition to this both distant education in the form of a correspondence course and training at the teachers’ training colleges were needed. The contact both to the general popular education and to the elementary school remained strong.

The relationship with the elementary school was somewhat problematic for the public libraries. The school was both a support and a threat. The rural libraries were especially dependent on the contribution of the teachers, but their view of the relationship between the school and the library was not always in accordance with the ideals of the library professionals. When the libraries were compared to the schools, the value and independence of the former were emphasized and as a result a certain niche was created for them in the no-man’s-land between formal education and so called “free popular education”. At the same time libraries became more detached from popular education. An article in the journal *Kirjasto-lehti* (Library Journal) with the title “Libraries are as important as schools” written in 1910 by the library advisor of the Society for Popular Education, J.A. Kemiläinen, became a classic example of an expression of the views of the emerging library profession.

Setting of boundaries towards the school was most acute in the field of children’s libraries. The pedagogical development of the school leading to a system of libraries placed in classrooms drove adult users away from the school libraries, but on the other hand the class-room libraries were not able to satisfy all their reading interests of the pupils. The logical outcome was a system with parallel libraries also in the case of children. As the State took charge of the top administration of the libraries and when the state subsidies to ele-

mentary schools seemed promising in the beginning of the 1920's, there still was a general belief that things would work out well, at least it was thought that a solution concerning the relationship between different forms of library was on the horizon.

II. Libraries become professional

The Society for Popular Education and the Library Association

The independence and professionalization of the library movement meant a setting of boundaries also towards the field of general popular education. The forefront was taken by representatives of the library profession instead of "general popular educators". Important steps in the process in Finland as elsewhere were a professional journal and a professional association. In 1908 the Society for Popular Education began to publish a professional journal in the field *Kirjastolehti* (Library Journal). It was meant to include other forms of popular education, but already during the first year the new secretary of the Society Väinö Voionmaa thought that there could also be a professional association which might continue publishing the journal as its organ. Contrary to the experience in 1892 when K. J. Werkko made his proposal for a special library association, the idea of a professional association this time gained support at the library meeting in the summer of 1908. As a result the Union of Finland's Librarians was established, which was soon (1910) transformed into the Finnish Library Association (Suomen Kirjasto-seura), still existing to this day.

After the separate association in the field had been created, the "true" library people started to grow away from "general popular education". There was a feeling that the leadership in the field should be placed in the hands of professionals. The process was not solely a result of the professional maturity of the library field; a role was also played by the shift of emphasis in the Society for Popular Education, where a new secretary took over.

The views of the Society are reflected clearly in the first issue of the journal *Kirjastolehti*, where a review on the state of the library field was published. According to the journal, after the children's libraries the most important were the small village libraries. It was true that the Committee on People's Libraries (1906) had proposed that the state subsidies should be directed to the municipal main libraries, which in the long run would awake the desire for reading in the rank and file of the nation, but still, according to the journal, the support should as a first measure be given to the existing libraries, which most often were small village libraries: "The fulfilling of the intellectual needs of the population is surely more close to the libraries than making the municipal institutions complete. The largeness of our country and the sparseness of its population demand costs that in other countries are not in the same degree needed. Our country must have a great number of libraries, even if weaker ones. Because of the long distances the large main libraries cannot serve the majority of the population, but they are at risk of remaining a privilege for a small group that perhaps is not so much in the need of those privileges. To concentrate the support on municipal main libraries seems in this respect to be starting the development from the top". The local interest in libraries was the most important thing, even if of course the main libraries should also receive support. References to the "rank and file of the nation" and retreating from the proposals of the Committee on People's Libraries meant a weakening of Granfelt's views, which until then had directed the library programme of the Society.

The new secretary, Väinö Voionmaa, also attached a great value to the libraries and was not far from Granfelt's position, but he had some ideas of his own. He was interested in the study circle movement of the Swedish educational associations, labour, temperance and others, which maintained their own small libraries. He thought that they could serve as models for the Finnish situation as well, even if the library system here in general was not to be turned into an imitation of the Swedish system. He emphasized the local activity and the role of associations and wanted, for example, to develop the libraries of the youth associations. Youth associations were or-

gans of self-education in rural Finland. These plans were contrary to those held dear by the library movement that saw libraries as the uniting force serving the private citizens as well as communities, those with vocational needs and those seeking for recreation. Concerning many aspects, such as library technique, Voionmaa was as American as the rest, but differences in opinion were nevertheless so great that it was difficult to agree about cooperation between the Society of Popular Education and the Library Association.

Nevertheless, it was not until the period of the next secretary of the Society, Niilo Liakka, that there came a serious rift in the relations between the parties. The arrangements concerning the distribution of books to libraries served as the overt bone of contention. The Library Association wanted to take this away from the Society for Popular Education. The Society and the Library Association had had separate journals since 1916, although a couple of years later they were again compelled to put them together for economic reasons. The quarrel between the Society and the Association caused polemics in the press, which was not positive from the point of view of the general development of the libraries.

Liakka's original frame of reference were the folk high schools, he was thus a true "general popular educator". His opinions regarding libraries differed both from Voionmaa and library professionals. Liakka thought that libraries were not a tool of the educational organizations but a form of popular education beside the other forms. In an article in *Kirjastolehti* in 1916 he presented a clarification of policy concerning the relationship between the free popular education, schools and libraries. He also referred to America, where, according to him "a formidable activity in the field of free popular education is going on. This and above all the astonishing development of the libraries shows how the foundation is already laid in the elementary school, where the pupils are taught to use and love books." Literature was according to Liakka the most important instrument of culture and also free popular education. Thus it was important that school, besides teaching the formal ability to read also engendered interest in the use of books. Free popular education wished to sustain the interest in education among the people. At

the start it was unavoidable to resort to private initiatives even concerning activities that already then generally were considered as obligations of the state, but in the future “even in our country the public library should be strong enough to concentrate around it and keep all these interests and activities functioning.”

Liakka’s goal was to extend the network of libraries throughout the country and arrange librarianship and library technique on a professional basis, but he preferred to build the network starting from the grass-roots up, whereas the people in the Library Association believed that there should be a strong and independent central administration to support and build a sound library network. If we do not count this organizational chicken-and-egg dilemma, there is no fundamental difference between Liakka’s views and those of the Library Associationists, but even this was enough to keep them apart. The way to organize the library system really was a decisive choice. It was not a question of mere procedure. Liakka thought that the library was an instrument to attain a certain educational goal and his opinions about the role of *belles-lettres* were closer to German than American influences. It was thus more a question of an image of man than an image of library. For the people in the Library Association the library was paramount. It was an institution that could give assistance to an unlimited number of people to attain their various goals.

Views on the central importance of the urban libraries, the training of librarians, library techniques and to a great degree book selection were almost identical in the Society and the Association. Even if they left the final choice to the readers, the library professionals favoured high-quality literature from the 1910’s till the 1960’s. It was perfectly in accord with the ideas propagated by the American Library Movement: you can educate readers to move on through lighter reading to better books. The so-called better literature was in this sense the core of the collection and the acquisition of popular material was legitimate only by its instrumental value in education. Another side of the educative and civilizing function of the library was the promoting of non-fiction.

In the Library Association the Finnish situation was compared with the United States in the sense that during the 1910's the Finnish library movement was in the same phase as the American movement during the 1870's, when professional librarians took the lead and demanded independence. The journal *Kirjastolehti* claimed in 1916 that a new era had begun for our library movement, when the Library Association had more clearly than ever taken over. In order to succeed the field needed a institution completely dedicated to its cause. The message was clear: amateurs should not bother to give advice to professionals on how the libraries should be developed.

Liakka thought that all forms of popular education, libraries included, needed a coordinating umbrella organization to make the cooperation more effective. First he proposed that the Society for Popular Education could serve in that capacity. This proposal foundered on legal obstacles, but the idea itself was not abandoned. The matter was violently discussed. Particular passions were aroused in the people of the Library Association by the committee that was appointed after the Civil War to plan the organization of popular education. The Association did not deny the close relationship and dependence between the libraries and the rest of the educational work, but opposed vehemently the attempts to subject the libraries "to the authority of benevolent but incompetent councils that possibly might hamper the operation of libraries", as *Kirjastolehti* put it. It had been possible to promote the library movement in Finland as well as in the more advanced countries as an independent field and its most important leaders in Finland, beginning with Granfelt, the committees consisting of professionals, library meetings etc. had all been behind this idea. Under the authority of the directors of free popular education, libraries would lose the advantage of an independent development. Too narrow views would dominate and the operational management of the library work would fall into incompetent hands. This would not bring us any public libraries. In practice there was a great difference, where there was in the region a public library, open to all, or a special library, where also outsiders were welcome. In the former case the library would remain independent and on a

professionally sound basis. Its work would expand and it would benefit popular education more in that way.

After Independence (1917) and especially at the beginning of the 1920's the organizational dilemma was solved through the establishment of the state library administration and the educational organizations in general lost some of their status in favour of the state administration. In the new situation the Society for Popular Education and the Library Association made formal peace and amalgamated their journals. The agreement could best be described as an economic shotgun wedding. The period of disagreement of views left in the Finnish library movement a tension that, besides causing positive discussion about values and practices, also deeply affected the manner in which the library system developed. The first round was both won and lost by the Society for Popular Education and Liakka, because the model of state library administration followed more their views than those of the Library Association. But the essential growth of the modern library system during the next decades took place in towns, where the principles advocated by the Association were adopted.

New ideas from study tours

At the beginning of the 1910's the professionals of the library movement started to seek knowledge from abroad. The most important pioneers, Einar Holmberg of the society *Svenska Folkskolans Vänner* (SFV) and J.A. Kemiläinen of the Society for Popular Education, traveled straight away to America (although according to the custom via England). To travel was not altogether simple because neither of the gentlemen knew English before. Holmberg was lucky to have a competent teacher living next to his summer villa, he also completed his language studies in England. Kemiläinen had friends and relatives in America, who helped him in learning the language. At that time it was not customary to learn English in the Finnish secondary schools.

The first to depart was Holmberg. He had originally a background as a folk high school teacher. He has recounted, how in

Porvoo in the summer of 1910, while browsing in a book shop, he saw a booklet that had fallen off a pile of new books, it was "*Bibliotek och folkuppfostran*" (Libraries and popular education) by the Swedish librarian Valfrid Palmgren, and it caught his attention. It opened up such new vistas into the spreading knowledge and culture that he declared to his wife there and then that he would travel to America. According to the travel plan the theme of the voyage was "further education", but Holmberg soon found out that libraries were its basis. In America they were consulted in every day life concerning any question and the answer was provided in a matter of few minutes. The friendliness, cosiness, beautiful premises, flowers and artworks appealed to him.

Holmberg financed his trip mostly with a loan, but the SFV had also given a small grant on condition that after his return he would work as the library advisor for the association. In this capacity Holmberg arranged courses, gave lectures and wrote actively both in the newspapers and in the journal of the library committee of the SFV, *Biblioteksbladet*, where he was coeditor.

Kemiläinen was on his way only a little later. Voionmaa proposed to him in Januari 1911 that he try to get funding for a trip to America. Kemiläinen became interested, even if it was difficult to get proper funding despite the support of the leaders of the Society for Popular Education. He was given a leave of absence from his position as the library secretary of the Society. From Holmberg and the Danish library man A. Steenberg, whom he knew, he obtained references that guaranteed a friendly welcome everywhere.

The trip seems to have made a deep impression on Kemiläinen. Based on his experiences he believed that the general goal of providing high-quality and free public libraries to raise the educational level of the people would best be attained if the belief in the benefits of the libraries were a great as in America. Americans were practical and future-oriented people and they had deemed the educational institutions inherited from the old continent as insufficient to educate everyone to be cultivated decent citizens. Well organized libraries had been tried in America and when their worth

had been detected, the Americans were ready to promote them on a continuing basis.

It was no longer question of study tours in the same sense as those of Holmberg and Kemiläinen, when two men from Turku, A. Törnudd and A. Wallenius, went to the United States in order to pursue library studies, which led to a diploma. They had, besides their role as pioneers, not so much practical influence on the public library movement. Törnudd left the Turku City Library relatively soon to enter the post of librarian at the Swedish-language university, Åbo Akademi, and after that to altogether different fields. Wallenius received a salary from the library at Turku while he was studying and had to work afterwards for some time in Turku, but he left library work in order to concentrate in politics, chose the Red side in the Civil War and after the defeat moved abroad for good.

Study tours also were made elsewhere than America. Their main goal was to find models along the lines of the American Public Library Movement and for that reason Sweden, which otherwise was a natural and easily attainable target, was a disappointment for many as far as libraries were concerned. Study tours abroad were made for example by Ms. Brita Andstén of Turku and Dr. Valter Juvelius, the librarian of the Viipuri Town Library, but these trips mostly had only a local interest. Another matter was the study tour that Helle Cannelin made to Scandinavia in 1920 while she was preparing to lead the planned library school of the Kordelin Foundation. She became acquainted with the practices and colleagues in Norway, which was still exemplary but already losing its leading position. She also visited Denmark, the future model country in library matters.

Cannelin had a keen eye and was not excessively polite in her critical remarks. She wrote in her report that, if we do not count England, Norway's library situation was closest to the United States of any other country. They had great libraries and libraries were vigorously propagated in the American manner. She had only good things to say about this, even if such Americanism that manifested itself as an exact copying of the decimal classification, could go too far. The general picture of Norway was at all events very positive.

The city library in the Swedish Gothenburg, which in Sweden was regarded as high-quality was a disappointment to Cannelin, even if she admitted that the building was beautiful. According to Cannelin Swedish libraries seemed to be purveyors of entertaining reading. She was not too excited about Denmark either, where she explored school libraries. All in all she thought that the trip was successful.

New technology for libraries

There were at least some decent libraries in Finland and the discussion on librarianship and library techniques was lively in the professional press. There was a willingness to design Finnish applications in order to promote the goals of the library movement. The sought-for standardized practices had started to spread in the country with the aid of literature, meetings and courses, but a genuine discussion about different techniques and their qualities could not be launched until a suitable forum for it opened in the journal *Kirjastolehti*.

A common classification system was sought for the Finnish libraries. The discussion was stimulated by the need for grouping of books on the shelves and back titles that were necessary in connection with the open shelves. The Dewey Decimal Classification held the strongest position. Granfelt had presented the classification in his guide book (1905) and a Finnish version edited by Kemiläinen was published in 1913. On top of that it was becoming general in the most important urban libraries, such as Helsinki, Turku, Oulu and Kuopio. The principal opponent of the Dewey Decimal Classification was H. F. Soveri, who was librarian of the Helsinki Normal School and active in the Library Association. He believed that the Dewey system, despite its wide diffusion, was unsuitable for the Finnish circumstances. He opposed Dewey energetically already at the meeting of the librarians of teachers' training colleges, but was not well received by Holmberg, Kemiläinen and Uno Therman, librarian of the Helsinki City Library, who all defended the system. Soveri's own classification scheme won some followers in the Library Association, but even if people were not blind to the problems of Dewey, it was already becoming the measure of the modernity

of a library, largely because of the efforts of the Society for Popular Education. For that reason one can say that the discussion was late already when it started.

Another important theme were the lending systems, but their standardization was not as important in the libraries, as long as the system was reliable, easy to use and responded reasonably to the library's needs. Thus the lending systems did not arouse special controversy, but more discussion of a practical nature and descriptions of different systems. In *Kirjastolehti's* columns it was notably Sippola who addressed lending systems; his motives were altogether practical. According to him the system presented in Granfelt's guidebook was too refined for small libraries and for that reason had not spread generally. Different systems gave answers to different questions; thus one had to choose a system that promptly answered the greatest number or the most important ones.

Some of Sippola's list of potential questions included controlling the lending procedure, but partly they were meant to be used in the development of the collection and monitoring the "reading career" of the borrowers. Bigger libraries could use two-card systems, for which equipment was distributed by the Society for Popular Education. Sippola had brought the Browne system from Norway and it had spread e.g. to the library of the Lappeenranta Labour Association, the library of the Helsinki YMCA and libraries in the town of Lahti. Based on the information produced by the Browne system, it was not, however, possible to trace who had previously borrowed the books and only one person could receive the returning books. This is why Therman in 1909, when the lending system was renewed in Helsinki, had reverted to the older Newark system. Under Therman's leadership the Helsinki City Library was becoming a similar model library as the Deichman Library of Oslo was in Norway, where librarians could go and see in practice how a system suitable for a growing circulation worked.

There were of course other reasons that affected the lending statistics than the lending system or the richness and quality of the collection. The greatest singular factor were the open access shelves. In library circles they were considered self-evident because of the

known foreign examples, but they were not easy to take into use. There were no suitable premises and the town fathers and governing boards were often reluctant. The open shelves were for the first time used at the Porvoo town library, after Holmberg had returned from his study tour 1912. During the same year he brought them with him to the reference department of the Turku library, even if the system was not taken into use in the whole library before 1914. Very early, 1913, open shelves were adopted in the lending department of the Mikkeli library; in Oulu the start was in 1915.

Only a few libraries had children's departments during the 1910's. There was however a need for them, because the adults avoided crowding among the children and on the other hand because the children got more attention in their own department. A problem with the children's department was the age limit, since children do not develop uniformly. In Helsinki the limit was 16 years, in Turku 14. The limit could in principle be chosen freely, if the children's department had enough literature other than children's books proper. On the other hand young people could anyhow start to avoid children's departments, wrote Helle Cannelin, who believed that the suitable age limit was 12–13 years, at least in libraries without open shelves. If the children wanted to borrow unsuitable books, one should not resort to white lies that the book was out, but rather to say that the book was dreary or something similar. Everybody would win, if there were as few restraints and restrictions as possible.

New practices did not easily make a breakthrough, especially in the rural areas. The Society for Popular Education in its subsidies had a sort of an inducement to influence the functioning of the libraries, but it was marginal already because the subsidies could be given only to a fraction of them. Nevertheless the turning-point of the 1910's, even if dampened down by the difficult political and economic circumstances at the end of the Russian rule and the beginning of Independence, must be regarded as important.

Urban libraries

Despite their otherwise tense relationship, there was no disagreement between the Library Association and the Society for Popular Education about the importance of the urban libraries or what an advanced urban library should look like. The library ideology in the American style started to spread in the towns on the eve of the First World War and during the first war years slowly but steadily. In the urban libraries the personnel and work practices were turning professional and there was a cautious optimism in the library movement. It was true that even the urban libraries had not reached “the level demanded by our national life”, as Niilo Liakka wrote in 1916. The borrowers loved reading novels. For example in Oulu the percentage of novels in the lending statistics was 89 and at Rauma 86.3. In the biggest towns the figure was lower. Many libraries had started to arouse the interest of the public by providing newspapers and lists of new titles, but publicity in the American sense was not conducted, nor were there “library days”, lectures etc. to boost the interest in reading.

Modern librarianship, somehow resembling the American or English, existed at the beginning of the 20th century in only a few towns. The best libraries among the large towns were in Helsinki, Turku and Oulu. Approximately half of the libraries had a reference department of a varying quality and rather fewer had a separate department for children and young people. There were building projects going on in Pori, Tampere and Viipuri, whereas Jyväskylä and Oulu already had new buildings. The majority of the libraries worked in rented premises and often the premises hampered the development.

The quality of the library work was satisfactory in Helsinki and Turku, where a number of professionally trained librarians were working. In Tampere, where the librarian’s position was full-time, the library still was waiting for a reform. The most advanced was Turku with its three American-trained staff and the relatively new building that had even undergone a renovation to satisfy modern demands. Libraries in Viipuri, Oulu, Kuopio, Porvoo and Pietarsaari were also relatively high-quality and the librarians had a reasonable

salary. Best of the small towns were Lappeenranta, Porvoo, Mikkeli and Lahti.

Because there was a lack of competent librarians, the library technique could not be too advanced. Only a third of the libraries was “organized in a modern fashion”, but in many places the situation was improving. In Kuopio the reform of the library started from the wish to reactivate the workers’ institute that had lived only a short period. The combination of the workers’ institute with the library was thought to be the most economical solution. Putting together the two institutions did not appeal to all members of the library board, but a committee appointed by the town council backed the plan made by Kemiläinen, who had been asked to consult. According to his proposal there would be a new public library -type institution, where the library would play the central role. Emerik Olsoni who had previously worked in the Helsinki University Library was appointed the leader of the combined cultural institution. His stay in Kuopio was short, but he had time enough to show both innovativeness and energy. He, for example, used the American-traveller from Turku, Allan Wallenius, as consultant and created principles for the development of the library. He organized the reference department and designed an application of the Dewey Classification. The reorganized library also had a reading room for newspapers with its own reference section. Part of the collection was on open shelves.

At the beginning of the 20th century it was no more evident than elsewhere that Helsinki, the capital, would experience a breakthrough of American influences in its library. Still in 1909 there was a serious discussion, whether the town should have a separate library for the educated people in the manner of Turku. Uno Therman, the librarian, who was one of the foremost representatives of the Public Library ideology in Finland, vigorously opposed such a plan. Three years later in Kallio, the working class area of Helsinki, a library was already opened, where the patterns of librarianship were taken from America, even if open shelves were not used. The premises were nevertheless organized so that it would be easy to add open shelves.

The bright, warm and fresh children's reading room was the most used area of the library, wrote Sippola about the new library in *Kirjastolehti* under the title *Amerikka Suomessa* (America in Finland). The shelves were full of children's books that the children themselves could pick and read in the library, and even if Kallio as a working class area could be considered somewhat suspect, there were not many book losses. In the adults' reading room open shelves were full of non-fiction and card-catalogues made use easy. There was a separate entrance into the newspaper reading room; its users were also a different kind of people. There were no chairs in the reading room and no ordinary tables either, as it was the intention not to attract "the idle to spend whole days in front of the newspaper" or even to lie on the benches, as had happened in the main library. Sippola even told about card games and drinking. Even coat racks were lacking from the reading room intended for short stays. But these were only minor problems and in general the new building meant a great deal to the library, which is seen in the doubling of the lending statistics in 1912.

The American library in Turku

The Finnish exemplary library of the American type was Turku, where the library conditions were radically reformed in the beginning of the 1910's. During the latter part of the 19th century separate libraries for the lower classes, the people's library, and for the educated people, the town library, were functioning there. This model was originally German and was also in use in Sweden. The purpose was to offer enlightenment for the common people in their own language, mostly Finnish, in Turku, and on the other hand keep high-class, varied and multi-lingual, though mostly Swedish, literature available for the educated people. The need was still felt to recompensate for the loss of the University Library (Library of the Turku Academy) that was transferred to Helsinki after the fire of 1827. During most of the 19th century Turku remained the most wealthy urban centre in Finland. When the people's library had been transferred from private philanthropy to the custody of the town, the

town council also decided to place the books of the town library there as a separate collection, but the functional unification of the libraries was not realized until 1912, when a common librarian was appointed for them.

A real boost for the library work in the town was the construction of the library building in 1903. It was donated by the manufacturer and important cultural personality, Fredrik von Rettig, whose interests also included popular education. He was born in Sweden and had continuing contacts to his country of origin. He also absorbed American influences for the planning of the library building via Sweden. Thus even before the Americanization of library work, which meant a thorough renovation of the relatively new building, the building itself was a sign of American influence, which probably came from the Swedish architect Ferdinand Boberg. Boberg designed for von Rettig's native town, Gävle, on the East coast of Sweden, a combined bath and library building. It was never realized for lack of resources, but von Rettig surely knew the plan. When in 1896 Boberg published a report of his study tour in the United States, he gave a dedicated copy of the booklet to von Rettig (now in possession of the editor of this book). Von Rettig, knowing about Boberg's grant and trip, may have contacted the architect, when he was planning to donate the money for the library building. Boberg was also a member in the panel of judges of the library planning contest 1899. The act of donation as well as the merging of the town library and the people's library were of course also in line with American ideas.

The reform of the library was preceded by a long and heated dispute between the town council and the board of the library about the merging of the town library and the people's library and the hiring of a common librarian. Rather paradoxically it was the board that opposed the plan, although it was not against the reform itself but the fact that the initiative came from outside its own circle. The reform proper was the board's project. The filling of the librarian's position also caused debate, but there the board did not take part. There were 18 applicants among those shortlisted including Holmberg, who had just returned from his American trip, and the deputy

librarian of the Helsinki People's Library Volter Kilpi, who also had a long career at the Helsinki University Library and the Helsinki Student Union's Library. Two of the experts consulted by the board placed Kilpi in the first position and one Holmberg, but the board chose Holmberg.

The competition between Kilpi and Holmberg took place during the period, when the educated Swedish-speaking class was under transformation, as the historian Matti Klinge has put it, from a class supporting the state, consisting of officers and top civil servants, to an economic upper-class. This was also the time when the language strife was affecting municipal life in Turku. The majority of the inhabitants had always been Finnish-speaking in Turku and their number was growing, but the Swedish-speaking upper classes had the power, because the municipal suffrage was based on wealth. Under these circumstances it is understandable that the Finnish-speakers regarded the nomination of Holmberg as a language matter. The American library ideology as such was by no means a trump card for the townspeople. Holmberg himself was a "svecoman", i.e. politically on the side of the Swedish-speakers, whose revival of popular education was in the first place directed to aid the Swedish-speaking rural people living in the coastal areas.

But it was after all not a question of language, but simply that the idea of an American style public library came to Turku and its ruling elite originally via Holmberg, which made him the natural choice for the librarian's position. The decision of the board was thus not against Kilpi but in favour of Holmberg, who had already been persuaded to apply and the other noteworthy candidate was a surprise. According to some information in Holmberg's private papers, the reform of the library had also been negotiated with him already beforehand. Holmberg's publications about American libraries and his work as library advisor of the Society *Svenska Folk-skolans Vänner*, as well as the reform of the Porvoo town library under his leadership, had made an impression on the board.

Already while the dispute about the appointment was raging, Holmberg was told by the board that he could make a three-month trip to Kristiania at von Rettig's expense to learn even more about

libraries. Still it was not easy to get the reform process going. The relatively new building needed considerable repairs and the personnel was against the changes. The board, itself the initiator of the reform, also had its moments of doubt, but finally all went well: the reform was started in June 1913 and the new departments were opened in January and February 1914. After the repairs the premises were eminently suitable “for the new library system that it is the purpose to apply, namely the American”. The renovated building was of the so-called butterfly-type, where the three main parts are situated so that they form the body and wings of a butterfly. In the middle there is the big lending hall for adults, on the other side the children’s department with its reading room and on the other side the reading hall for newspapers and journals. On the upper floor the lending room of the former people’s library had been transformed into a stack with open shelves that was connected to the reference library.

When he presented the goals of the reform in the annual report of the town library in 1914 Holmberg cited the American A.E. Bostwick: The modern library does not only conserve and protect its collection but gives it to the use of every interested person and tries actively to arouse and satisfy the desire for knowledge. There had been an awakening in the libraries to take into consideration the great public and not only those, who on their own initiative came to the library. The modern public library believed that it could find a reader for every book and a book for every reader. All the methods of making library use easier, such as home lending, open shelves, cosy milieu, children’s departments, cooperation with the schools, inter-library loans, longer opening hours, easy-to-use catalogues, branch libraries, ambulatory collections, lectures and exhibitions, all had the purpose of bringing together the books and the people.

Now Turku had a library that had no counterpart elsewhere in Scandinavia, except Kristiania. The greatest attention was aroused by the open shelves, because they had not been tried out either in Finland or in Sweden (except in a limited fashion). All were wonderstricken and shocked by them. There were fears of thefts, of course. Somewhere, where there is a cultivated audience, you could

try something like this, but can you really do it here! Holmberg however was steadfast. A trouble with the open shelves was that the books might get confused until the audience learned how to use them, but losses of books were not more numerous than in other libraries. The books also remained fairly clean. There was crowd during the opening ceremony, but no disturbances whatsoever. Problems ensued only in the newspaper reading room, where jobless and homeless people tried to get shelter during the winter. The problem was solved by removing the chairs and tables, so that the visitors were compelled to stand.

The application of the American methods produced amazing results: before the reform in 1912 the annual circulation was 80,822, where 17.6 % was non-fiction, and there were 3,340 borrowers. The corresponding figures in 1914 were 206,756 volumes circulated, 35.6 % non-fiction and 8,340 borrowers; in 1915 already 212,134 volumes lent, 29.4 % non-fiction, and 10,899 borrowers. The Newark system proved to be a good lending system. It was swift and saved the time of the personnel so that thanks to this and the open shelves no queues developed, even if practically all inhabitants visited the library. The Dewey scheme that was chosen as the classification system was functional although not ideal.

The example of Turku made it clear, according to *Kirjastolehti*, “that the principles reached through the rich American experience are also valid in the circumstances of our own country and that the controversial Dewey system and the open shelves function excellently at least in a people’s library”. Statistics spoke for themselves “assuring that there is no need for fear when we start to follow the new path and that the library movement, directed along proper lines, has great possibilities of development in our country, too.”

III Library of civic society

The Central Library Committee

Besides the regional central libraries that the Committee on People's Libraries had judged premature, there were relatively early initiatives for a discussion about a national central library. Parallels were again found in the United States. In Finland the father of the idea of a national central library seems to have been Uno Therman, who introduced the subject for discussion at a meeting on popular education in 1909. He envisaged a state library, where the collection would cover domestic Finnish and Swedish literature as well as foreign books to fulfil the needs of culture-loving men and women of the people. The central library was supposed to homogenize the libraries, support and supplement with its collection the weak or non-existent local services and produce centrally library technical services. The free right to borrow, to which all should be entitled, would be taken care of via inter-library loans by local libraries.

This was an appealing idea for the activists of popular education. It even found its way to Parliament and led to the appointment of a committee in 1913. The report of the committee, published the next year, proposed that the plan to organize the central administration of libraries as presented in the report of the Committee on People's Libraries, should be supplemented. It seemed necessary that the top administration of libraries should be centralized under an organ called the Library Commission to make the state subsidy plan of the previous committee feasible. The Commission was supposed to promote and control library work by supervising a central library and a library bureau that would take care of the contacts with the libraries. The report also noted that the proposal did not prevent establishing regional central libraries that had been discussed in Parliament in 1912. They could be located in towns with teachers' training colleges, where the future teachers would be able to get acquainted with library practices.

A statistical review of the situation of Finnish libraries was published as an appendix to the Report of the Committee on Central

Libraries. It was compiled by A.A.Granfelt. It shows well that in general the libraries were small and underused. A fifth of them had no more than 100 volumes and only 55 libraries of the total number of 2,300 had more than 1,000 volumes. Municipal main libraries that could be considered as satisfactorily managed were 77 in number. A sign of satisfactory management in Granfelt's opinion, was whether a library had used the possibility of obtaining the parliamentary papers free of charge, because certain conditions were put on these libraries. The distribution of the parliamentary papers to public libraries was one of the earliest forms of direct support by state to Finnish libraries. Thus the landscape of libraries was not too comforting. The great number of libraries, that on the one hand was a proof of an active desire to read, was according to Granfelt also a sign of backwardness. The municipal library network was thus very incomplete. This was of course a result of the fact that libraries had no official position and, especially in the rural areas, they were not considered independent institutions.

Granfelt thought that the statistics proved the development of the libraries to be bound first and foremost to the support from the municipalities and therefore considered the greatest importance of the proposed central library and the state subsidy to lie in the awakening of the library interest in the municipalities. According to him the development was leading away from the libraries at schools: in many places it was already a fact and the foreign examples showed that, as the circumstances were changing, the schools would not be the best sites for libraries, neither the school teachers the best possible librarians. Even if the combination of schools and libraries seemed to have succeeded better in Finland than elsewhere, Granfelt regarded it only as an intermediary step.

The work of the Central Library Committee did not in the actual circumstances produce any direct results and the longer it took the more complicated it got. Reasons for the burying of the committee's proposals were in the first place the political and economic situation, but the disputes between the Society for Popular Education and the Library Association that split the ranks of the library people were not favourable either. In 1917 Parliament anyhow made

a positive decision about the matter, but the Civil War and the dissolution of Parliament prevented the decision from gaining legal force.

The State library administration and libraries in the beginning of Independence

“The year 1918 shall forever remain in the memory of the Finnish people. We can apply on it the words of the poet: ‘so sweet, so dark’. It is the year of our national independence, the fulfillment of the centuries-old dreams of the nation’s soul that opens up vistas to unforeseen, until now closed possibilities of action, unchartered territories of exuberant hopes. But the very same year is the depressing year of the red rebellion.”

Thus was written in the annual report of the Society for Popular Education of 1918, the year of the Civil War. The activists of popular education and libraries saw the reasons for the events of 1918 in the defects of the civic education. There was a strong belief in the power of literature. When *Kirjastolehti* after the pause caused by the war again appeared, Helle Cannelin wrote that the library people wished that the state and the municipalities from now on would better understand “how dearly we must pay for the lack of education”. The principal scapegoat were the socialists, but even the bourgeoisie received its share of the blame, because it had been so lukewarm towards the education work.

The decision made in 1917 concerning the central library was not put into practice after the calming of the situation. Because the Parliament that had made the decision had had a socialist majority, even this decision was labeled as a socialist project. On top of everything else the state had no money, when all the reforms stuck in the blind alleys of the last years of autonomy waited for realization. In the cultural sphere the first in line was the legislation on compulsory education in 1921.

Still there were many hopes in the Library Association in front of the new decade. Now the Finns were also able to decide for themselves about library matters. Parliament had previously been favourable towards libraries, why would it now fail? A swift deci-

sion was to be expected. The practical forms were open, but the report of the Committee on Central Library included a plan of action designed by the best experts in the field. It had been endorsed at the library meeting of 1919. The Library Association wanted to stick to it. The alternative plan by Niilo Liakka, where the libraries were put into a close relationship with other forms of popular education, was referred to. Its purpose was of course close to the heart of the library people as well, but the practical procedures proposed in it presented a threat to the free development of the libraries.

The solution through a provisory compromise of the library administration was clearly affected by Liakka's views: the central library was left out, the membership of the State Library Commission also included representatives of the free popular education, e.g. not only professional librarians, and the training of librarians was left loosely in the care of the State Library Bureau. The library people were not altogether happy with the outcome, even if they were content that the state had finally taken library matters into its care.

"The American and German library spirit"

Helle Cannelin wrote in 1925, inspired by a couple of German library handbooks, in *Kansanvalistus ja Kirjastolehti* (Journal on Popular Education and Libraries) about the American and German library spirit or ideology. She conceded that even the German library movement that was not so much a library technique as a library philosophy had something to offer to us. It might give us something to supplement the onesidedness of American librarianship. Our own libraries had been, she wrote, "for thirty years led totally in the American spirit" and she was firmly convinced that "this course has been the right one and it has been more suitable for the nature of our nation than the one in the German spirit".

She did not have to describe further the American library spirit, because all who had been in contact with the modern librarianship knew it. The library was an information agency, where the collection was as large and versatile as possible and the organization such

that all information that the patrons needed was found reliably and swiftly. All trends of ideas should be represented and no form of literature should be rejected, except the “worthless”. “The public must be guided and helped, but any form of patronizing must be avoided”. The public library in the American sense was meant for all and it tried actively to attract users, non-fiction was highly valued, active information seeking with the aid of systematic and alphabetical subject catalogues was favoured and the users were allowed themselves to choose from the open shelves the books they wanted. In an ideal German library, on the contrary, the clientele consisted of a small group of those who desired education; from a well selected, concise collection they were given books that were meant to build an outlook on life or an ideology.

According to Cannelin, even if education of character certainly was a thing that needed enhancement in Finland, too, we must not repel the larger public from the library with too strong a stress on “the refinement of soul”. We must also stick to neutrality, even against charges of emphasizing non-fiction too much. All other forms of popular education should in any case be promoted and even in connection with the libraries. According to Cannelin’s view the goals of the German libraries were more easily and better attainable through other forms of popular education than libraries.

Thus Cannelin remarked that it was first and foremost the top administration of the libraries that was American-inspired. The American influences had until 1925 firmly anchored in the Finnish library movement, in the State Library Bureau and to a growing degree even in urban libraries. The development in rural libraries was following other paths, but even there working methods were American-influenced, for the simple reason that no other kind of technical knowledge of libraries was available.

Slightly later the same subject was treated by Alice Cronwall of Turku, but this time from the perspective of an urban librarian. She rejected the German ideas more straightforwardly than Cannelin: “...when these ideals are logically followed, they lead ... to what we, as well as our public, call patronizing and spiritual bondage”. Even she did not deny that there was a danger in the American

system to favour quantity at the expense of quality and if the German Dr Hofman had rejected the goal of the Enlightenment of educating the masses and concentrated on a few, who are “the salt of the Earth”, he probably was not totally wrong. For the sake of many one must not forget the few. Especially that the novice borrowers must not be left without aid, even if pressing is totally out of question.

Even if the American library ideology was not accepted uncritically in Finland, it never really needed to take a defensive position. After the merging of the journals of the Society for Popular Education and the Library Association some ideas foreign to the American library ideology found their place besides the thoughts of the library professionals, there were some comments, when the library matter was treated from a too narrow an angle according to the library people. The atmosphere was in any case generally neutral, even when it was question of the position of libraries in the field of popular education, even if just that question had been the subject of the sharpest debate between the people of the Library Association and Liakka.

There were seldom any writings about the abstract ideology of popular education in America, but mostly it was practical examples that were presented. Some working method new or undeveloped in Finland was described and its good results in America were related. The American library ideology manifested itself to a large degree in comparisons with its German counterpart and the result was often a negation: what it is not. It is fairly clear that even if Germany could not play the part of a model for the library movement, there was still an attraction in the German ideas about popular education, for historical reasons. German pedagogical trends were creeping especially into the rural library work via the teacher-librarians. The clearest ideological differences between the German and American models emerged in extreme examples, but the library movement in the American spirit was known and strong even in Germany. The “warning example” of the German style library ideology that was presented in the Finnish library journal was not the whole picture of the library movement in Germany, even they had their “lib-

rary wars” there. In any case the discussion indicates why independence was so dear to the library people.

The way of the library from the society of estates to the civil society

The spreading of the American library movement was a part of the appearance of the social movements and the formation of the civil society. First the library professionals, who in Finland mostly worked in the academic libraries, developed their professional skills and applied the innovations according to their own needs. The management of collections was their primary goal at this stage. Because the collections were growing, the classification systems and catalogues were important, but the design of library networks, uniform working methods etc. were not so relevant. The American library technique was one form of technology among others and its use was justified by practical reasons. You could also pick a feature from the American libraries to promote popular education without adopting their central principles.

When the public library movement proper started to spread, the first-wave trend-setters were educators, disseminators of the ideology and “agitators”. Werkko’s attempt to start a separate library association in 1892 may be regarded as the beginning of the breakthrough. The meeting, at which it took place was a step towards the Public Library Movement as a reinforcer of the identity of the libraries, even if the association was not established on that occasion. The library work of the Society for Popular Education, besides starting the general intensification, genuinely promoted change: under its wing a professional attitude to libraries and librarianship started to develop. The key person more than anyone was Granfelt. The innovation started to spread. It was important that a large enough group of disseminators adopted the principles of the American library movement. Efficiency became the goal: if we want to serve everybody and increase the circulation, we must adopt technical innovations, such as lending systems, classifications, catalogues, open shelves and library networks. The prelude of the new

phase were the convention of the Society for Popular Education 1905 and the Committee on People's Libraries 1906, which led to a new turning-point around the beginning of the 1910's. At that time the special association and the journal of the field were established, fairly regular training started and the Central Library Committee presented its views about the organization of the libraries.

During the second wave the central actors were already professionals in the field and the development seemed to lead relatively rapidly towards the establishment of an independent library system. The Library Association made a clear distinction towards the popular educators and the differentiation of the pupils' libraries seemed to demarcate the territory of libraries in the direction of schools. Even the development of the book production was working; as there was more suitable literature, there were grounds for specialization and independence in the libraries.

It was easiest for the working methods to become American. They were disseminated under the aegis of the Society for Popular Education into the professional literature and training and had reigned in practical life since the publication of Granfelt's guide-book 1905. Their position was enhanced by the founding of the Finnish Library Association.

Through the Society for Popular Education the American influences spread in due time via the course at Tuusula – where Helle Cannelin was a participant – into the state library administration and the reality of the Finnish libraries. The application of the American library techniques in the Finnish rural areas did not necessarily mean that the ideology was also adopted. The development was slow for a long time: the resources for the primary schools were scarce, even if the establishment of the schools was stipulated in the legislation. There was even less money for full-time librarians and thus no full-time positions were established in the rural areas for a long time. Without them and other resources the libraries had difficulties in proving their utility and changing the attitude of the municipal wise men. One cannot expect part-time librarians to be particularly affected by American influences. They might lack training altogether and the ideological nourishment of the short courses

and professional literature was meager. The library of the society of estates stayed in the rural areas for a long time. The teachers were under the influence of the German pedagogy that they adopted during their professional training.

The American influences came to Finland in the first place indirectly. Important links were Norway and later Denmark and England. At the beginning of the 20th century knowledge was also sought directly from America. Sweden, otherwise so important for the Finnish development was, as a source of practical examples, less central in library matters, but the discussion conducted in Sweden was also transmitted to Finland. A specially important person was Dr. Valfrid Palmgren, who acted as a catalysator in Finland as well.

The library movement was chiefly an urban phenomenon even in Finland. Libraries in towns became models that were presented in professional journals, at courses and meetings. A centralized support and control system was to be designed to secure the development of libraries in the rural areas, a goal that was not totally successful. The fall of the central library plan was especially difficult for Kemiläinen to accept.

The compromise of the 1920's and the Library Act of 1928 left the implementation of library network, but also the dissemination of library ideology, halfway. It seems that the proponents of the central library, i.e. library professionals, did not have enough political clout in the new circumstances. The support from the Socialists had a directly negative influence after the Civil War. The politically influential Niilo Liakka became the strong man of library matters. He has been regarded in a very negative light by later generations of library professionals, but it is unquestionable that he knew the libraries well and was sincerely willing to promote their cause.

From the point of view of the library people the compromise was still a step backwards. The disputes that ensued and of course the wretched state of the national finances prevented the organization of library matters in a decisive manner. The Library Act of 1928 was overrun by the depression of the early 1930's and soon after that by the Second World War, which makes it difficult to

evaluate its potential. On the other hand neither were Liakka's views fully realized: there was no obligation for the municipalities to establish libraries nor to have full-time librarians. It was not until the 1960's and 1970's that the third wave of the American library influence became a reality in Finland, when rural librarianship was professionalized.

There are many similarities in the development in Finland and in the United States, even if the social development has taken place at a different tempo and in different forms. The library as an institution, however, suited many purposes. For example, in Finland language and literature were a central element in nation building for totally different reasons than in America, where the chief goal was to adapt the immigrants to the American society.

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Tampere City Library (old building) in winter before the Second World War.
Photo: Tampere City Museum, Photo Archives



The reading room of the Tampere City Library in 1935. On the right wall hangs a picture of the founder of modern Finnish literature, Aleksis Kivi , and on the back wall a triptych by a local art nouveau artist, Josef Alanen.
Photo: Tampere City Museum, Photo Archives



Lapua Municipal Library between the World Wars.



Personnel of the State Library Bureau during the war in 1943. Helle Kannila second from left.

Photo: National Board of Antiquities Photo Archives.

Eija Eskola

Finnish Public Libraries between the World Wars

In Finland during the 1910's there were not many public libraries, especially in the rural areas, that were in really good condition. There were libraries without any staff and without acquisitions, there were libraries closed for a long time, and not only in rural areas but also in the town of Savonlinna for example. The devastating and traumatic Civil War in 1918 also had a negative influences on the libraries. Libraries were destroyed and there was not much money for those which remained. Things began to improve during the 1920's. New books were bought, new librarians began their work and attended library courses. Librarians started new catalogues and books that nobody wanted to read – mostly religious works – were put in storage. There was not much money for reforms, but there was lots of enthusiasm. Even in an inland rural municipality, like Lempäälä in the province of Häme, the library board “dared to dream of a library building of its own”.

Behind the progress there were the financial support from the state and advice of library experts, also financed by the state. Financial support - although it was only small sums of money – was now available for a large number of libraries. The State Library Bureau and the State Library Commission were founded in 1921, four years after Finland became independent. Ms. Helle Cannelin (1896–1972, she changed later her surname to Kannila) was appointed chief of Library Bureau. She was to become a prominent person in the library field until the 1960's. She was also an educator of librarians, a writer of library textbooks, editor of the national library journal, and developer in many library issues. Five library inspectors started their work in various parts of Finland. Their role

was to give advice to librarians and local authorities and to check that the financial aid from the state was used appropriately. The detailed and careful reports of the library inspectors, which are nowadays kept in the Finnish National Archives, provide information about the condition of the libraries of the young Republic.

The term “public library” (yleinen kirjasto) was not widely used in the 1920’s and 1930’s. In its stead the traditional term “popular library” or “common people’s library” (“kansankirjasto” in Finnish, “folkbibliotek” in Swedish, a term still used in other Nordic countries) or sometimes “citizen’s library” (“kansalaiskirjasto”) were used. The term “common people’s library” has in the Finnish language a connotation referring to the lower classes of the population, and that was the reason why the term was not favored by library authorities and experts, who strove to establish a public library in the American style aimed at all classes and levels of the population. When the first Finnish Library Act came into force in 1928, it still was entitled “The (Common) People’s Library Act”, which was a disappointment to the librarians and state library authorities.

Before the law was passed, accurate statistics were compiled. Only libraries that really were open to the public were taken into account. The lowest required number of loans per year for a library to be included in the statistics, however, was a mere 20. In 1928 there were 1705 libraries in Finland, of which only 55 in towns. Of these 62 per cent of libraries were owned by the municipalities and towns, the rest were owned by youth associations, labour associations and other organizations. Half of the libraries received state support. Libraries were small: 40 per cent of the libraries had less than 200 books.

Founding new libraries in the rural areas – or improving old libraries – seems to have been an important cultural issue which concerned relations between the central administration and the provinces. From 1929 to 1936 the number of branch libraries receiving state support doubled. A library inspector in the eastern part of Finland – one of the poorest parts of the country – reported that founding libraries in villages was necessary, otherwise municipal authorities would have stopped financing the main libraries of the municipi-

palties. Thus the number of libraries was impressive but the standard of library service was frequently low. Libraries were small and seldom open. The state library authorities wanted the emphasis to be on improving the main libraries of the municipalities, but this did not happen. On the other hand, many young people started their reading by borrowing books from these small village libraries, and many remember the small library as the starting point of their education and widening their outlook on life. Many small branch libraries did survive until the 1970's, when mobile libraries were introduced and started serving the sparsely populated areas.

The number of books in state supported libraries including all town libraries rose from 1.2 million (1929) to 2.2, million (1939) and the amount of loans from 2.6 million to more than five million in the same period. Town libraries made more than half of all loans, and they had 40 percent of the books and 37 percent of the customers. The population in the rural areas was 3.5 times as big as in the towns. The number of books in the statistics also included volumes which were practically not in use. The book as an object was respected and the old-time librarians were reluctant to discard books. It was therefore not uncommon to have a classification system as it was in a small library in the northern part of Finland with three classes: fiction, non-fiction and worn-out books.

During the Second World War the Soviet Union and Finland fought against each other. In the interim peace agreement of 1944 (permanent in 1947) Finland ceded 12 per cent of its land area. The people living in the ceded area, 12 per cent of the population, were settled in other parts of Finland. 349 libraries in the ceded parts of Karelia were lost to the Soviet Union and about 50 libraries in Lapland and north-east Finland were destroyed by the retreating German troops. Many rural libraries in Karelia were destroyed and collections burned or lost. Libraries in the towns of Viipuri (Vyborg) and Sortavala changed hands two times during the war. After the Winter War (1940), during the period of a little over a year, in Finland known as the Period of the Ceasefire, the libraries were kept in use by the Soviets, who had invaded Karelia. In the case of the Viipuri Library we know how it was purged, reorganized and aug-

mented by Russian-language books by the Soviets. During the resumption of hostilities (1941–1945), when the Finns temporarily won back the areas lost in the Winter War, the libraries were again run by the Finns until the end of the war, when the area finally fell within the Soviet border. The Viipuri library, a modern functionalistic building designed by Alvar Aalto, had been inaugurated only four years before the Second World War. The building was not destroyed in the war, and the collection was saved as well. Viipuri City Library is used as a library even today, and international aid has been gathered to help the Russians to restore the building.

What did libraries cost?

In 1928, 62 per cent of libraries were owned by towns and municipalities. When the state support system was planned, the municipalities were invited to take over the libraries with promises of state support if the municipality agreed to allocate a certain sum to the library. The state library authorities believed that libraries could be successful only in the municipal system. State support was given for buying books. The library authorities believed that municipalities would rather give money for books than for a librarian's salary. A rural library was, according to the Law, to receive as much state support as the municipality had given in the previous year for the purchase of non-fiction books, and 75 per cent when buying fiction. Town libraries could claim 50 per cent for non-fiction and 40 in the case of fiction. Only rural municipalities were given support for the librarian's salary. The upper limit of the total sum of state support was nevertheless so low that it was almost meaningless for the larger libraries. For instance, the Helsinki City Library considered the state support so low that it did not even apply for it.

In the beginning the total sum of applications was bigger than the appropriations in the state budget and libraries could not get as much support as was prescribed in the Law. Libraries had difficulties with bills, and some libraries even had to take a loan from the bank to be able to pay for the books they had ordered.

The state support to libraries, however, increased quite rapidly. From 1928 when the Library Act came into force to 1931 the sum of money increased from 1.3 million marks (1.8 million marks at today's value) to 2.8 million marks (4.7 million marks today), and some town libraries also got reasonable support. During the 1920's extra finance was started in order to support the libraries in the eastern and northern parts of Finland which were the poorest areas of the country. At the beginning of the 1930's the economic depression, however, reduced the state library support. Thus in 1933 the budget allocation was only two million marks (3.5 million marks today). During the latter part of the decade the support increased again (3.7 million marks in 1936, which corresponds to 6.5 million marks today).

The state support system succeeded in giving the municipalities motivation to take care of the libraries. Although the sums were low, positive results were achieved in many places. The biggest towns paid the library costs themselves, the poorest municipalities got as much as 90 per cent from the state. We have only some fragmentary information about the overall financing of the municipal libraries. In 1928, when the state support was still low, altogether 1,705 libraries received municipal funds for a total sum of 10 million marks (14.1 million marks today), of which the share of the towns was 6.6 million marks. Every third rural library did not use their own money in 1928 at all. The emphasis of the urban library financing can be illustrated by the fact that in 1939 the capital Helsinki allocated its library a sum that was half of the sum which all rural municipalities put together gave to their libraries.

Librarianship as a hobby

Every library was recommended to have a library board. Model rules made for municipal libraries assumed that the members of the library board were "literary oriented". We do not know much about the board members, but 40 percent of part-time librarians were school teachers. The majority of the librarians were part-time. In 1928 there was not a single full-time librarian in the rural municipalities. Taking care of the library was often considered a "family hobby",

where one member of the family was nominated as librarian but book lending was done by every member of the family who had spare time for it. Library inspectors noted in their reports, for example, that nominally some shoemaker may have been nominated librarian, but actually it was his daughter who actually took care of the library, or a municipality clerk had no time for cataloguing and that his daughter did the work. A teacher as a librarian might ask the pupils to help him and so on. This was not, of course, legal but the state authorities had to accept it. Many librarians worked without pay and there were not always volunteers enough. The chairmen of the library boards also took part in the actual running of the library, prepared catalogues, took care of correspondence, ordered new books. If we can talk about professional librarianship at all, it may be that the chairmen of the boards were the most professional among all those people who took part in the library operations on the local level.

The Library Act of 1928 defined the staff qualifications, but it was too ambitious. There was no library school in Finland, only some provisional courses, and because there were only a handful of full-time jobs, not many wanted to take the courses. A library chief in a town with more than 15,000 inhabitants was required to be a secondary school graduate and have experience of library work. Deputy chiefs in towns and chiefs in big municipalities should have had the competence of a primary school teacher and take a library course of four months. It turned out that the State Library Commission had to give an exemption from qualifications in many cases. There were 90 librarians in the town libraries, and only 34 of them had the specified qualifications. A library course of four months was arranged five times between 1924 and 1942, and 155 persons passed it. Most of them got jobs in town libraries. During the 1930's, at the latest, librarianship became a female profession. 90 per cent of those who passed the library courses were women. The chiefs of big city libraries (Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, Viipuri), however, were men with academic degrees. Salaries were poor, and the Finnish Library Association tried to secure the same salary for rural librarians as the school teachers got. Part-time village librarians usually worked without any salary.

Library premises and library technique

There was great variety in the quality of library premises. Most of the rural libraries did not have a room of their own. The books were kept in bookcases which were locked when the library was not open. The library room served perhaps primarily as a school classroom or a meeting room for an association. It was perhaps cold and dark, and not meant for lengthy visits or reading. At the other extreme, Viipuri City Library, designed by Alvar Aalto and opened in 1935, had a lending section, a reading room, rooms for researchers, large storage facilities, staff rooms, a children's section and an auditorium with its own kitchen.

The state library authorities had to be realistic and admit that rapid progress in library building was not possible. A realistic goal was to get a separate room for each municipal main library. At the end of 1920's 45 percent of libraries were located in school buildings, 27 percent in private houses and the rest in buildings of associations or in municipal offices. During the 1920's and 1930's some other library buildings were built, in addition to the Viipuri library. Tampere got its library building in 1925. In 1938 two municipal library buildings (Nurmes and Laitila) were built. Their construction was made possible through private donations, which was – and has always been – exceptional in Finland. Viipuri also got donations for a new library building.

According to a tradition dating back to the 19th century, rural libraries especially had been open on Sundays serving churchgoers. As late as in 1929 most libraries in the northern region were open on Sundays. State supported libraries had to be open at least four times a week in the towns and twice a week in the rural areas.

It was not possible to have the open shelf system before the library got its own room. Thus the system with open shelves, which the library authorities regarded as a necessary condition for the modern public library, was not taken into use rapidly. Even in some town libraries closed shelves were in use in the 1930's. When librarians adopted the open shelf system they had to introduce a classification system. The State Library Commission recommended the Dewey Decimal Classification; a Finnish version was published in

1925. Library inspectors reported that classification and cataloguing in practice were unfamiliar to many librarians. Some librarians lacked the skills and some did not regard the procedures as necessary.

A cataloguing code for the public libraries in Finland was approved in 1936, and a list of subject headings in 1941. Most often the catalogues were hand-written acquisition books. In town libraries especially there were printed catalogues of collections. There were hardly any libraries with no catalogue at all: books were respected property and an inventory was usually made regularly. Many lending systems were in use. The traditional system consisted of a book where information about the borrowers and the borrowed books was written down. In more advanced libraries three different card systems were in use, the Newark, the Browne and the so-called one card system, which was a Finnish adaptation of the Newark system. In the 1930's Finnish librarians learned about the Detroit system, which was to be in use for many decades.

Customers

The persisting tradition of free use without lending charges in the Finnish libraries was finally established when the Library Act of 1928 was passed. Even before that book lending had been free in many libraries, but now the law required that the libraries which got state support may not make any charge for lending. There were usually limitations on how many books one could borrow at a time. Some people were afraid that the library books would spread contagious diseases, thus some of the "better people" did not use the public libraries, and did not want their children do so either.

We do not know much about the libraries' customers. The state supported libraries, including all town libraries, had 194,000 customers in 1929 and 370,000 customers in 1939. In the late 1920's lending per inhabitant was 0.34 items in the rural areas and 3.5 items in town libraries. The economic depression in the early 1930's increased the number of customers especially in town libraries. There was not much difference in the library use between men and women.

Public libraries were considered at the same time, although by different people, too educational or too liberal. There was some discussion whether light novels should be accepted in the public libraries. The chairman of the Home Education Society (*Kotikasvatusyhdistys*), Vilho Reima, disapproved of public libraries buying books such as detective stories or a novel about the urban young people living in Helsinki by Mika Waltari. Helle Kannila strictly argued against Reima and claimed that such books had not been bought for many libraries. The bookseller A.W. Stenberg, for instance, defended entertainment literature, which, in his words, “the library men with their motherly warnings blamed”. He was sure that the young people, even in the rural areas, could learn to read more difficult books if they were allowed to start with lighter ones.

What books did the libraries then buy? In their selection work the librarians could use the Reviewing Book Catalogue (*Arvostelva kirjaluettelo*) published by the State Library Bureau. The Catalogue was founded as early as in 1902 to inform the libraries about books and even to recommend which books were or were not suitable for libraries. The reviews were perhaps in some cases rather strict in moral and religious questions, but the Catalogue was still a very good aid for libraries in book selection. A difficult question for the Catalogue were artistically high-quality but morally dubious books, such as the Decamerone or novels by Anatole France. Such books were usually recommended to be acquired by well-stocked, large libraries. There was a special “poison shelf” in libraries, where this kind of books were kept and the librarian decided who was and who was not allowed to borrow them. Poison shelves were in use although the state library authorities did not approve of them, because they thought that all library books should be on open shelves.

I have tried to find out what kind of fiction libraries really bought, and went through the acquisition catalogues of some libraries between the years 1880–1939. It seems that the most common library fiction works were novels for everyman, not high-brow, but not of the lightest quality either. The subject of a typical library novel was historical, wilderness life, countryside, family history, spiritual and intellectual growth. Original Finnish books were bought in great

numbers, but novels in translation by such writers as James Oliver Curwood, Hall Caine and Edgar Rice Burroughs were also very popular. It seems that the library collections were selected basically with the readers' tastes in mind. Non-fiction books were bought less and less, and during the 1930's many public libraries became "fiction lending libraries", a stamp which the libraries wanted to get rid of in the 1960's.

There were also arguments against libraries and reading in general. The agrarian "old folks" tended to see reading as a waste of time, light novels of the easy life were believed to make the young readers dissatisfied with their own lives, some religious movements found books and reading too worldly, and, finally, the traditional agrarian rural people were suspicious of public servants, librarians included. Library authorities emphasized that libraries must not yield to the conservatives' opinions.

Children in libraries

It was as early as 1866 when in the statute concerning primary schools it was decreed that every school should have a library for pupils. The pupils' libraries did not develop, however. For many decades it was unclear how library services for children should be arranged. After the beginning of the 20th century larger public libraries started to establish separate children's sections. The school library issue was discussed at the meetings of primary school teachers in 1926, and the National Board of Schools sent a circular recommending the founding of both a children's reference and lending library containing fiction and non-fiction, if in the vicinity there was no public library with a satisfactory children's section.

It was more advantageous for municipalities to have a pupils' library at the school because of the higher state support. One of the two biggest book publishers, Otava, started an active campaign for school libraries. Thus some librarians in public libraries did not feel it was necessary to have children's books in public libraries. For instance, in Joensuu City Library children could borrow books only during the summer holidays, and Oulu City Library and Tammissaari

City Library did not lend books to children at all. Some public libraries arranged special lending hours for children, because of the lack of space and because of the noise of children. There were usually no reading rooms for children, which Helle Kannila found specially regrettable. She defended the reading rooms using social arguments: reading rooms were a cheap way to keep the children off the streets.

Summary

From the First to the Second World War the Finnish library establishment was characterized by the great number of small libraries, which were not in contact with other libraries and were in most cases run by non-professional librarians. Local organizations were loose, there was not much cooperation between rural municipal main libraries and branch or village libraries. Many branch libraries were established to emphasize the independence and spontaneous activity of the village. Already during the 1930's the influential handbook on librarianship by Helle Kannila introduced the Finnish librarians to the American mobile library, but mobile libraries were not seen on the Finnish roads for decades.

Networking was also weak on a national scale. Plans for regional libraries and a central library for public libraries were made, but resources were not allocated for the purpose. Librarians and other people working in the library field did, however, meet each other at library meetings which we arranged every third year. There was a journal which treated library and adult education issues. There was information, possibilities for discussion about library issues, and also some library courses, but the number of librarians was small, and most of them were part-time. The network of library inspectors in principle covered the whole country, but distances were long and giving advice to libraries had to be done mostly by correspondence. Professional reforms were achieved, e.g. classification rules and cataloguing rules. Specialization in the field of public libraries also began, e.g. children's libraries and hospital libraries. In general, the period between the World Wars was a good start but not enough in the long run.

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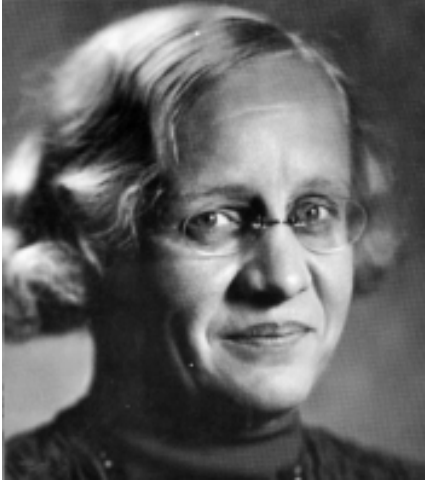
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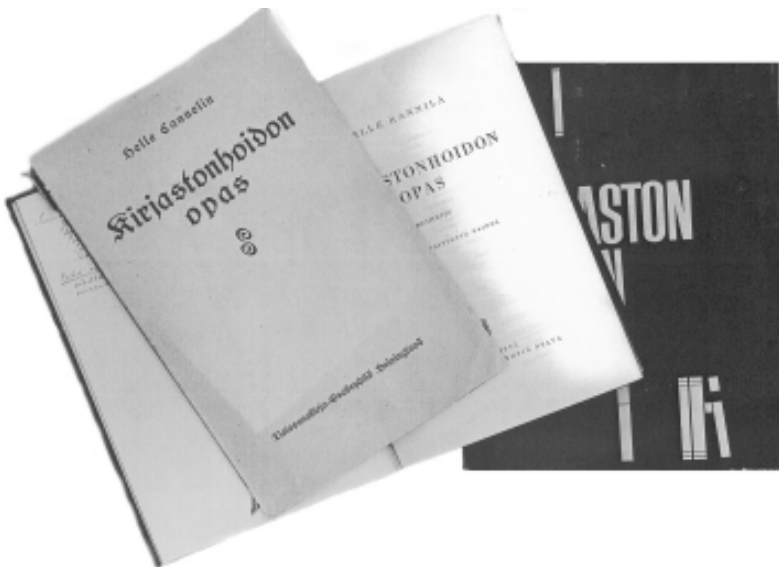


Helle Kannila (1896–1972), the *Grande Dame* of Finnish librarianship.



Ms. Kannila's textbook on reference work, *Kirjat ja tiedot* (Books and Information, 1922).

Ms. Kannila's steady-seller, *Kirjastonhoidon opas* (Guidebook on Librarianship), editions of 1922, 1941 and 1966.





Alvar Aalto's masterpiece, Viipuri City Library (1935) from the northeast.

Photo: Alvar Aalto Foundation



The lecture hall of the Viipuri City Library.

Photo: G.Welin/Finnish Architecture Museum

Sven Hirn

Librarians versus Architects

The Case of the Helsinki City Library before 1940

A few years ago it dawned on me that I had accomplished all the writing jobs required of me. In the watches of the night the notion matured in my thoughts that it might be time to give serious consideration to an attempt at a history of library. This appeared less than straightforward for the simple reason that I had repeatedly banished library history as an excessively dull subject. My banishment of the subject entailed that in general nothing exciting ever happened in the library, nothing colourful. The only exception to this was those rare occasions when the heavy boots of suspicious censors came trampling over the library collections.

I might attempt a defence of my view by evoking all those years during which I have been wont to survey the pleasures of the people in all their variation. What a pampering it has been to be able to rub shoulders with bearded ladies and educated apes. Once these subjects had been duly exhausted it was time to regroup. I noted that all was quiet on the library history front. Yet I held the conviction that if the history of the Finnish public libraries were ever to be broached, one could not ignore the part played by Helsinki. And there yawned a horrendous gap, in that the history of library in our capital city had been documented only up to the year of grace 1885 in the work *Lukuseurasta kansankirjastoon. Helsingin kirjastotoimintaa 1800 luvulla* (1963), which, being interpreted means “*From reading society to people’s library. Library activity in Helsinki in the 19th century.*”

I was the one to prepare this work for printing, and I knew it from cover to cover – the author, Mauri Närhi, had died before the manuscript was finalised. I believed that I was fairly well informed as to the accessibility of the source material. The minutes of the

committee meetings reposed safely in the city archives. Moreover, the city library's own collections held the vast number of press articles compiled by Uno Therman. The main data thus appeared to be ready at hand. In my perusal of back numbers I myself had made a note of news on the library. Thus not a great deal of trouble needed to be taken in unearthing sources – and this is generally the most gruelling stage of a writing project.

Having once assured myself that there were no other researchers with an interest in the subject I was able, with the favourable support of the library, to embark upon my examination and on the writing proper. Of course it was necessary to go through the archive collections with a fine toothed comb to assure myself that no other relevant material on the city library was lurking there. The unwelcome upshot of this was that the collections of letters did not generally concern themselves at all with the problems besetting the city library. No word from Valfrid Vasenius to Th. Höijer nor yet from Hugo Bergroth to anyone on his work in the library, nor did Georg Schauman (regarding the city library) or Uno Therman take any stance. This is most regrettable and almost frustrating. Presumably important official matters were dealt with verbally and required no repetition in correspondence.

After a host of complications, my history *Kansan kirjastosta kaupungin kirjastoon (From People's Library to City Library. Helsinki City Library 1860–1940)* was published in February 1998. I consider the work to have an adequate outer appearance and the ample illustrations are well set off. The period of time the work treats was natural, insofar as I fear I lack the appropriate objectivity to address a more recent time with which I am personally familiar.

The treatment of the various developmental stages was by no means uneventful. Here I attempt to extract a few cherries from the cake and describe a some details in the years recorded. Authorial interpolations might be justified by the claim that within research the expression of opinions is somewhat restricted. Here and now I can present my conclusions in a manner unfettered by inhibitions.

The librarians, who, of course, were responsible for various aspects of activities, constitute some sort of a developmental frame-

work. It should be noted that in the 19th century this was not a full-time tenured post. The appointment was generally only made for three years at a time, although the city council sometimes omitted to specify the time limit. The title of chief librarian only became appropriate towards the end of the period described, i.e. in 1940. The line-up contains a goodly number of key people, some of them actually difficult to identify. I shall mention the most important of them.

In the early days, when the library functioned as a private institution on various subsidies, the key people changed quite often. For a fairly long period, 1866–70, the responsibility was born by Thilda Helander. She was born in Turku in 1835, but later left the country and was pronounced dead in 1939. The first woman to do this work is thus shrouded in a certain amount of mystery. Miss Helander appears to have worked simultaneously for the office of the *Hufvudstadsbladet* (a quality Helsinki paper published in Swedish). The activity was not without its progressive aspects. The librarian was admonished by the board in 1867 for allowing more books to be displayed for loan than it was possible to keep a check on – too many had been lost. This modest departure in the direction of open shelves was ahead of its time.

Our next stop is with Carl Albert Gröneberg (1845–1880), who was in charge of the library 1873–77, during which time it was transferred to the city authorities. Using a pseudonym, Gröneberg edited booklets and plays, worked for the administrative court as a translator and also as a newspaper editor. He would seem to have been a fairly progressive library worker but does not appear in the annals of acknowledged Finnish authors under his own name. Apparently the work of a librarian did not command sufficient respect; other merits were required to achieve public attention.

In the case of Valfrid Vasenius (1848–1928) there is no uncertainty. He is among the best known of the librarians, albeit his fame resting on merits in literary history. He began his work in 1878, but only pursued it for one and a half years. The situation was exceptional in all ways. The Helsinki Company for the distribution of alcoholic beverages (a public company which engaged in retailing spirits and their distribution in a manner calculated to prevent drunk-

ness rather than to create profit) had been assiduous in its efforts to achieve a main library building for the city. Vasenius had just been fortunate enough to participate in the preparatory work for the project. He had done this conscientiously by familiarising himself with the new building of the *Kungliga biblioteket* (Royal Library) in Stockholm.

Throughout the process the Company was responsible for the initiative and the implementation; Viktor Öhberg (1830–1907) was the leading light. A plot of land was purchased at the corner of Korkeavuorenkatu and Rikhardinkatu; Carl Theodor Höijer (1843–1910) was chosen as the architect and all that remained for the city authorities to do was to give the project their formal blessing. This was the overall situation to which Vasenius was required to acquiesce.

The plans had actually progressed rapidly, efficiently and without complications. Now Vasenius as a thinking actor made his contribution to the whole. Having visited Stockholm he was no longer convinced that all the arrangements were appropriate. Transportation of books should be facilitated through lifts and the monitoring of various spaces should be centralised. Nor was that all: Vasenius did not scruple to interfere with the façade of the building, advocating that it should face not onto Rikhardinkatu, but rather the street called Korkeavuorenkatu. To my mind, the librarian thereby exceeded his authority.

The difference of opinion duly came before the committee for building works and thereafter was addressed in the council. Vasenius published a booklet containing an exposée of the conflicting proposals, including Höijer's ground plans. The views of the librarian were not favourably received and he came out of things second best. Vasenius drew his own logical conclusions and tendered his resignation. He had not held the post very long, but long enough to realise certain broad-minded innovations in library technique.

It is only to be deplored that Vasenius was unwilling to continue to run the library. As a member of the library board he was nevertheless able to monitor progress, a surprising arrangement, and one which was to be repeated with his successors. The focal point of

his career came to be the post of extraordinary professor of literature 1902–08. As a literary researcher and also as a critic Vasenius was worthy of note. His main work is a biography of Zacharias Topelius in six volumes (1912–31), the most comprehensive of its kind. (Topelius (1818–1898) was one of the most important authors in 19th century Finland writing in Swedish. Posterity remembers him chiefly for his fairytales, historical novels and journalistic work.)

This was the first major conflict between the architect designing the library and the librarian. The defeat of Vasenius was no surprise. The committee for building works had estimated that making new drawings would have caused not only incalculable extra costs but also a delay in the actual construction of the building. The matter was to be accomplished rapidly, and so indeed it was. In hindsight it is not easy to conjecture which proposal would have been preferable – this would entail taking account of considerations of subsequent extension.

At any rate it was a positive fact that Helsinki acquired a building of splendid outward appearance as its library. The project was a pioneering achievement, as the other Scandinavian countries only woke up to this later. Generally it has been put about that the library building in Gothenburg donated by Dickson was older as the gaze of the Swedes naturally did not reach quite as far as to see Finland. Alas, the activities begun in 1882 in the new situation in Helsinki did not turn out to be exemplary.

The library did not have the use of the entire building; almost half of the space was rented out. The city had acquired the building *gratis*, but this did nothing to ensure that good use would be made of the facility. It was not possible to purchase sufficient new books and activities were otherwise pervaded by extreme austerity.

No immediate successor to Vasenius was appointed; a substitute was deemed sufficient while the construction was in progress. Finally, in summer 1882, Mauritz Bernhard Mexmontan (1856–1936), a matriculant from secondary education, was appointed for a term of three years. Mexmontan was not particularly well-suited to the job; his activities are characterised by a sort of non-achievement, possibly even indifference.

Somewhat embarrassing attention was paid to the fact that the building was inaugurated without any ceremony, almost furtively. Even if the librarian had certain misgivings, the committee should have been sufficiently alert to publicise and promote the improved services. The attitude of the committee to the young librarian remains a matter for conjecture, for the minutes have not survived, a fact which itself is indicative of negligence. The loan statistics were modest, i.e. the new building was not duly utilised. The enlightened contribution of the spirits company fell, one may say, on stony ground and failed utterly to delight the residents in the intended manner.

It may be that Mexmontan was not interested in literature and reading, or in the actual nature of library work. He took his master's degree in 1903. Sporty hobbies, going as far as fencing and massage appear to have been what really interested him. He did not lack courage: In the city Mexmontan defended members of the fair sex against the advances of cossacks. He ended up in custody in 1915 under suspicion of consorting with Germans. He was taken to Petrograd and sentenced to be hanged, but escaped this fate as General Russij refused to sign the death warrant. He was literally put into irons and taken to the notorious Schlüsselburg prison, but the Russian Revolution led to his liberation and joyful return to Finland. Whatever else he may have been, Mexmontan was no colourless figure.

Frans Johan Valbäck (1852–1923) was appointed to succeed him, and served as librarian for seven years, 1885–92. As an editor he was active and otherwise appropriately furthered the activities of the library: a rise may be seen in the loan statistics and the opportunities afforded by the building were finally put to good use. Regrettably this most positive development came to an inexplicable end through a total breakdown of relations with the committee.

In January 1892 the fact had to be faced that no acquisitions had been brought before the committee for approval, nor had previous acquisitions been made available for borrowing. An investigation of the situation revealed that the library premises were in a state of disorder and, to cap it all, the management of finances was in disarray. No accounting or receipts for rent revenues had been

presented to the city authorities, thus it was not possible to grant the people concerned freedom from liability. The librarian, of course, was required to take care of the essential book-keeping, but he did not appear at the emergency meeting called.

The committee decided to propose to the council that the care of the library be placed in the hands of a substitute and that Valbäck be relieved of his duties. At the eleventh hour, however, he appeared with the essential copies of receipts and in due course it was agreed that the librarian would tender his resignation, in which case the council would not be informed of the grave negligence disclosed. This avoided a public scandal, for the press did not report the gravity of the situation – it only emerges from the minutes of the committee meetings.

This wellnigh incredible turn of events came as complete surprise to me. No explanations were forthcoming, only the communication from Valbäck that he was unable to fulfil all his obligations. He duly became secretary of the *Arbetets vänner*, and there is no subsequent indication of irregularities in his life, surprising turns of events or other difficulties. These events were a grave shock to the committee, and great care was expended on the selection of a successor.

Generally there were many applicants and ample choice. It was now the turn of Hugo Bergroth (1866–1937) to take the helm, and he did so in exemplary fashion until 1907. The post was declared open at intervals of three years, but after a few such rounds the procedure became a mere formality, with the committee confirming its total satisfaction with Bergroth's way of running the library. Yet this was still no full-time engagement, for the librarian was compelled to supplement his income by working at the University as a lecturer in Swedish.

Hugo Bergroth was a fine figure of a man, very presentable and well connected. The development of the activities of the library was steady and positive. At the turn of the century the tenants of the building on Rikhardinkatu were turned out and library assumed control of the entire building. The position of the librarian appeared invincible, but in 1907 he himself took a surprising decision in ten-

dering his resignation. The committee were apparently amazed, but there was nothing to be done. I assume that Bergroth had taken a fresh look at the focus of his professional activities and given priority to his lectureship.

Bergroth's work *Finlandssvenska* (1917) is a pioneer and a classic in its field. The use of the Swedish language in Finland was to be brought closer to developments in Sweden itself and provincialisms were to be rooted out. Before long this was being preached to the press, the actors and the schoolchildren. As a consequence of this, Bergroth's life's work has been seen to rest almost completely on his achievements in this area. Once again, librarian's work was unjustly overshadowed.

Matters may have been more satisfactorily managed by making the job of librarian full-time, in which case the remuneration would have been more appropriate to the demanding nature of the work. This point was reached only with the next librarian in line, Uno Therman (1873–1943). He held the post until his retirement in 1940. This period is marked by numerous innovations and progress, but also by bitter setbacks.

Our conceptions of Uno Therman as a librarian are likewise mixed. He is perhaps best remembered in his later years as a cringing pennypincher and grey-haired non-achiever. His early years in the post were utterly different; he sought for new ways of working, and other progressive innovations. The people's library became the city library, charges on loans were abolished and the main library adopted a system of open shelves. The new building of the Kallio Branch Library, paid for by the city, was inaugurated in 1912, at a time when many American innovations – not counting open shelves! – made their first appearance in Finland. But the fateful issue of a new main library building was brewing.

The tortuous path of the new main library building have caused its chronicler considerable deliberation. Is it reasonable to recount all the minutiae of a project which was dead in the water and a total flop? Here is absurdity enough to inspire Dario Fo, but as regards the history of library the chain of events is a demoralising monotony. Yet I feel this grotesque example should indeed be publicised in

all its details. We can see how the library experts – not only Uno Therman – were trodden under foot. There is ample instructive material for posterity. How in creation could things go so very badly wrong?

It was already in 1911 that Therman first broached the idea of a new library building in the committee. This was not favourably received, but a year later a proposal to initiate the project was forwarded to the municipal bodies. We may note that in December 1986 the matter of a new library had been under way for 75 years before being brought to completion. In other words, this incredible municipal bungling would merit a place in the Guinness Book of Records.

Not everything, of course, can be blamed on the stodginess of the Helsinki bureaucracy. Sporadic efforts were indeed made to solve the problem, but the chances of ever achieving anything were mercilessly depleted by the First World War and the economic straits of our newly independent nation. With no immediate solution in view it was necessary to be content with procrastinating and adding a third storey to the old library building in 1923. This served to buy a further ten to fifteen years' grace, but the real problems of space remained unsolved. The problems were actually exacerbated due to the surprisingly rapid shift to a system of open shelves and as a consequence of the pressures of the lean years of the 1930s.

Throughout the course of events there was difficulty in finding a suitable piece of land; several alternatives were considered, but no unanimity could be reached. Frequently it was necessary for those in the library to point out that the solutions proposed were too far away from the centre of the city. On the other hand, the city authorities were reluctant to part with sites they considered too valuable for the use of the library. Thus the buck was passed continuously and virtually *ad infinitum*.

We need not delve into all details here. A certain point of possible departure was arrived at when in 1930 it was decided to arrange a competition of ideas as to whether the new main library could be located adjacent to the National Museum of Finland, on a site bordered by the streets Dagmarinkatu, Töölönkatu and Museo-

katu. A drawback was perceived in the fact that the site might be too cramped for a favourable positioning of the building, and that the existing tenements of council flats with their dreary firewalls might mar the prospects for a visually imposing result.

The first prize in the competition was awarded to the architects Aarne Hytönen and Risto-Veikko Luukkonen. The proposal clearly advocated reasonable options for positioning the structure and modest prerequisites for its realisation. It looked as if this might be the time to take a decisive step. However, the architecture competition remained open and it was decided to award the commission to design the building to Professor Eliel Saarinen. By this time he had moved to the United States of America, but on visiting Helsinki agreed to accept the commission on reasonable terms. All seemed to be going well. Our celebrated architect would be designing an important public building for his native country and the library building would be an imposing and impressive structure in the centre of our capital city. The idea for this solution originated with Georg Schauman, and the library had reason to believe in an optimal and speedy implementation.

But it was not to be. On commencing his design work Eliel Saarinen realised that the site was inappropriate for the purpose. This meant that the agreement sought through the competition collapsed forthwith. The authority of the architect was so peremptory that the city officials acquiesced virtually without argument to seek better locations.

In my estimation there then followed the first act in a prolonged national drama, with roles played by the Great Architects and the Little Librarians. The principle heroic arias were performed centre stage and with grandiose gestures by our designers Eliel Saarinen, Alvar Aalto, Reima Pietilä accompanied by their adulating and compliant disciples. The librarians may have been permitted an episodic squeak in the back row of the chorus. I suspect that this strange eventful tragedy is now still being played out in some theatre.

In the course of the preparations to find a new improved location for the main library numerous committees, boards and of course

a host of private individuals were enlisted, and their opinions duly burst upon the press. Over the years the issue of the main library was addressed on several occasions in the city council, but time and again it was decided to decide nothing. The game played was such that one was constantly compelled to go back to Square One.

A large number of possible sites were taken under scrutiny. Among the more important of these were what was known as the site of the City Sanitation Service by the side of what is now the main thoroughfare of Mannerheimintie, where the Hotel Hesperia and Hotel Inter-Continental were subsequently constructed. The merits of the site were deemed considerable, but the costs of transferring the City Sanitation Service were thought to be considerable and the cause of the library was not felt to be sufficiently weighty. Very soon sights were set farther afield and towards the street called Nordenskiöldinkatu. In that direction there was then nothing except for the Aurora Hospital. There were no residents, but it would give a totally free hand in the design of a new building.

No support for such a remote location was forthcoming from the library faction, and preferable alternatives were envisaged, for example, in the vicinity of the Hesperia park and Kaisaniemi. Yet there was a desire to retain our parks and after a few years of deliberation three alternatives emerged: a plot of land near Nordenskiöldinkatu, more or less where the National Pensions Institution stands today, a site by Läntinen Castréninkatu (not included in the town plan) on which the City Theatre now stands, and the location of the Kallio library, which was to be used for a more ambitious complex.

Time was squandered and the lean years depleted the chances of funding. When in autumn 1935 the moment of decision was finally at hand the preparations for the Olympic Games took precedence. The debate in the council was spirited and after various voting procedures the choice fell on Castréninkatu. Thus a solution had been arrived at regarding the location, but the building schedule remained totally unresolved. The issues of the architect was still open, i.e. Eliel Saarinen had actually contributed to his own ultimate ousting.

The decision of the Council was a peculiar one in many ways, verging on the incomprehensible. The location was opposed by all the library experts, who were dumbfounded by the outcome. Naturally the Left Wing were pleased with the decision, seeing it as a compensation for the fact that important public buildings had not been located in working class areas. They would clearly have welcomed a new city library in every second block of the Kallio area.

One can only wonder at the plans of the Right Wing. On the far side of the *Pitkäsilta* (Long Bridge) traditionally regarded as the boundary between the wealthy quarters and the working class area, there were to be two library buildings, and, what is more, fairly close together. In my understanding this would never have been agreed to when it was ultimately necessary to decide on funding. However, it had the effect of calming the situation insofar as the library people were manoeuvred off the field: given that the site was useless, they could no longer wholeheartedly advocate the building of a new library. As by an ingenious plot the City of Helsinki had seen to it that the main library moved into a vague and uncertain future.

What this painful process, I believe, shows us, is that Helsinki would never encompass a new library if this were at all to be avoided. Thus the strategy had to be made in such a way that in the absence of alternatives the city would be put at bay. Something had to be learned from history. In that sense delving into the fruitless phases might well be worth it.

For Uno Therman the defeat was a bitter and crushing experience. He had endeavoured to exert influence in the location issue by writing in the press and registering objections in the minutes of meetings. These means had been exhausted and the situation appeared hopeless. When the Nordic Library Conference was held in Finland for the first time in 1935, the librarian was so ashamed of his position that he took absolutely no part in the event. In Stockholm and Oslo it had been possible to show visitors around new, grand – if impractical – library buildings. In Helsinki there was nothing at all to show, no designs or plans. The librarian saw fit to take cover.

When reviewing the situation in hindsight one might try to imagine what would have happened had Eliel Saarinen been given free rein to fulfil his vision. The location remains questionable, but the building today would indubitably be too small and distinctly impractical. Thus as the city grew the question of a new main library would have emerged in any case. This realisation would in all probability have been more problematic to achieve, requiring machinations on a grand scale.

In hindsight it may well be that all was for the best. In the long run the dragging of bureaucratic feet proved to be a blessing in disguise which could eventually be turned to the advantage of the operational planning of the city library. Thus my irrepressibly optimistic nature seeks to see something positive in the development: perhaps all that trumpeting and drumming by our architects was not entirely fatal...

Editor's note

This is based on the presentation by Sven Hirn at a seminar on library history held in May 1998. Professor Hirn served as director of the Helsinki City Library 1963–1987. The new main library building was completed in 1986.

Background information on Helsinki

Helsinki has been the capital of Finland since 1812. Initially clearly a Swedish-speaking city, the proportion of Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking inhabitants in the 1890s was roughly equal. At Independence in 1917 Finnish speakers already accounted for over 60 % of the population, and by the Second World War their share had risen to over 70 %. Today Swedish-speaking Finns account for some 8 % of the population, which is a fair number, given that the entire population numbers some half million. As in the case of other municipal services, there has always been an effort to offer library services equally to both language groups.

References

Readers interested in the history of the Helsinki City Library will find more detailed information and references in the work by Sven Hirn *Kansankirjastosta kaupunginkirjastoksi. Helsingin kaupunginkirjasto 1860–1940* (Helsinki 1998) and in the work by Mauri K. Närhi *Lukuseurasta kansankirjastoon. Helsingin kirjastotoimintaa 1800-luvulla* (Helsinki 1963).



Professor Sven Hirn, at that time head of the library, in front of the construction site of the new Helsinki Main Library in 1984. The building was completed in 1986.

Ilmi Järvelin

1950s: The Decade of Wait or the Decade of Progress after all

The restored peace

Analyzing any given function in society shows us that we must look back decades or even centuries to get a comprehensive view of the development that has taken place. The label attached to the function may have changed, new branches may have evolved, even to the point that we are not able right away to identify the original object of our analysis. The forces of society may have affected the development, sometimes directly, sometimes with changes that become visible only afterwards. The history of the public libraries of our country is a genuine example of this. We can divide the development into partly arbitrary periods or we can use certain periods attached to neighbouring spheres of life, or we can use (as I did in my dissertation) the periodization offered by changes in the legislation. Great upheavals, such as gaining independence during the First World War and the ensuing social changes, or the Second World War, also clearly define the periods of the history of public libraries.

The topic of my presentation, the 1950s, – “the decade of wait” or, as the chief of the State Library Bureau, Mauno Kanninen, used to put it, “the interim and waiting period” – was not limited to this decade, but even its course of events was affected by the prewar plans to change the library legislation, plans that were postponed by the long years of war and reconstruction from 1939 until the beginning of the 1950s.

After the hostilities between Finland and the Soviet Union had ended in the fall of 1944 and the German troops had been chased out of Lapland by spring 1945, it was time to restore the state sub-

sidies for libraries to their prewar level and, in general, reinstate the peace-time working capacity to the libraries. Some of the shortcomings in the Library Act of 1928 were already visible, when the law was passed and more of them surfaced over the years. Already at the end of the 1930s the time was ripe to renew both the law and the decree. The war, however, stopped the plans for a more radical legislative reform. By administrative decrees the authorities could remedy a number of faults at the end of 1941, but after peace was restored changes in the law itself came under discussion.

The State Library Bureau responded to the need to change the 5th paragraph of the Library Act to be in better concordance with the real circumstances by sending two proposals to the Ministry of Education in the autumn of 1944 and in the spring of 1945. Concurrently a bill was proposed in Parliament to raise the building subsidies for libraries and to replace the planned regional central libraries with a slightly different system of regional centres. The bill would have meant changes in some paragraphs of the Library Act. The parliamentary Committee on Education, however, stated that there also was a need for greater changes in the Library Act, but noted that additional preparatory work was needed for that purpose. The Committee recommended at this stage that the bill should be rejected, but proposed that Parliament would request the Government to start planning for a thorough reform of the Library Act.

When in November 1945 Parliament accepted the Committee's proposal, it simultaneously started the long chain of events leading to the thorough reform of the Library Act, a long and meandering process that more than 15 years later culminated in the passing of the new Library Act. Parliament's request presupposed that a committee would be appointed to draft the reform. As a preparatory measure the Ministry of Education asked the Library Bureau to give a statement concerning the need for reform. The statement was ready in April of 1946.

The Government in its turn appointed a committee to draft a proposal for a reform the Library Act and nominated Helle Kannila, the chief of the Library Bureau, as chair of the committee. The

committee did a thorough job. The Library Bureau kept the library inspectors well up-to-date during the different phases of the committee's work and also used their experience and work while gathering information from the field. The library inspectors also had the opportunity to give their opinion on the different reform alternatives, especially concerning their own position and work.

The Committee's proposals

The Library Committee's report was completed in September 1949 (published in 1950). The committee's model based on public municipal libraries was a tightly centralized system where the National Board of Schools had a prominent role. The Committee proposed that the central administration of libraries would remain under the National Board of Education with a sufficient number of library inspectors to take care of the controlling and guiding tasks. Each province was to have an inspector and the division into "senior" and "junior" inspectors was abolished.

The harmonization of the titles was connected with the proposal by the Committee to reorganize the inspectors' tasks. Their number would rise from seven to eleven, one for each province and two for special tasks. Even after the reform the districts of library inspectors would have been large in comparison with the inspectors of elementary schools (39 districts). Leaving a destroyed Lapland aside, there would have been approximately 140–450 libraries for each inspector. The new law was to raise both the number of libraries and the need for advice. The Committee emphasized that the position of libraries should be considered equal with that of elementary schools.

According to the Committee one of the senior inspectors should take care of the school libraries. The Committee thought that the need to reform the libraries of various educational institutions was urgent and that steps in this direction would enhance the cooperation between the school and library authorities. To alleviate the shortage of personnel in the central administration, the Committee proposed an assistant with the responsibility of running an information

centre for rural libraries, and another employee for the preparation of administrative matters.

The Committee also proposed it be compulsory for the municipalities to establish and run a library. This principal matter was treated from many angles in the committee report. There were at that time no more than 10 municipalities without a municipal library. But the background of the proposal was the desire to make the rights and duties of libraries equal with those of elementary schools or compulsory education. Some other proposals of the Committee were directed towards the same goal, e.g. concerning the inspection of school libraries and closer cooperation between the libraries and schools. In this way the thoughts that Helle Kannila had presented in her own development plan for libraries in 1929 were incorporated into the committee report.

The Committee proposed that the library inspectors should be positioned in the regional central libraries, as was already planned in a committee report of 1938. None of those who gave a statement of the committee report questioned the problems that would have arisen with inspectors representing the state and municipal civil servants would working side by side. Another matter that came up in the discussion was the proposal made by the Union of Rural Municipalities (*Maalaiskuntien liitto*) two years earlier to link up the whole spectrum of popular education to the field of municipal cultural work: what would be the role of libraries in that scheme?

The statements concerning the committee report were, however, critical towards many aspects of the proposals of the report. The Union of Rural Municipalities was the most ardent opponent against making libraries compulsory and claimed, among other things, that it was against the law. Later, in 1958, the Union criticized the proposal for the library act by the Ministry of Education because of the incoherence of the library administration, e.g. the lacking coordination of public and school libraries. Besides the Union of Rural Municipalities it was also the Agrarian Union, the political party having its strongest support in rural areas, that opposed making the library compulsory.

A large part of the proposals of the Committee were realized in the Library Act of 1961 and other decrees connected to it. The

division of inspectors into senior and junior inspectors was abolished, but the creation of assistant positions was not realized nor was the location of the inspectors in the regional central libraries.

“The decade of wait”, as the fifties in the Finnish library world might be called, had in many points overtaken the proposals of the Committee. At the end of the 1950’s there was a library in every municipality. The systematic planning of library work was realized by the library inspectors by creating a planning programme for each year without the compulsion of law. The committee report of 1950 was still heavily tied to the past and the experiences of the previous quarter of a century.

The subsidies granted by the state to the municipal libraries also gave it the right to direct the work of public libraries in each municipality down to the smallest detail. Too close a specification of the contents of library work especially annoyed the representatives of the rural municipalities. Regardless of all this the “decade of wait” must still be characterized as a decade of progress, as the following facts show.

Steps ahead

The tasks of the state library authorities grew a great deal after the armistice of the autumn of 1944. Besides the reform of the legislation, the development of libraries was discussed in the Library Committee and elsewhere both as a separate matter and as a part of a larger reform of municipal cultural activities.

In this connection the question was raised of a unification of the municipal boards working in the field of education and culture into parts of a single educational and cultural board. The managing director of the Union of Rural Municipalities, Aarne Eskola, spoke and wrote first about cooperation among the cultural workers on the municipal level without forgetting the libraries and librarians. Then, in a speech at a conference on popular education in 1946, he generalized the idea by mentioning a common municipal board for these activities. The Library Committee chaired by Helle Kannila

agreed with the proposed enhanced cooperation of cultural workers and included an option for a common board in its proposed bill.

In small rural municipalities the unification of the tasks of the boards might have been reasonable. The Union of Rural Municipalities emphasized this policy on various occasions during the 1950's and 1960's. Nevertheless no paragraph including this was included in the Library Act of 1961.

Through the inspectors the Library Bureau and the State Library Commission received information on questions of practical library work. The state library authorities could, based on the compiled controlling and statistical information, give directions supplementing the legislation both to the libraries and the inspectors. The agreed measures were closely connected with the practical operations and with the ongoing process of legislative reform and development plans.

The state subsidies

The absolute upper limit allowed by the Library Act of 1928 was 150,000 Finnish marks during the 1950's. This sum was also intended to cover the special subsidies to poor municipalities as well as those in the more remote areas. The period could be characterized as a training period for making applications for state subsidies: the inspectors often returned the application documents to the municipalities in order to teach the municipalities to follow the proper application procedures. The training period was successful: the municipalities learned that to fill in the applications documents carefully was the first condition for getting the subsidies. Thus the amount of control was increased, but the increase of guidance was by no means negligible.

The problems of library premises are an example of this mansided work. The Union of Rural Municipalities was a good ally to the state library administration in this matter. Already in 1948 it published the results of a planning contest for municipal library premises. The chief of the State Library Bureau since 1949, Mauno Kaninen, became acquainted with the questions of library premises

and furniture through literature and study tours. He once wrote about a survey concerning the library premises in the rural municipalities, where the district libraries had received a crushing condemnation. According to the patrons “it was not appealing to go to borrow from some corner shelf”. Kanninen remarked in his article that “it was just the bad conditions of the premises that prevent libraries from reaching the central educational position that they otherwise deserve”. Library premises were also studied by the Library Committee and the published report increased the activities of the inspectors in upgrading the library premises. Mauno Kanninen was able to get a decision concerning a library building programme through in the State Library Commission. Based on the information gathered in the Library Bureau he was able in 1953 to publish a guidebook on library building, which was the first “official” guidebook of its kind in Finland.

In 1948, in cooperation with the Union of Rural Municipalities the Finnish Library Association had already published its own guidebook entitled “Library Premises for Rural Areas”. The starting point of library planning in the guidebook was “a library building or a common building for club and youth activities well in harmony with its surroundings and surrounded by a park”. The publication listed those planning projects with which the library could be connected. Examples mentioned included the health care building, the local museum and the folk high school. Special emphasis was nevertheless placed on the libraries located in school buildings. The publication recommended that “every new elementary school building should house at least one combined library and club room”.

The Union of Rural Municipalities also continued its activity to help planning cultural centers in rural municipalities. The handbook for municipal matters published by the Union (1955) also included instructions for applying for state grants for the construction of library premises compiled by the State Library Bureau. They included instructions on how to apply for financing for library premises in school buildings.

Besides Mauno Kanninen, there were other people, e.g. the library inspector in the province of Lapland, Mirja Räsänen, well

acquainted with the building of library premises, who wrote and spoke for the building of functional library premises. According to Mauno Kanninen's proposal the matter was discussed at the inspectors' meeting in 1953, where an agreement concerning the norm for the size of library premises was reached. The norms for library activities were already on the agenda at the inspectors' meeting in 1953 and they were closely connected with the planning of new premises. After the war years the acquisition and furnishing of library premises had become more and more topical and guidance was needed. Problems emerged in adjusting the libraries in connection with schools with the state subsidy system. Should the state subsidy be calculated considering the whole surface area, as the State Library Bureau proposed, or according to the plans, still non-existent, as the Council of State (the Government) proposed? The inspectors deliberated about the size of library premises in relation to the number of inhabitants, the concentration of population and other considerations. Mauno Kanninen thought that one could speak about library districts in the manner of elementary school districts. Whether the districts were identical was still left open.

The meeting proposed that the smallest size of a library should be 60 square meters, from which it would increase according to the number of inhabitants in the municipality, the size of the built up area and other factors. This first "official" decision of the inspectors was to have long ranging effects when the surface area of a library entitled to state subsidy was determined in 1957 (in the Law on Elementary Schools 247/1.7.1957). As soon as the normative decision was made, the library inspectors concentrated during the 1950's on the detailed definition of questions concerning the premises. It was no longer sufficient to have a simple place for lending books, but on top of it a special room for the stock, an office room (if possible) and a place for the books for the children's and juveniles' books were needed. The outward appearance of library premises was emphasized more than before.

The questions described here were strongly present in the inspectors' meeting of 1959, where a decision was made – based on a proposal from the field – to start a systematic library development work or a true five-year plan for library activities. The proposal to

demand a library development plan from the municipalities had already been presented already in the Library Committee and the chief of the Library Bureau, Mauno Kanninen, in a circular in 1952 had introduced the matter for deliberation among the inspectors. Each year the programme would help to focus attention on a number of features which would have been realizable even under the old regulations on state subsidies. The implementation of the plan, however, presupposed more full-time jobs both in the urban and above all in rural libraries.

The development programmes of library services also included the question of the relationship between the school and the library. Cooperation between the pupils' libraries located in schools and the public libraries became more complicated after the war years, both as a result of the changes in the elementary school legislation and the burgeoning of district libraries in schools. After a discussion and deliberations the Library Committee included a chapter on this issue in its report. The new Library Act of 1961 removed the worst overlap, but the practical measures had to wait until the 1960's and 1970's.

Guidance and education on library matters increased markedly during the 1950's. The inspectors wrote, lectured and made speeches in their districts on current topics. They addressed crucial problems, e.g. concerning the selection of books, at the special meetings they organized. In their speeches and writing they compared the development in their own district with that of the public libraries in the country as a whole. They also made their contribution in solving administrative problems both at the meetings and, for example, by participating in the compilation of a guidebook for municipal library boards published in 1960.

The long and frustrating wait for the new library legislation thus did not mean the cessation of the practical development work or of development programmes. During the years of waiting many necessary projects were planned and partly implemented and various development plans were drawn up. The active participation of the Union of Rural Municipalities in the enhancement of educational and cultural services in the rural area has been described in this

chapter. The Home District Association (*Kotiseutuliitto*) also aimed at the same goal, and their interest resulted in the Memorandum on the Development of Library Services in the Rural Areas and Regional Central Libraries by Mauno Kanninen in 1952. The memorandum did not, however, lead to visible results.

Conclusion

The reform of libraries was overridden by the war (1939–1945) and the Library Decree of 1942 could not give more than a breathing space. Already during the autumn of 1944 the State library authorities were compelled to reorganize the districts of library inspectors and inform the public libraries about it. The proposal in Parliament to appoint a new library committee and to put the chief of the State Library Bureau, Helle Kannila, in its chair was successful.

As a support for its work the Committee needed different kinds of statistics and investigations on the general situation of the public libraries in the country. At the same time the number of libraries grew fast and the biggest problem was premises. The chief of the State Library Bureau in 1949–1956, Mauno Kanninen, was well acquainted with this question even before taking up this post. With the inspectors he discussed various problems that the Library Committee had not considered or had taken a negative attitude to. One can nevertheless point to many things that the Committee initiated, which changed character during the years of wait. This was the fate among other things of the goal of making libraries compulsory in the municipalities. Its place was taken by norms and library development plans. Many inspectors were experienced workers in their districts and, aided by their long experience, could make a decisive contribution to the planning and development activities. In this way both the legislators and the state library authorities could, as soon as the new Library Act was passed, make their contribution to the development of public libraries in the country.

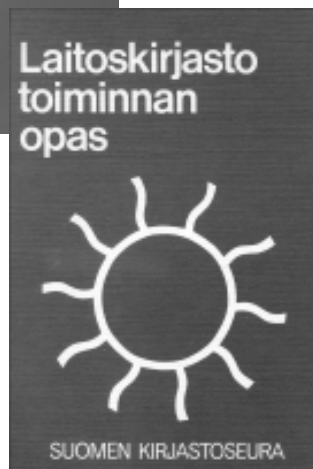
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The cover and a page of the book presenting new library buildings (*Uusia kirjastohuoneistoja*, 1953) by Mauno Kanninen. The building in the picture is another of Alvar Aalto's libraries, the library of Säynätsalo Municipality near Jyväskylä.





Covers of guides on librarianship. On the left a Swedish-language guidebook on the management of small libraries by Barbro Boldt (1965), on the right (top) a guidebook on hospital librarianship by Mauno Kanninen and Kyllikki Nohrström (1944) and (bottom) a guide on library work in hospitals and other institutions (1980)



The town library of Nurmes in 1954.
Photo: Ilmi Järvelin



Ilomantsi Municipal Library in 1985.
Photo: Ilmi Järvelin

Ilkka Mäkinen

The Golden Age of Finnish Public Libraries: Institutional, Structural and Ideological Background since the 1960's

Introduction

During the last 40 years the Finnish public libraries have grown rapidly, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In 1960 the annual circulation rate per person was 3.4, in 1970 it was 7.1, and in 1980 15.1. The level of 20.2 was reached in 1994. For some years each Finn has been borrowing around 20 volumes annually from his or her local municipal public library. The rapid evolution of the Finnish libraries is also mirrored in the comments of outside observers. When comparing the Finnish public libraries with those of its Nordic neighbours in 1956 Lionel McColvin had to admit that “in the remaining Scandinavian country – Finland – even more remains to be done”, although, as he pointed, “it would seem that nevertheless achievement is greater than in several European countries which enjoy more propitious circumstances”. During the 1950's Finland was lagging far behind the best of the Nordic countries, Denmark and Sweden, and Britain itself. (McColvin 1956, p. 104.) In a thorough review of the Scandinavian public libraries in the mid-1960's K.C. Harrison could already find many positive signs in the Finnish libraries, notably the positive perspectives that the new Library Act of 1961 had opened and the Finnish library architecture, but even then he had to find excuses for the low loan statistics (4.63 per person in Finland, 9 in Britain). (Harrison 1969, p. 247.) Since the 1960's the evolution of Finnish public libraries has surpassed all expectations. My task in this article is to describe what has happened and to explain how this evolution has been possible. It is almost needless to say that this article cannot give any definite answers, it can merely pose questions and show where the answers may be found.

The most important individual factor explaining the success of the Finnish public libraries is the Library Act of 1961. We have to take a closer look at its background, adoption and immediate effects. But this can only lead us further, to a more general societal context: why was the law passed in the first place and would it have had such an effect if it had been passed ten years earlier? It is the society that builds a library of its kind. The next step is to give a description of the country at the time when the law was passed and follow the great changes during the 1960's and onwards and see how they affected the libraries. I shall continue by describing chronologically and thematically what has happened in the Finnish public libraries during the last four decades, during which period the present network of public libraries in the country has evolved.

Thus I shall search for possible explanations both in the more narrow changes in the library world, its institutions, ideology and profession and in the general societal changes, such as the construction of the welfare state. In the course of the four decades many other things have changed in the country. It has become an integrated part of the European and global market economy, a member of the EU, a modern post-industrial information society with a high density of internet-users and mobile phones, etc.; the same kind of development many other Western European, especially Nordic, countries have undergone. But there was no preordained necessity for the libraries and their use to develop as they did even in these conditions.

A. Public libraries and the coming of the Finnish welfare state

Prehistory

As stated in the Introduction, many of the great changes in the Finnish public libraries are direct results of the Library Act of 1961, but there still remains the question: why was the law passed in the first place? An answer to this question would reveal a part of the general historical background of library development before the beginning of the welfare state era.

Laws are often reactions against older laws. This is also the case here. There was an older law, the first Finnish Library Act of 1928. In this the public libraries were still named “popular” or “people’s libraries” (in Finnish “kansankirjastot”, in Swedish “folkbiblioteken”), a term still used in the other Nordic countries, but abandoned in Finland in favour of “public libraries”. The law of 1928 was a good law in its own time. It made possible the spreading of libraries throughout the country by giving grants to municipal libraries of up to 50 % of the expenditures, in some cases up to 90%. The law of 1928 was of great importance in bringing the library services to every corner of the country and securing a minimum level, but its weakest point was the absolute upper limit to the state grants. After many years of inflation the maximum state grant became meaningless. The law outlived itself. (Concerning the era of the Library Act of 1928, see Eskola’s and Järvelin’s articles in this volume and more in detail in Järvelin 1998).

The new law was passed after a frustrating 10-year period of waiting in 1961. It was perhaps worth waiting for, because, in the context of other societal changes and growing financial resources, it really opened the flood gates. The law of 1961 started a new era for Finnish public libraries and created the library network existing today. There have been new library laws in 1986 and 1998 but they merely stated what had already happened in reality. The law of 1961 created a new reality.

The law of 1961 is best understood in the context of the Finnish welfare state. Even its prehistory is closely connected with the first plans to create welfare systems in Finland. There were some attempts to establish welfare institutions even before the Second World War; the old age pension system was adopted, but in practical terms the creation of the welfare state was accomplished after the war. There have been two distinct phases in the construction of Finnish welfare society after the Second World War. The first took place immediately after the war, when there were huge social problems to be solved, such as resettling the 400,000 Karelian refugees from the area ceded to the Soviet Union, finding work and accommodation for men returning from the front and taking care of the inva-

lids, widows and orphans. To solve these and other problems important institutions and systems were created. The war had also created a new sense of solidarity in a society that previously had been rather hierarchical and a certain mistrust between the classes had been a fact, partly as a heritage of the Civil War of 1918. The years immediately after the war have been characterized as the Finnish “New Deal”, but in fact it was not America that was the chief source of ideas but the UK with its Beveridge plan and other initiatives for a welfare state, the public library being a part of it.

It was a near thing that even public libraries gained a place in the reforms. After a parliamentary initiative attention had been directed to the public libraries that had been neglected during the war, when subsidies were cut down. A committee was set up in 1946 to prepare a new legislation for the municipal public libraries. It worked very thoroughly and in 1949 produced an ambitious report, where a well argued plan for a new library legislation was proposed. The committee gathered information from other countries, mostly from the Scandinavian neighbours, but British plans to develop libraries into cultural centres were also mentioned.

Unfortunately, when the committee submitted its report, the hottest reform era had already cooled towards the end of the 1940's. Despite the brilliant report the reform of the library law was put aside for ten years, even if there were repeated initiatives in Parliament to revive the reform. Sometimes it was the short-livedness of the governments that prevented the law from being introduced, other times it was the Ministry of Finance that deemed the reform too costly. Generally, the 1950's were characterized by a steady economic growth but also by weak governments and a lack of major reforms in society. So libraries had to wait and the librarian's profession became frustrated.

But after ten years the dust was blown off from the covers of the report and the proposition of the committee was introduced to Parliament basically in the same form as it was originally printed. The order of the paragraphs was altered and some things had been changed, but it was recognizable as the old proposition. During earlier decades Parliament had been rather reluctant to direct resource-

es to the libraries, but this time it was even more open-handed than the government that formally introduced the proposition. Partly this can be explained by the bad conscience of the politicians: for such a long time they had let the libraries down. In the parliamentary debate it was said that it was time to “pay the debt” to the libraries.

Some of the political parties had changed their opinions about giving resources to libraries. The Agrarian Union, representing a large part of the rural population, had before the war been rather unwilling to spend state or municipal money on other than basic needs and had been against increasing the number of civil servants in the rural municipalities. Now it was ready to accept the law, because its benefits so clearly and openly were intended for the rural municipalities. In fact, the Minister of Education presenting the legislation to Parliament was a member of the Agrarian Union; the same man, Heikki Hosia, in 1962 became the chair of the Finnish Library Association. The changed attitude of the Agrarian Union also indicates that Finnish non-socialist political forces were beginning to be receptive to the coming of the welfare state, i.e. spending more money for the well-being of the people. Left-wing parties had always been more eager to spend on social reforms and culture.

During the parliamentary debate concerning the law an influential member of the Agrarian Union, Johannes Virolainen, said about the library law that it was “an important part of the cultural reconstruction” that one and a half decades after the war was finally set in motion. He even anticipated that “we have to be prepared in the coming years to spend on cultural matters year after year an ever increasing amount of our total expenditures. If this doesn’t happen, if we cannot allocate enough money to cultural goals, then we shall without mercy be left behind in the tough competition that is going on everywhere in the world among free nations.” Even if he used the phrase “among free nations”, it may as well have meant “between competing ideologies”, alluding thus to the great shock-wave after the launching of Sputnik in 1957, when western societies became afraid that they were losing ground on the cultural and educational front. Some later analysts have seen in the whole construction of the welfare society a move in the ideological struggle (Raimo

Väyrynen in Suomi 2017, p. 382–383, Olavi Riihinen in Suomi 2017, p. 681).

In that way the passing of the Library Act of 1961 can be seen as anticipating the wave of societal reforms that started a new phase in the construction of the Finnish welfare state following the Nordic model. After the library law there came a number of important social political and educational reforms. Thus, we can say that the Library Act of 1961 was both a remnant of the first reform period after the war and at the same time an early herald of the new welfare state. This duality explains both the phenomenal success of the law and some of its faults, especially its strongly bureaucratic character.

What kind of a country Finland was in the beginning of the 1960's?

In the beginning of the 1960's Finland was a market economy with solid democratic institutions, but in many ways the country was self-centred, regulated and controlled in ways that nowadays would seem strange, even suffocating. Traditional authoritarian practices in the relationships between the authorities and the public, teachers and pupils, libraries and their patrons, were approximately the same as in the beginning of the century when Finland became independent (1917). The standard of living was low in comparison with the Nordic neighbours. Finland was not yet a modern, liberal industrial nation such as Sweden, the mirror in which we are used to scrutinize our own image. Finland was definitely not a nation on the move.

For a long time after its Nordic neighbours Finland retained a large share of population that lived in the rural areas and worked in the agricultural-forestry occupations. A small share of the workforce was working in service occupations.

Breakdown of labour force by branches of industry in Finland 1930–1996 (%)

	1930	1950	1960	1970	1980	1993	1996
Agriculture and forestry	65	46	35	20	13	8	7
Manufacturing and construction	20	29	31	36	35	29	28
Services	15	25	33	43	52	63	65

(Source: *Blom & Melin, p. 7*)

The final modernization of Finland was started in the beginning of the 1960's. Finnish society was opening up to the influences from abroad, the welfare state was beginning to be a realistic goal and the first steps in economic integration were taken. Finland became a member of EFTA and the OECD, the common Nordic labour market was established. In the early 1970's a free trade agreement with the EEC was signed.

After a long time of stagnation there were extremely rapid changes and a couple of traumatic periods. The first was the great move from the rural areas into urban centres, when hundreds of thousands left their small farms in the eastern and northern parts of the country and moved to cities in the South of Finland and also to Sweden, because the Finnish labour market could not absorb all of them. Most of the Finns now living have a rural or agricultural background personally or through their parents. The second great trauma was the deep economic depression of the 1990's, about which more later. The changes have also meant that the Finnish class structure and economic outlook have changed from a situation characteristic of many East European countries to a more West European structure, nearer to its Nordic neighbours. (About the development of the Finnish society, see Suomi 2017.)

The same development has taken place in many other countries, but the unique aspect in Finland is that it began so late and was so rapid. Until the 1960's the nation was hesitating whether or not to step onto the inevitable road of modernity, which was full of promi-

ses but also full of threats. When the change once began, it was dramatic.

The conquering middle class

If we look more closely at the changes in the class structure in Finland we can see an essential rise of the middle class, especially the lower middle class, white collar employees, and even the other classes have begun more and more to resemble the middle class in their lifestyle. One of the factors behind the rise of the middle class has been the growth of the public sector. Recently its growth has stagnated, but the rise of the white collar employees – in administration, planning, office work, services – in the private sector continues. (Matti Alestalo in Suomi 2017, pp. 209–226.)

After the Second World War and especially after the 1960's until the crisis of the 1990's the differences in living standard and lifestyle of the Finnish classes diminished. This has been accomplished through taxation and redistribution of income (various benefits, regional subsidies etc.). Even if the differences of income did not disappear and used to be, until recently, greater than in other Nordic countries, the Finnish classes are rather homogenous: the rich are not outrageously rich and the poor are not wretched (although there are some alarming signs). Even in cultural habits there are no striking differences, although the finer things tend to be consumed by the upper middle class. (Alestalo *ibid.* p. 219.)

Bourgeois values and lifestyle (e.g. planning one's life, investing in quality of living, avoiding dangerous behaviour etc.) penetrated large parts of the population, but there is no longer the same exclusive, elitistic upper middle class as persisted during the 1950's. From the point of view of this paper, the important thing is that the new middle class has adopted the public library as its favourite institution, which it was not necessarily even during the 1950's.

Welfare state à la finlandaise

A welfare state is defined as a state that has a large responsibility for its citizen's welfare and social security and that functions in a relatively prosperous society. The concept includes not only the state but also the municipalities. Many experts say that there is a distinct Nordic type of welfare state with Sweden as its finest example. Its characteristics include more far-reaching political tools to control society and a larger field of operation for the state than in other countries. The Nordic model is also characterized by universalism: the services are offered to the whole population, not only to clearly delineated target groups. Health, education and social services are mostly taken care of by the public sector. The pursuit of equality has a high status and the redistribution of income is used to attain it. (Hannu Uusitalo in Suomi 2017, p. 337–353.) As we know the universalism of services was an essential feature of the public library long before the birth of the welfare state. In this respect it has pioneered the welfare state.

Because of a certain retardedness in Finnish society compared to our Nordic neighbours, especially the Swedes, there have been some symptomatic differences in the construction of the welfare state. In other Nordic countries the welfare state was constructed through cooperation between the labour movement and the political forces representing the farmers, but definitely with the labour movement, the social democrats, as the leading force: a struggle between the labour movement and the capitalists, thus an ideological battle. In Finland it has not been so clear-cut.

The influence of the farmers and middle class has been considered important regarding the universalism of the services. Finland became industrialized later than her Nordic neighbours and because of that the rural population and independent farmers were long into the 1960's a more important political force than in the other Nordic countries. The rural and agrarian political forces were for the most part channelled through the Agrarian Union, today called the Centre Party. (Uusitalo, 344.) In Sweden the party of the same name has declined into a marginal factor in politics, but in Finland it

still continues to be a major party, one of the Big Three (the Social Democrats, the Centre Party and the Coalition Party), occasionally even bigger than the Social Democrats. The secret of the success of the Centre Party is that it has never been a totally agrarian or farmers' party. The number of the farmers is so low that they could not sustain a large party, not for many decades. The Centre Party is essentially a regional party representing the rural parts of the country and it is especially strong in the rural municipalities. Previously the Communist Party or People's Democrats also had a certain support in the rural areas (forest workers etc.). The construction of the welfare state was never left solely into the hands of the Social Democrats. A special feature of the Finnish case is that the employers also had a certain role in the shaping of the welfare state, especially in the forming of the work pension system. (About multipolarity in the creation of the welfare state in Finland, see Uusitalo *ibid.*)

The creation of the Finnish welfare state has been an interplay between industrial Finland and rural Finland, i.e. between the social policy and the regional policy, like a pair of horses forced by circumstances to drag the cart in the same direction. The benefits have been distributed not only in urban centres but also in rural municipalities. This explains the stately library buildings in the remote rural municipalities. The construction of many of those buildings was financed by the Ministry of Labour, not by the Ministry of Education.

With an active regional policy the politicians tried to keep the whole country inhabited: the tools that were used included decentralization of government offices and works, establishment of higher education institutions all over the country, supporting the transport of newspapers, keeping a post office in every community, compensating the differences in the economic situation of municipalities by state subsidies. This was well in line with the equalizing ideals of the welfare state: equal opportunities for all regardless of where they happen to live. Since the beginning of the 1990's regional policy and many other regional equalizing measures have lost more and more of their political support.

During the heyday of regional policy in the field of libraries, it was especially library buildings that profited. It was a matter where the government, even an individual minister could direct the distribution of the annual resources, at least deciding the order in which the projects were realized. The busiest period of library construction, the 1970's and 1980's, has been characterized as "a boom of cultural investments unparalleled in the history of Finnish municipal history" (Matti Kuusi). A new library building always gives a boost to circulation numbers. Many Finnish rural as well urban communities have had a new or renovated building and without exception it has always given a tremendous rise to the circulation statistics. Finnish library architecture has also attracted attention abroad.

Besides the direct effects of regional policy, there were important side-effects connected with the establishment of welfare services in the rural regions. When new jobs demanding academic education – teachers, social workers, engineers and also librarians – opened up in the rural municipalities, they served simultaneously to increase the number of those with a steady income and who are socially and culturally active, who have individual habits in consumption, hobbies and reading. Implanting the avant-garde in the countryside, so to say.

The construction of the welfare state could not have been accomplished without a growth in the resources available to the state. When the GNP and tax revenues started to grow rapidly, more resources were available to be used to welfare services. This meant the state's growing involvement in social security, education etc. We can see it in the growth of the public expenditures in GNP. Education and health services were the areas where the most rapid growth took place.

The share of the public expenditures in GNP (in Finland)

1950	26.1 %
1960	28.5%
1970	32.9%
1975	39.7 %
1980	39.2
1985	41.1 %

(Source: Jaakko Nousiainen in *Suomi 2017*, p. 254.)

The Library Act of 1961

The Library Act of 1961 was about money and the control of the use of money. There was no more an upper limit for state subsidies, but the use of money was tightly controlled by the library authorities. Whereas the largest cities and a number of towns had been able to develop their libraries to an advanced level with their own resources, the level where most of the rural municipalities started was very low. The municipal administration and service production during the 1950's and at the beginning of the 1960's was still poorly developed, nothing to compare with the modern municipal administration with tens or hundreds of civil servants and employees and a whole range of services.

In the law of 1961 financing of the libraries was raised to the same level as that of elementary schools. Rural municipalities were especially favoured, they were to get two-thirds of the "approved expenditures" as state subsidies, cities and towns only one third. Some special services, such as hospital libraries, were given an even more generous subsidy, 90%. Bookmobiles were also mentioned in the law. They would later revolutionize the library network. The law also directed special allowances to the construction and repairing of library buildings. The long-awaited network of regional central libraries was also authorized.

The central administration for library matters remained poorly staffed even under the new law, as it still is in Finland. There were only the director and 2–3 other staff at the State Library Bureau that administratively was located in the National Board of Schools. During some critical periods a larger personnel in the planning and management of library matters would have made it easier to lead the development of public libraries along clearer paths, e.g. when the question of a common automatic system for Finnish public libraries was at stake and could not be solved positively.

In retrospect, the law of 1961 seems generous, even lavish and it is absolutely sure that no such law could be accepted today. Was it really lavish or is it an illusion? At the time of its adoption, the law was indeed welcome and it raised hopes for a bright future for

libraries in Finland, but in fact it was not really considered anything extraordinary. K.C. Harrison in the mid-1960's was quite laudatory in his evaluation of the law. He wrote that "the new Act of 1961, which came into force the following year, was a really progressive and welcome measure", but he didn't regard it as something lavish. He even found flaws in the law, e.g. that the special grant to regional central libraries was stated in the law as an absolute figure and was in danger of losing its value. (Harrison 1969, p. 228.)

The truth seems to be that the level where most of the rural municipal libraries started was so low that drastic measures were needed. The law had to be inviting for the municipalities, which were not eager to invest even their share, one third of the expenditures. The financing of the libraries was minimal at the time, as was also the rest of the service production in the municipalities. Nobody could predict the tremendous growth of the municipal welfare services during the next ten to twenty years. Without the growth of the municipal economy and the general willingness to put more money into the service production in society during the 1960's and beyond, there would not have been such a growth in public libraries either.

The success of the libraries can be seen more or less as a by-product of the construction of the welfare society. We can assume that, if the law had already been passed during the 1950's, the development of libraries would not have been such an immediate success as during the 1960's and even more during the 1970's, when many factors in the creation of the welfare state were beginning to be felt, such as the comprehensive school system, the rise of higher education, plus also the general liberalization of the cultural climate in the country.

B. What has happened in the public libraries of Finland during the last 40 years?

Caveant consules

The new law loosened the pursestrings of the state, but resources could not flow without control and guidance, the more so as the administrative ability of the municipalities was weak and librarians in the rural areas were mostly part-time. The state's regional authorities, the library inspectors, were in a central position when the new law was implemented. (Regarding library inspectors I am greatly indebted to Ilmi Järvelin's thorough history of library inspection, Järvelin 1992)

The inspectors had already existed under the old law, and in fact the same persons continued in their positions and large districts, but now they were given more powers and more work. They also knew how to use their powers and authority to promote libraries according to the then prevailing library ideology which was a mixture of American public library ideals, remnants of the old moralistic Finnish nationalism and aesthetic conservatism.

The inspectors were also given strong sanctions to ensure that the message got through. If the municipalities were reluctant to comply with their advice, they could notify the regional authorities or the Ministry of Education or the National Board of Schools. The ultimate sanction available was the loss of state subsidies. This was used as a threat, but sometimes it was actually put into practice. Libraries taken care of by part-time librarians, a huge majority in the rural areas, were closely controlled. Library directors in the larger urban libraries often felt that the inspectors and the whole system was a nuisance and complained that urban libraries did not get as much support as the rural libraries, especially for library buildings.

What is suitable literature for public libraries?

In some cases the system led to tragicomic disputes. Disagreement concerning what literature was suitable to be purchased for the library using state subsidies culminated in the mid-1960's. Some libraries had wanted to buy light novels with state subsidies. The inspectors involved and the National Board of Schools decided that such literature was not an acceptable use of state money. The municipalities did not comply and the case proceeded as high as it could. The Supreme Administrative Court ruled the case in favour of the library authorities.

A library inspector in her published memoirs describes the dispute in words that illustrate the old attitude of the library professionals vis-à-vis the formally unqualified part-time librarians, municipal administrators and politicians and the general public:

Especially during the 1960's and 1970's there were hardly any library meetings, where a discussion about [the selection of books] did not take place. There was always some member of the municipal library board who stood up from his chair and asked, why books by Netta Muskett, novels for adults by Anni Polva [a Finnish light novelist who also wrote children's books] or Golon's Anquélique-series were not allowed in the libraries. A circumstance that contributed to the matter was that libraries in rural communities had part-time librarians, in other words those who selected the books and their "aids", the members of the library board, lacked a knowledge of literature. The library might be taken care of by a farmer's wife, who herself was fond of love stories and wanted, according to her inclinations, rather one-sidedly to purchase them for her library. Members of the library board had been chosen on political grounds. In the rural areas they were most often farmers, for whom it was enough to read local newspapers in the evening. There were no prerequisites for the demanding task of book selection. (Wigell 1994, p. 63–64.)

This was a typical expert-layman relation: the expert knows which books are valuable and he or she should have the authority to have his way. The denial of the state subsidy for light novels did not mean censorship as such, because with their own money the mu-

nicipalities could buy what books they wanted. Urban libraries had so many resources of their own that they could ignore the opinion of the library inspectors. To be fair, one must also remember the cases when library inspectors defended the librarians' choices against narrow-minded local politicians. If we want to look for overt censorship in the Finnish public libraries we have turn our eyes to the years immediately after the Second World War, when the allied control commission, practically Soviet authorities, demanded that books hostile to the Soviet Union and otherwise unsuitable books should be removed from the shelves of the libraries (about this action, see Ekholm 2001).

Later, when the number of professional full-time librarians grew, such disputes vanished. The academically trained librarians had more authority both in the face of their local library boards and library inspectors. They could also back their book selection with theoretical arguments. Of course, the resources of the libraries also grew so much that there was no longer any point in having disputes about individual books. Nowadays the very same or similar books that were condemned by the Supreme Administrative Court are found on the shelves of any library. The book selection principles have undergone a complete revision since the 1960's and many genres that were not accepted in the library are now freely available. But this doesn't mean that the high loan statistics have been accomplished by offering only light reading material. On the contrary, the share of novels among the books borrowed has been declining in favour of non-fiction, and the library collections are universally regarded as many-sided and of high quality (although the economicaly meagre years during the 1990's were harmful in this respect).

Library ideology

The golden age of the Finnish public libraries began when the dominant library ideology still was rather moralistic and intended to edify, it then proceeded, along with the professionalization, towards liberalism. The library was regarded as a neutral channel letting the people make individual choices. Not even the radical leftist period

during the 1970's and 1980's could shake this ideology. People were allowed and they themselves took the right to make more individual choices in what they read, how they used their leisure time, what things they bought etc. This happened both in libraries and in all other fields of society.

The changing professional attitudes are clearly illustrated in the evolution of music libraries, a new and prominent field, where the librarians are especially dedicated to their work. Sanna Talja in her recent doctoral thesis studied the musical world views of both the music librarians and the patrons. The short history of music libraries (in the modern sense) in Finland can be divided into three consecutive periods. During the pioneering period, the 1950's and the 1960's, dominant influences came from outside the library profession, foremost from an enthusiastic composer, Seppo Nummi, whose views were adopted when new music sections were established in the libraries. Music to him was exclusively western classical music. According to his recommendation 90 % of the collection of recordings should be western classical music, the rest might be jazz and folk music. These ideas were challenged during the 1970's by music sociologists, who advocated the music library as a place where alternative music styles could live side by side presenting a counterbalance both to the classical music and to the commercial music industry. Music librarians were rather eager to adopt this new view, because the original elitist way of building the collections did not appeal to the public. Since the 1980's the discussion about the nature of the music libraries has been confined to the circle of professional music librarians. They have adopted the common user-centred attitude but not a totally demand-based acquisition. They advocate a wide-ranging collection.

According to Sanna Talja's study there exists an astonishing unity in the views of the librarians and the users. Both librarians and users accept a pluralistic view: it is not only demand that counts. Even the most fervent enthusiasts of a certain music style do not demand that only that kind of music should be acquired, even if it means that their own wishes are not always met. (Talja 1998.) It may be that this total agreement is dependent on the desire to se-

cure a legitimatization for the library: even the users are aware that libraries can nowadays maintain their high status only if they can show a serious, rationalistic image in combination with high use statistics.

In recent years the old moralistic ideology has been creeping back through the back door. To legitimize their existence, libraries must take part in the mobilization of the people in the great international competition of nations, which entails that public libraries must show a respectable and serious image, not being merely “lending libraries of light novels” but focal points of information retrieval.

Library inspectors show the way

As the operation of the libraries became livelier, the tasks of the library inspectors grew. Many were the things, great and small, that required their attention: ensuring that the positions were filled with competent people, controlling the book selection, even checking the book receipts, reading the annual reports of the libraries, inspecting the premises, giving personal guidance to the librarians and trying to make the municipal administrators grant more money to the library etc. (Järvelin 1992, s. 264.) They also offered courses for those who wanted to become part-time librarians. During the first decade of the new law, the role of the library inspectors was important in the rural areas and remained so until the rural communities got their full-time qualified librarians. The employment of full-time librarians was often preceded by intensive opinion formation by the library inspector and help with the formalities was also often needed. In urban libraries their role was not so important, and sometimes they were regarded as a nuisance.

Library inspectors met regularly for discussions and agreed on norms and 5-year development programmes for rural libraries. The emphasis in the programmes changed from year to year. During the years 1968–1969 for example the special theme was rationalization. The municipalities were asked to scrutinize the effectiveness of their library network and especially evaluate if the small branch libraries or a part of them could be replaced by mobile libraries. The

large scale advent of the mobile libraries during the 1960's and 1970's revolutionized the municipal library networks and effectively increased the circulation.

Bookmobiles revolutionize the local library network

The number of libraries rose until the mid-1960's to over 4,000, but fell dramatically and was under one thousand at the end of the century.

Number of libraries

year	
1960	4007
1970	3015
1980	1608
1990	1151
1998	970

(Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Finland 1998 & Kirjastot-Biblioteken-Libraries 1998.*)

The loss was compensated by the service given by mobile libraries. Their number of stops increased almost fourfold in twelve years (1969: 5,400; 1981: 20,000). Mobile libraries made the greatest difference in the rural areas, but they also had an important role to play in the fast growing urban suburbs. Mobile libraries cleared away hundreds of small branch libraries and their unqualified part-time librarians. In 1963 there were only two mobile libraries in the country, at the end of the decade their number was already near 90

Number of mobile libraries

year	
1960	-
1970	89
1980	221
1990	232
1998	208

(Source: *Statistical Yearbook for Finland 1998 & Kirjastot-Biblioteken-Libraries 1998.*)

The regional central libraries

On a national scale the library network was restructured by the regional central libraries. The start faltered. The reasons were both economic and qualitative, because it was thought that the rights and duties of the regional central library demanded that the library in question have proper premises and be otherwise in good condition. The first nomination to regional central library was given to Joensuu City Library in 1962, then it took four years before the next one was inaugurated. The building of the network of regional central libraries was begun from the eastern and northern parts of the country. Nowadays there are 19 regional central libraries (plus Mariehamn City Library in the autonomous province of Åland). Besides regional central libraries, the Helsinki City Library has served since 1981 as the national central library for the public libraries.

In each of the regional central libraries a special person dedicated her time to taking care of the regional library network. The duties have included supporting the local librarians through education, meetings and discussion, and channelling the regional inter-library lending. During the manual era the inter-library lending procedure used to be hierarchical, so that the local libraries sent their requests to the regional central library that held the union catalogues and other facilities. The regional central library distributed the requests to appropriate libraries, both public and academic. Nowadays inter-library lending is no longer so hierarchical, because union catalogues are in the WWW and libraries can send their requests directly to the appropriate library.

Because of the dual function of the Finnish regional central libraries (both a city library and a regional central library), the effect of the system is not easily seen in the loan statistics. Their importance is still universally appreciated, because they strengthen the cohesion of the library profession, channel new innovations, help to focus the attention of local librarians and formulate reactions to questions that need some kind of a collective answer. Thus the effect is more structural than directly quantifiable.

Effects of the Act of 1961 in the rural areas

One of the most important results of the Law of 1961 was that the difference between towns and rural communities in regard to circulation per head was equalized by the beginning of the 1980's. Supply and use of the library services in the rural areas rose to the level of urban municipalities despite the rapid growth that took place simultaneously in the urban libraries. During the 1970's the increase in circulation in the rural areas was threefold and in the towns double. (Hovi 1984, p. 69, 41.)

In her statistical analysis (1984) of the library development during the years 1969–1981, Irmeli Hovi could state that “in medium-sized and large rural municipalities (more than 6,000 inhabitants) there existed, almost without exception, in the beginning of the 1980's a mobile library and a full-time librarian and also a large part of the premises were new. Library use has grown quantitatively but it has also changed qualitatively. Collections of recordings and periodicals have come side by side with books and among the types of literature it is the circulation of adult non-fiction that has grown most.” (Hovi 1984, p. 69–70) According to her analysis the strongest statistical factors that explained the growth in circulation were the amount of money invested in the library and the employment of a full-time librarian. The most lively circulation was found in middle-sized towns (20,000–65,000 inhabitants). In big towns, which in Finland means over 65,000 inhabitants, the increase was not big, because there the library services had already earlier been on a high level. (Hovi 1984, p. 42–44.)

It is also important to note that rural children found their way to the library, often to the mobile library. We must remember that Finland at that time still was a land of villages, villages that had only a handful of houses far apart from each other: Finland was still the same “immense ‘lonely’ country” as described in early 1950's by Lionel McColvin (since then it has become even lonelier when people have been moving to the urban areas). The share of children among the users was high. An average child of 5–14 years in 1981 borrowed some 50 books per year (14 books in 1965): this was three to four times as high as among the adults. And in 1977 the

love of reading among the rural children rose above that of urban children. (Hovi 1984, p. 67.)

Of course there were negative features in the development. Despite good intentions many small municipalities were lagging behind. The implementation of the Library Act was also too bureaucratic and the position of the central administration for library matters was considered to be too close to school administration.

Accelerating growth in the 1970's

The work started during the 1960's began really to produce harvest during the 1970's. Circulation rose twofold during the 1970's (from 32 millions to 72 millions).

Circulation per head 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980–2000

1950	1.5
1960	3.4
1970	7.1
1980	15.1
1981	15.7
1982	16.1
1983	16.2
1984	15.6
1985	16.4
1986	17.0
1987	17.6
1988	18.1
1989	17.3
1990	17.3
1991	17.9
1992	19.3
1993	19.7
1994	20.2
1995	20.1
1996	20.5
1997	20.0
1998	19.6
1999	19.3
2000	19.9

(Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Finland 1998, Kirjastot–Biblioteken–Libraries 1998, 1999 & 2000: <http://www.kirjastot.fi/showhierarchy.asp?hid=1871>)*

Planning on all levels: the libraries emerge from isolation

A will to direct the development systematically and according to precise plans was an inherent part of the modernization process. During the 1960's and even more during the 1970's systematic planning of activities, financing and construction projects developed on all levels of Finnish society. It is no wonder then that libraries and their administration was caught in the thickening web of planning systems. This applied equally to the central administration on ministerial level (with the Ministry of Finance setting the trend), to the regional level, where library inspectors were working, and to the municipal level.

The integration of the library inspectors with the regional bureaucracy is an illustration of how library matters escaped their isolation and became parts of a greater whole – some may say that they lost their independence. Since the law of 1928 library inspectors had been their own masters in their districts and their nearest superior was the State Library Bureau in the capital city. They even had their office at home. During the first decade of the new law they continued as before, even if the Library Bureau administratively was a part of the National Board of Schools. In the beginning of the 1970's all inspection of libraries, schools, social work etc. was centralized in the provincial administrative boards. The technicalities of the legislation determined that library inspectors became “school inspectors inspecting libraries”. They were now civil servants among other civil servants. The new state of affairs was nevertheless to the advantage of the libraries, because a broader perspective was opened up for the inspectors, more communication between different branches of administration. The same applies to other levels of administration and planning, at least during the years of growth, when the most important thing was to allocate new resources in the best possible way.

The more precise context of the planning of library development was the educational and cultural planning beginning in the 1960's and continuing even stronger in the 1970's. A good illustration of the new context of library planning at the highest level was a commit-

tee planning a new library legislation, the committee was named “The Library Committee of 1973”. In its report (1975) it referred to a whole range of other educational and cultural committees and planning processes, which in their turn took library planning into consideration. Libraries were meant to serve the general societal goals set in the public debate, Parliament and in the government. Unfortunately the energy crisis and the subsequent economic difficulties retarded the progress of the planning systems and reforms and caused a paradigm shift in society, the effects of which slowly began to change the direction of the administrative system.

After the centralizing tendency had gone far enough, an opposite trend in the administration was beginning to be felt during the last years of the 1970’s. Power and responsibility were more and more removed from the central administration to the municipalities. In the end the central administration of libraries, which during the 1990’s was removed from the National Board of Schools to the Department of Cultural Affairs at the Ministry of Education, became even weaker than it had been before. At times there was only one person to take care of public library matters in the Ministry of Education. Library inspectors lost quite a lot of their previous routine tasks, which nobody complained about because their job had been frustratingly bureaucratic indeed. On the other hand they got more planning duties. These changes in the administration plus changes in the state subsidy system to the municipalities (beginning from 1978) literally forced the adoption of a new library act in 1986, which more than presenting new ideas, recorded changes that already had taken place in reality. In any case the law of 1961, the administrative ideas of which came, as we have seen, from the 1940’s, was completely outdated, so it was ripe for relegation to history. (As before, my chief source on the library inspectors is Järvelin 1992.)

The training of librarians

The development in the libraries also led to a growing demand for academically trained staff and, conversely, the more numerous, com-

petent library profession has been one of the decisive factors securing the successful growth. Before World War II there had been occasional courses of a few months for full-time librarians and shorter courses for part-time librarians. Since 1945, a pre-academic one-year diploma course was established in the School of Social Sciences in Helsinki. In the beginning of the 1960's the institution moved to Tampere, where it became the University of Tampere. In 1971 a chair in Library and Information Science (now Information Studies) was established there. Later new chairs in the discipline were established in the Swedish-speaking University Åbo Academy in Turku (where Swedish-speaking education in librarianship was moved from Helsinki) and the University of Oulu.

In the development of academic library education Finland has not followed its Scandinavian neighbours, where there have traditionally existed separate library schools without strong emphasis on research. The Scandinavian library schools have offered an all-round curriculum in many fields that are needed by future librarians, e.g. literature, administration etc. In Finland the departments of information studies at the universities have concentrated on research and core courses of the discipline, i.e. information retrieval, information seeking and later also information management. Students of information studies have had to take literature, computer science, general administration etc. as minor subjects in the other departments of their respective universities. Some areas in the education, e.g. children, hospital and senior librarianship, have been neglected.

The Finnish version of library education has qualitatively been successful, because it has been possible to combine research in the field with the education of future librarians. On the other hand the concentration on the core areas has somewhat narrowed the cultural side of the education. This may reflect in a more general sense the business-like character of Finnish public librarianship, where working solutions in the serving of masses have been more important than individual, more socially geared services to special groups.

The 1980's: fears of stagnation

The 1980's was a sort of an interim period, when there were even some years of stagnation in the growth of circulation. Librarians were plagued by self-scrutiny: "Why do libraries exist?", they were asking themselves. The first signs of the information society became visible: did that mean the end of libraries? One of the major structural changes was that the state subsidy system was changed, it was integrated into the general system of state subsidies to municipalities. The system has since then evolved to be more and more dependent on certain mechanistically calculable properties of the municipalities, nowadays chiefly the number of inhabitants and the structure of settlement.

During the 1980's librarians and library scientists were worried, because the circulation statistics that during previous decades had grown tremendously now began to stagnate and there were even years when the curve turned downwards. Reasons were found in the modest efforts to curb the growth in library expenditures or in the evolving lifestyles of the people: when people earn more money their consumption patterns change and they find new, more individual ways of spending their increasing leisure time. Others thought that the stagnating circulation was caused by the fact that those children who had been the most eager library users, had grown past the reading age. (Hovi 1984, Vakkari 1983b.)

Libraries and schools

As we have seen, the growth in library use among children was great. More and more children had the opportunity to use libraries and an ever growing number among them had the possibility to continue their education longer than the children of the past generations. During the whole history of the Finnish public libraries the relation between schools and libraries, between school libraries and public libraries, between school teachers and librarians has been a sensitive issue. Librarians have tried to maintain the independence of their institution fearing that the larger and more powerful profes-

sion would begin to dictate how libraries should function. The problematic relation extended from the central administration – whether the Library Bureau should administratively be set in the National Board of Schools or not – to the lowest local level, the smallest branch libraries.

The question whether school libraries and municipal libraries should be integrated was also debated. Municipal libraries were often situated in the school buildings and most of the rural part-time librarians were school teachers. Library professionals feared that something of the compulsory and disciplinary character of the primary school would be attached to the public library, if it was too close to the school organizationally or physically. Small branch libraries nevertheless usually functioned in the primary school buildings.

The committee that had laid the ground for the law of 1961 did not recommend the use of school libraries as general juvenile lending libraries, because in that case their use by young people might be diminished by the common – though unfounded, remarked the committee – patronizing image connected with everything that has something to do with the school system. The committee report continued: “Whereas in a public library the young person can feel that he or she has entered a new, more spacious atmosphere and among such books that open roads to new worlds after the compulsory school hours.” (Kom.miet. 1950:1, p. 64–65)

The image of school in the Finnish mind has been described in rather dramatic words by a sociologist (J. P. Roos) who has studied life stories written by Finnish people. Going to school seems to have been a serious crisis in the lives of many Finns. The pre-school years are often remembered as a light-hearted and lively period, but when children enter the school they have changed completely, they are shy and timid and those who are not will be subdued in school. “In this respect school has a dual role: on the one hand it is the central instrument in destroying self-esteem, on the other it is the institution that is expected to be the basis of a new self-esteem”, says Roos (Roos in Suomi 2017, p. 478). This last point is also important, because the spontaneous will of the Finns to educate their

children created a dense network of private (but state-subsidized) grammar schools that preceded the comprehensive school reform and made its introduction a relatively easy affair.

The school that Roos refers to bears the characteristics of the traditional, authoritarian primary school, the teachers of which often served as librarians. In this respect Roos' rather over-dramatized image of the school may belong to the past, because the education system has changed thoroughly, but in any case the public library has retained its image as an oasis of freedom and the library ideology adopted by the Finnish professional librarians since the 1960's has enhanced this image. It is still an open question what the transformation of the old school system into a new comprehensive school meant for the use of libraries. The change of system was made during the 1970's, a decade when the use of libraries soared to new records, but there were many parallel trends going on at the same time.

Studies of library use show that the higher the general level of education is, the higher is the use of libraries. Some specific results indicate that the role of the teacher is important in leading children from the lower social strata to use libraries. (Vakkari 1983a, p. 112.) The study referred to was based on data gathered in 1973, which means that the introduction of the comprehensive school system had not started on a large scale. It is probable that the comprehensive school, which extended compulsory education from the previous 6 years to 9 years, strengthened the propensity to use libraries as a channel for acquiring reading material.

Beginnings of library automation

The growth of library use also led to a demand for rationalized methods in library operations, which in turn enhanced the possibilities of serving an ever growing clientele even in the economically more austere times. There was an early start in the planning of library automation in Finland during the early 1970's; several committees and work groups planned the adoption of ADP technology in both public and academic libraries. The development that ensued was not an immediate success on either side of the library world, be-

cause of the reluctance of the government to invest in a controlled and planned adoption of ADP in libraries, but in the academic libraries there was at least a continuous will and effort to develop cooperation and general solutions, the positive results of which are seen even today.

In the field of municipal libraries, there were also initial plans made by a committee to proceed according to a common programme and attain some kind of unity, but these plans were not implemented. The reasons were partly economic: the Energy Crisis broke out at about the same time as the plans were made public. Some of the reasons are perhaps also to be found in the weakness of the central administration of the public libraries, there simply was not enough manpower to make things roll.

During the late 1970's there were individual pioneering projects in some big city libraries and also cooperation over the municipal boundaries in the library network of the Helsinki metropolitan area. Library automation began to spread in the Finnish public libraries during the 1980's as separate municipal projects and there has also been regional cooperation, but always only on the initiative of the municipalities themselves. The central organizations of the municipalities that had big economic interests at stake also played an important role in the development of library automation and centralized services. The central administration and the Ministry of Education of course encouraged cooperation. For the adoption of the Internet during the late 1990's, there has been a direct financing project by the Ministry of Education. Nowadays almost all Finnish public libraries have library automation and Internet connections.

During the economic depression of the 1990's, when the use of libraries rose markedly and at the same time the personnel costs were cut, it would have been difficult to attain the same kind of circulation statistics without the help of library automation. The many-faceted and sometimes dramatic history of library automation in the Finnish libraries remains yet to be written.

The 1990's: crisis and counter-attack

The 1990's is a story in itself. A severe economic depression took Finland in its grip and at its worst the unemployment rate rose over 20 %. The government started frantically to cut expenditures to convince the market forces that the country was able to fulfill its economic obligations. Regarding libraries, there were severe cuts in expenditures, no vacancies were filled and acquisitions fell. From 1991 to 1998 annual man-years in the Finnish public libraries fell from 4612 to 4193 (9 % decrease); at the same time the expenditures on acquisition fell almost by a fifth. But people kept streaming into the libraries and the use rose to new records year after year. The level of 20 loans per inhabitant was exceeded in 1994 and the circulation remained a little over or a little under that level even during the years when the economic situation has improved: the good times have at least not yet decreased the success of the libraries to a great degree. If there had been any doubts about the meaning and function of the libraries during the 1980's, they were, at least for a few years, completely set aside during the crisis. The unemployed but also other people found a safe haven in libraries, where they could retain some of the freedom and warmth that the economic difficulties and a continuous stream of bad news seemed to threaten.

During the 1990's there were also other threats to libraries than direct financial cuts. The new system of state subsidies to municipalities seemed to jeopardize the position of the libraries. The development towards municipal autonomy concerning the use of the state subsidies continued to extremes: there was no more earmarked money. The municipalities can now decide how much money they invest in their libraries. The structure of the total sum of the state subsidy is still calculated using theoretical "unit expenditures" for library services, too, but that doesn't mean that the municipality has to use a certain sum on its library. On the other hand, according to the most recent library law (1998), it is the obligation of the municipality to ensure the availability of library services. This state of affairs calls for a system of evaluation of library services, which is beginning to be implemented.

There were threats that even the theoretical unit expenditure of libraries would be cut down, which would have been a severe symbolic blow against libraries, because it would have encouraged the municipalities to cut their library expenditures even more. Librarians were nevertheless able to turn the difficult situation to the advantage of libraries with successful publicity campaigns. The public backed them warmly. That didn't mean more money, but at least the worst attacks against free library services were repulsed. The middle class rallied to defend the libraries.

Some of the library people's actions were quite spectacular. The climax of the library campaigns was perhaps in 1994, when the Finnish Library Association had decided to have the 200th year jubilee of Finnish public libraries. The ground for the jubilee was in itself an example of the innovativeness of the Finnish librarians. They chose as the first Finnish public library, not one of the patriarchal parish libraries of the 19th century, but the subscription library established in 1794 in the town Vaasa, a library which was a cross between a *Lesebibliothek* of a reading society and a commercial lending library. It definitely was not a "people's library", meant for the lower classes, but it was a splendid example of a library established by a community for its collective use and also, although under certain economic conditions, available to the general public, with a wide-ranging collection, a true predecessor of the later public libraries.

The jubilee got a lot of publicity and strengthened the positive image of the libraries. During the same year a public appeal "for Reading and Libraries" was signed by almost 570,000 persons, more than 11 % of the population. To the triumphs of the decade can also be added the lowering of the V.A.T. on books from 22 % to 8 %. The new library act of 1998 can also be seen as favourable to the libraries. It guaranteed free services at least in the traditional sense, required that at least the librarian in charge should have an academic librarian's education, and showed the way towards future opportunities, such as network services.

An incident during the last years of the 1990's showed how deep the goodwill of the libraries is in the hearts of general public.

The omnipotent Minister of Finance asked in an interview quite casually: “Why don’t we charge for the use of libraries when there is a fee for using the health centre?” His intention was to create a well argued debate on municipal services, but instead of it he was overwhelmed by a massive and loud NO from the media and the general public, and ate his words. It is very difficult for a politician to propose anything directly detrimental regarding libraries.

On the other hand there are many indirect threats to libraries promising difficulties in the future, e.g. the decreasing state subsidies to the municipalities, copyright matters of the electronic media, lowering of the required competence of the work-force etc. Some doubts concerning the future of libraries have crept back into the general discussion with the current and future development of network services. A certain, at least temporary, advantage was gained for the libraries when the government chose them to be gateways into network services. Public libraries were in this way connected with the strategies for entering the information society, to ensure equal access for all regardless of economic or geographical limitations. The future will show how far the government is prepared to go or whether the project was only a one-time affair. Of course it also depends on the libraries themselves: are they willing and able to reorganize their services according to new demands? It is useless to expect more money, so you have to manage with what you have or less. So far libraries have been able to walk on the tight-rope, providing the traditional services and investing in the new ones. The future is open.

Not an unqualified success

Although it is tempting to present the development of Finnish public libraries as a success story, we cannot close our eyes before the weaknesses and failures. Although the circulation has grown to record levels and has stayed, the negative side is that the variety of library services is not as well developed as, for example, in Sweden, where many socially engaging library services are offered to the public. During the last ten years, especially hospital libraries have

suffered after the special allowances for them were abolished. On the other hand people don't generally stay at hospitals as long as they used to stay during previous decades. School libraries have also been quite neglected.

Investments in the long range development of library collections have been rather difficult since the 1990's, when the allocations for acquisitions were cut with a heavy hand. For many years librarians have warned that this neglect of acquisition sooner or later is going to affect the circulation, but there has not been a dramatic decrease. Borrowing books home may no longer be the only or the best indicator of the performance of libraries. Finnish libraries have increased their net-services, it is easy to renew loans through the net, browse the catalogues and use other services without going to the library. All this could affect the circulation of books, but it seems that the increased use of libraries' net-services does not diminish lending.

In general the cultural climate in Finland has traditionally been more rugged than our western neighbours, and this has manifested itself among other things in the fact that much less money per head of the population has been put into libraries than in Sweden or Denmark. Finns tend to be proud of this, claiming that library services are produced more economically and effectively here, but I wonder if there is any real reason to be proud of this kind of stinginess. Nowadays libraries are, behind the façade of success, facing serious challenges in the harsher economic climate of the municipalities and this time they cannot expect any effective help from the state. One thing that has not been taken seriously yet is that the professionally competent work-force is nearing retirement, and very few new competent people have been recruited during the last ten years. A growing share of the students completing their education in the universities are going to work elsewhere, because the salaries in public libraries are so low. There are some semi-academic (polytechnic) professional programmes, but even they are insufficient. Nobody knows what is going to happen in the next ten years.

Conclusion

But still, even if Finnish society has not invested in its public libraries as much as the (in this respect) best Scandinavian countries and even if the success of the libraries has been produced by exploiting the low-salaried librarians and assistant librarians, even then the undeniable success of the Finnish public libraries remains a fact. What, then, is the ultimate explanation? Is there hope that the success will go on or, at least, that the libraries can go on fulfilling their function under the new circumstances? There certainly is no single explanation for what has happened in the past, but a network of conditions in interaction with each other. It may be the late multipolar dynamism of the Finnish welfare state, old traditions of self-education, the skill in organizing things typical for lucky small nations, the high professional level of the unprejudiced corps of librarians, etc. etc.; all this in combination. About the future it is hard to tell, because there are again so many things happening in Finnish society and around it that nobody can predict what is going to happen to its libraries. Librarians, library authorities and friends of libraries are at the moment pondering what would be the best strategy for the future. Judging from the past, they'll come up with something.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to many persons in connection with the writing of this article. I am happy to count among them: Eija Eskola, Ilmi Järvelin, Kirsti Kekki, Riitta Mäkinen, Samuli Nuotio, Pertti Vakkari and Anneli Äyräs. I have read an earlier version of this paper at a library history conference in Croydon in May 2000.

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Nekala Branch Library in Tampere during the 1950s.
Photo: Tampere City Museum, Photo Archives



Beginnings of modern music library activities at the Tampere City Library. A music teacher introduces a recording in the beginning of the 1960s.
Photo: Tampere City Museum, Photo Archives



Kirjastolehti (Library Journal) today, avidly following the developments in librarianship and library architecture.



Tuula Haavisto

ad astra – Will the Libraries Have a Starring Role in the Information Society?

The development of the information society is propelling the libraries and information services into the forefront of society more than any previous development. The information society refers to a situation in which information has become, or is about to become, the most important resource for work and activity. A situation which calls for more human brain than human brawn. Given that any society needing an extensive degree of literacy needs at least a rudimentary library institution to serve everyone, the task of the libraries – or comparable institutions – is emphasised in the present situation.

The need to collect, store, arrange and provide access to intellectual products, information and culture is increasing in size and complexity apace with the material. The uses to which information and culture can be put are likewise increasing in size and complexity. Never at any stage in the development of society has there been such an enormous requirement on the part of society for libraries and information services. Every country boasts reliable means of responding to the general need for information, to arrange the acquisition of scientific knowledge, to satisfy the information need of lifelong learning and to preserve the cultural heritage for posterity. Globalisation poses the same challenge for the developing countries, although their prospects of responding are considerably weaker.

Yet the libraries' focal position is not automatically the same everywhere. Factors bearing on this include the respective countries' library traditions, the professional body's own attitudes and activity and the political culture: how much weight, for example, is attached to democracy of the information society. This may be ob-

served by comparing the choices various countries have made in their own information society strategies. While the Nordic countries make a connection between information society strategies and democracy, the corresponding paper for Singapore is concerned with the importance of libraries as a stimulus for the economy.

On a smaller scale one might observe perhaps local government, the choices made by municipalities in any country at all: too many are trying to survive in the new millennium on old practices and have not updated their attitudes (read budgets) to the library. It is difficult to imagine a positive future strategy without a basic information service.

Here, in a somewhat fragmentary manner, I consider what traditions and derived solutions have recently been arrived at in certain countries or internationally with regard to the libraries and what manner of thinking and conception of the future they describe.

Where is the political focus of the libraries?

The position of the academic and research libraries in the industrialised countries has been historically much less stormy and political than that of the public libraries. It is “too” obvious that research and at most teaching should be supported by library and information services – there is no way that this could spark off a political debate. The national bibliography of printed matter is likewise mostly to be taken for granted.

If we go to the developing countries it is the compiling of a national bibliography which becomes a political project. For example, right after independence in Namibia in 1990 there was a great effort to fill the gaps by seeking material from the age of the missionaries and colonialism from as far afield as Finland and Germany. The need for a national bibliography as a part of national identity building became very evident.

It is just the public libraries, for example in the United States, which, since the 18th century, have been an instrument for the realisation of one constitutional right, namely the right to information. There more than anywhere else has been fought the ideological

battle on the content of the work of the libraries, especially the selection of materials.

Other traditionally strong library countries are of course the Nordic countries and the UK, in which the political stamp of library work has been less extreme. In the Nordic tradition library work has been seen as part of the project of liberal education for the entire nation. In the British Isles the public library continues to be much more a part of social work than in Finland. Given the employment and exclusion of the present day this may well be to the advantage of the British people as they have developed good capabilities for participation in the prevention of social exclusion and for co-operation; no doubt in the future this will be expected of the libraries in Finland.

Waves in library policy

The new wave of library policy beginning in the 1970s concerned the public libraries. In Europe it first made its presence felt in France, where the political left, which had come to power at the beginning of the decade set about systematically strengthening all cultural institutions meant for the people. The potent motive at that time was the promotion of language and literature, which is to say that the basic idea was the availability of culture and the mission of the information services of the libraries could be more easily perceived. The same motivation was later apparent, for example, in Catalonia, in the different language areas of Belgium and in Turkey.

Information society policy, for its part, has served to strengthen the maintenance of the library network and the motivation to build also elsewhere than Finland when the issue of democracy has moved centre stage: how can a minimal amount of basic resources or information and culture be guaranteed for all. On this fundamental issue, however, much has already been written elsewhere.

When the library raises its profile in society, the political interest in its work increases. The spirit of censorship of the American model began to appear in Europe.

This phenomenon, too, began in France, although one might hope that it did not constitute an actual wave. Yet it gave cause for concern: in the municipal elections of 1997 the extreme rightwing *Front National* came to power in four towns in the south of France. A purge of the magazine shelves in the libraries began forthwith, with those publications which were important for immigrants the first to be removed. Significant limitations were imposed on the acquisition of foreign language publications. Qualitatively there was a shift to censorship of the content material in French, which, in the case of children's literature was compared to the banning in the United States of Tom Sawyer. In the municipal elections of 2001 the *Front National* held its position in three towns, and there is a risk that their libraries will fold up completely – certainly no children are to be seen in them and many library professionals have left. (On the French situation, see Steinsaphir 1999.)

A new definition of professionalism from IFLA

It is therefore no wonder that the definition of professionalism by IFLA, our international organisation has been extended in recent years. For years the debate on freedom of speech and similar themes was distinctly peripheral, and some member deliberately avoided it. In the mid 1990s the cases in France and the holding of IFLA meetings in countries where censorship was practised caused many active North Americans and active people from the Nordic countries in particular to demand that the organisation take a clear stand and act in the interests of access to information and freedom of expression. As a result of this pressure an interim workgroup was first set up and in 1997 a permanent office, FAIFE, Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression, to work in this field (<http://www.faiife.dk/>). In spring 1999, after a long and genuine organisation discussion the IFLA board approved a communiqué on libraries and intellectual freedom. Since influential library people from many countries are IFLA members *ex officio*, who in their own work encounter censorship, the discussions were far from easy.

The Council of Europe, which focuses on culture and human rights also produced its own declaration at the end of the 1990s, known as the Helsinki Draft Charter on Public Access to and Freedom of Expression in Networked Information: Principles for Cultural Policy; Helsinki Draft Charter, which touched on the responsibility of the libraries regarding access to information and censorship. This document, too, gave rise to ample discussion.

In conclusion it may be stated that in the future the role of the libraries as the guarantors of access to information and links in the chain of freedom of expression will become increasingly political. The greatest danger lies in the risk that net censorship will run out of control. There has indeed been professional discussion on this in several countries.

A clear sign: outsiders acknowledge the necessity of the libraries

Since the 1980s the significance of the libraries has been perceived by those in which it might be considered surprising. Many major American and European foundations have supported library and literacy projects. In the mid 1990s, for example, the Kellogg Foundation invested tens of millions of dollars in the literacy programmes of the American Library Association. Bill and Melinda Gates directly named their foundation established in 1997 the Gates Library Foundation, although since then the name and the field of operation have been extended to the form Gate Learning Foundation.

The support of the foundation of the internationalising publishing giant Bertelsmann includes support for the international co-operation of libraries. It supports a long-term project International Network of Public Libraries with the idea of bringing the most advanced public libraries in particular into co-operation and exchange of experiences from Slovenia to Singapore.

In supporting the libraries the foundations have various reasons. Many of them feel concern for the decline of local communities and for the widening of the gap between rich and poor – the

libraries are also seen as an important community actor by means of which equality can be increased.

In the programmes of the Open Society Foundation of the investor George Soros the libraries also have a strong position. It is Soros' aim to inculcate market economy thinking in the former communist countries and in the developing countries. The libraries are perceived as a tool for ideological work: there is support for both book and publications regarded as desirable and for study trips and training, but also for investments in IT.

A similar phenomenon can be revealed by examining by whom and on what initiatives the libraries have been included in information society projects in various countries. The active party has by no means always been the professional library people, but rather that part of the (state) administration which has set about digging out the preconditions for information society policy.

The USA report published in July 1999 and entitled *Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide* gets right to the heart of the matter, namely equal access to information. There the access of those groups especially which are at risk of exclusion is analysed. Already at that time the opportunity for transactions on the net, for example with the authorities, was significantly common for ordinary citizens. According to the statistics presented in the report, those with no net connection at home, at their place of study or at work really did make use of the Internet facilities of the libraries. For example, unemployed people used the libraries' net connections three times more than average citizens. To my knowledge this was the first time that it was possible to demonstrate with an extensive amount of data what the importance of the libraries is in ensuring alternative access to net information. One main conclusion of the report is the strengthening of the libraries still further as public points for the dissemination of information.

The EU creating a line for the libraries

There is a similar indication in the EU's activities in library matters how actors who are independent of the libraries have come to stress

the need for service of the library type in the information society. Ineffectual use of the libraries' resources – there was talk of useless treasures – began to give rise to concern in the mid 1980s. As a result of this deliberation for the first time the EU framework programme on research and technical development for the period 1990 – 1994 included a separately named library section. The same policy was retained for the period 1994 – 98. The Telematics for Libraries projects have indeed consolidated library co-operation and networking in Europe. In the present framework programme 1998 – 2002 there is no specifically named library project, but library projects are an appropriate part of the section Information Society Technologies: Digital Heritage and Cultural Content. The section concerns so-called memory institutes, libraries, museums and archives. As may be seen in the names of the programmes, they concentrate on utilisation of technology. This is limiting from the perspective of the libraries, but logical considering the EU's own activities.

On the other hand the EU culture programmes of the 1990s Ariane, Kaleidoscope and Raphael have not been suitable programmes in which to include any library projects. Only the new Culture 2000 programme offered the libraries any possibilities. The libraries still have the option of being included in applications of the EU structural funds, generally together with other organisations in their regions.

The approval in October 1998 in the European Parliament of the own initiative report "Role of the Libraries in Modern Society" was a completely new step. It was compiled by Mirja Rynnänen, former chair of the Finnish Library Association. The report is available in all the EU languages and it spread through Europe as an opener of discussion. Feedback was unexpectedly active and positive. However, the change in the Commission of 1999 prevented the initiative from going further as a whole, although some of its ideas persist.

The report noted aspects and projects which would be worthwhile implementing at the European level. These typically comprised standards, research related to the preservation and storage of valu-

able material, maintaining of co-operation networks and support for joint project involving several countries. In the EU it is always important to draw the line between community level and national actions; culture and liberal education issues in the EU are primarily within the sphere of national decision-making. Nevertheless the report presents recommendations for Member States. European colleagues have seized upon these and made use of them in the planning of actions and budgets in their respective countries.

The libraries as actors in major conflicts

There is little cause to nurture excessive optimism with regard to the EU, however, as can be seen in the handling of the directive on copyright in the organs of the community. Citizens' access to information and culture did not originally count for much as an argument when the framework decisions for the EU Member States' own legislation was created. On the other side of the scale were the interests of media production/the culture industry which had been estimated to be a much heavier matter. It was only in the last round of talks that the representatives of the libraries and their users were able to assure the European decision-makers of the necessity of this aspect, too. The more important organisers of the campaign included EBLIDA and the European Fair Practices Copyright Campaign EFPICC common to many parties.

The situation revealed one typical conflict of the future. Reconciling the interests of many small actors, commercial and cultural, may in future be much trickier than it has been so far. The libraries invariably take the side of the economically weaker party by reason of their activity and nature, but as traditional actors of public administration they have fairly good chances of speaking with the voice of the users and non-commercial suppliers.

The measures of IFLA, the Council of Europe and similar bodies on behalf of freedom have begun just in time. There has also been joint activity in pan-European campaigns: the co-operation of the libraries in matters of copyright has been a pioneering contribution. There was a reaction throughout Europe to the censorship in

the French libraries. The stands taken created the atmosphere of the responsibility of the libraries which goes beyond their own outside walls.

What role for the individual libraries?

Although there is a need for study trips, strategies, meetings and international contacts, these do not serve to lend people poems, they cannot hold story-reading sessions or make new data records for catalogues. I personally take the view that the core of the matter is that each individual library is connected to larger and larger networks with greater and greater influence. It swings more weight. Each library is still more dependent on the actions of other library networks, and putting onto the net the material it has itself produced it will come to be used more widely and probably in more demanding applications.

In the swirl of international perspectives it must be born in mind that the actual sense and purpose is realised in each individual library and user context individually.

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The new building of the Tampere Main Library (1986), designed by Raili and Reima Pietilä. The building, seen from above, resembles a big bird, the capercaillie, and is subsequently called by that name, *Metso* (the Capercaillie).

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About the Authors

Eija Eskola, Licenciante of Philosophy, has worked for 20 years in public libraries and is now assistant chief of Lahti City Library. In 1991 she published the book *Rukousnauha ja muita romaaneja. Suomennetun kaunokirjallisuuden valinta yleisissä kirjastoissa 1880–1939* (The Rosary and other Novels. The Selection of Translated Fiction in Finnish Public Libraries 1880–1939). She is currently working on a doctoral thesis on book selection in public libraries during the 1920s and 1930s.

Tuula Haavisto, Master of Social Sciences, is Project Leader at EBLIDA. She is the former managing director of the Finnish Library Association. She has experience both in practical library work, international tasks in the field of libraries and planning projects for the information society. Recently she has taken part in the writing of a proposal for a new Finnish library policy.

Marjatta Hietala, Doctor of Philosophy, is Professor in History at the University of Tampere. Her many publications include *Der neue Nationalismus in der Publizistik Ernst Jüngers und des Kreises um ihn 1920–1933* (Diss.1975), *Services and Urbanization at the Turn of the Century* (1987), *Innovaatioiden ja kansainvälistymisen vuosikymmenet* (1992, The Decades of Innovation and Internationalization [in Helsinki]).

Professor **Sven Hirn** graduated in 1946 as librarian from the first diploma course in librarianship at the School of Social Sciences. He is also Doctor of Philosophy. He served the Helsinki City Library during the years 1945–1987, more than half of the time as chief librarian. His many publications include a dissertation in history *Imatra som natursevårdhet t.o.m. 1870* (1958, Imatra Rapids as a Natural Wonder until 1870), books on the history of the circus, tourism, popular music, dance, theatre and the city of Viipuri. In 1998 he published a history of Helsinki City Library 1860–1940.

Ilmi Järvelin, Doctor of Social Sciences, ended her long career in librarianship as library inspector in 1987. Before that she worked as chief librarian of Joensuu City Library. She has published a history of the Joensuu City Library (1962) and a book on libraries in Northern Carelia 1850–1930 (1966). Her dissertation *Kunnankirjastojen toimintaedellytykset ja kirjastontarkastajan rooli kirjasto-toiminnan kehittämisessä Kuopion läänin tarkastupiirissä v. 1921–1961* (English summary: The Prerequisites for Public Library Activity and the Role of the Library Inspector in the Development of Library Operations in the Inspection District of the Province of Kuopio 1921–1961) was approved in 1998.

Ilkka Mäkinen, Doctor of Social Sciences, is working as lecturer and researcher at the Department of Information Studies at the University of Tampere. He is also Reader in Library History. His publications include *‘Nödvändighet af LainaKirjasto’: Modernin lukuhaluun tulo Suomeen ja lukemisen instituutiot* (Diss. 1997, English summary: ‘The Necessity of the Lending Library’: The Introduction of the Modern Desire for Reading in Finland and the Institutions of Reading). In 2000 he published a monograph on a Finnish library pioneer, P.U.F. Sadelin. His articles have appeared in *Libraries and Culture* and other international and domestic journals.

Pirjo Vatanen, Licentiate of Social Sciences, has worked both in public and academic libraries since 1968. At present she is working as head of department at the Turku University Library. Her article “The Birth of an Institution: The Finnish Public Libraries up to the 1920s” was published in *Libraries and Culture* in 1993. The theme of her licentiate thesis (1988) was *Sivutoimisten valtakausi; koulutuksellinen näkökulma Suomen kirjastolaitokseen ennen vuoden 1961 kirjastolakia* (The Period of Part-time Librarians: an Educational Perspective into the Finnish library system before the Library Law of 1961). She is currently finishing her thesis on the period when the American Public Library ideas came to Finland.