

Openness – a way of life

If I had to characterize Finnish libraries with one word, what should I say? The Finnish library system is a complex network of relationships mediated by information technology, communication and logistics. The way I see it, libraries are all connected with each other, both nationally and internationally. No library is an island.

My one-word slogan for Finnish libraries is "openness". The aim of our library system is to provide information freely for everyone, irrespective of social status, age or place of residence. Finnish public libraries are real vanguards of freedom of information in our country. Furthermore, our university libraries and even the Library of Finnish Parliament are open to everyone.

"Openness" is not just a word but a philosophy and a real practical way-of-life of Finnish libraries. For example, one does not need to be an MP to use the parliamentary library or an academic to use our excellent research libraries. We are pragmatic and egalitarian and we want to put the acquired information resources into maximal use for the benefit of everyone.

We Finns are true believers of the power of information and knowledge. The section 12 of the Constitution of Finland states that we have a freedom of expression. This freedom entails "the right to express, disseminate and receive information, opinions and other communications without prior prevention by anyone." In addition, everyone "has the right of access to public documents and recordings."

Finland is a success story in many respects. We are eager readers and library users. Our level of education is high and we have a solid national economy. We strive for innovation and technological advances.

When IFLA2012 arrives and the international library community gathers into Helsinki we want to show you what we have done and what we really can do. Our modest aim is to provide the best possible conference experience for everyone involved.

On behalf of The Finnish Research Library Association, I invite you to come and experience the unique spirit of IFLA in the Finnish environment in 2012. I hope you will be able to visit as many libraries as possible during your stay here and have inspiring conversations with our librarians, both young and more experienced professionals.

We Finns want to be open to new experiences, opinions and viewpoints. Openness is a prerequisite for learning new things.

Kimmo Tuominen
President
The Finnish Research Library Association