

The strategy for the network of Finnish university libraries in 2003-2007

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Summary

The network of Finnish university libraries includes all university libraries, the National Library of Finland and the National Repository Library. The network extends effectively and economically the research, teaching and study materials and information services available to an individual university. It develops its services with the aid of projects, strengthens the expertise of libraries, and supplies new approaches. It also forms part of a broader national and international libraries' service network. The National Library of Finland supports the library network by producing and co-ordinating centralised services. The National Repository Library conserves and loans material transferred from libraries.

The strategy of the network outlines co-operation for 2003–2007, which will be implemented by means of a two-year operating plan. Each library has its own strategy forming part of the university's strategy. The National Library strategy covers the activity of Helsinki University Library.

Vision

The network of Finnish university libraries is the main supplier of information materials and services to the networking universities. It has a significant impact on the prerequisites for research activity and on how familiar it is and on the taking of qualifications. The university libraries are stepping up and broadening their co-operation in order to strengthen the universities' capacity to produce services that meet their needs. As part of information society services, the network helps to ensure that published information is accessible to all.

The basic tasks of the Network

- q to develop and co-ordinate the availability and scope of information materials
- q to strengthen the prerequisites for research activity and make it better known as well as to support flexible and diverse teaching and study
- q to monitor the operating environment, strengthen the expertise of the university libraries and their capacity for change
- q to strengthen the effectiveness of the university libraries as information society players.

The changing operating environment

- The supply of scientific information is being digitalised. Printed material will retain its significance to some extent. Printed and digital material should be provided in an integrated manner.
- The prices of materials are rising. Alternative channels for scientific publishing are emerging.
- Teaching and study are diversifying and networking as a result of the Virtual University. Students need good information management skills and network services.
- Research activity is increasing mainly with outside funding. Research projects are availing themselves of the materials and services of university libraries.
- The libraries are developing joint services and networking regionally and internationally.

Strategic objectives and recommendations

Improving the **availability and scope of the materials** is the most important task for the network in the next few years.

- in order to render resource sharing more effective, a resource map of the collections and services by theme should be compiled,
- document supply services should be developed,
- the network should participate in national integrated portals,
- support is to be given to strengthening the work of FinELib,
- the digitalisation programme of the national collections and measures for long-term conservation of materials are to be actively monitored.

In order to develop **research, teaching and study**

- the visibility of the universities' research is to be improved by means of research registers, material and reference databases and using portals,
- the use of non-profit-making scientific publishing channels and new publishing methods is to be promoted,

- a joint online reference service is to be created on the basis of the resource map,
- support is to be given to integrating information management skills into university study, and the role of the libraries in promoting information literacy is to be developed,
- the accessibility and availability of digital study materials is to be fostered,
- the construction of integrated network teaching and learning services is to be promoted.

In order to promote **expertise**

- the expertise and personnel structure required at libraries is to be investigated,
- career training needs are to be charted,
- expert networks and co-operation are to be strengthened.

In order to strength **effectiveness**

- free accessibility of information is to be promoted together with other libraries and memory organisations,
- methods for assessing the effect of the libraries' and joint services on the universities' results are to be developed,
- the drafting of core legislation is to be monitored and influenced.

Funding

Library financing needs to take account of newly established educational sectors, the rise in student numbers and increased outside research funding. In this way, services and materials will be dimensioned to meet growing demand. The networking of universities increases the need to produce joint services, which are often more effective and economical than separate solutions. In addition to the funding allocated to the National Library of Finland and the National Repository Library by the Ministry of Education for the upkeep of joint services, there is a need for funding and operating models that also support the production of joint services at other libraries.

- the current bases for funding university libraries are to be investigated and any need to alter them based on these is to be submitted to the Finnish Council of University Rectors,
- cost-benefit analyses are to be developed for assessing the economy and quality of centralised services,
- funding models for maintaining and co-ordinating joint services are to be formulated,
- proposals for project funding and for organising the funding of joint projects are to be drawn up.

Approach

New services are created by launching and organising joint development projects, supporting libraries' pilot projects and by putting the experiences gained from these to use. The work of the network is co-ordinated by the Council for Finnish University Libraries, whose members are library directors. The Council agrees on joint guidelines; decisions are taken by the libraries and the executive organs of consortia.