

# Library for Citizens

*An essential part  
of the Finnish know-how*

The Way Forward  
for Public Libraries  
2016–2020



## The champion of culture, civilisation, information, and know-how

As the environment keeps changing rapidly, public libraries need sustainable guidelines for their work. The economic scarcity in the municipalities, the increasing inequality among citizens, the digitisation of the traditional cultural products, and the emphasis on digital services challenge libraries to clarify their mission. The Council for Public Libraries is now proposing common priorities for library operations for the near

future. Libraries have a strong status in Finnish society and they maintain a long tradition. As the new priorities will be put into action we, at the same time, appreciate the core of libraries.

Libraries offer access to culture and information and support civic skills. Libraries champion freedom of speech and civilisation. Libraries are an essential part of Finnish know-how, language, literature, equality, and literacy. Libraries carry

a huge significance for the whole of society, the book economy, local communities, and individuals.

Public libraries need common guidelines and actions to provide a direction for development. The Way Forward for Public Libraries 2016–2020 document is meant to do just that, to provide direction and inspiration for municipal libraries.

## The Council for Public Libraries (CPL)

CPL is an organisation based on local representation. The permanent representatives are the Central Library for Public Libraries, the provincial libraries, and Espoo and Vantaa as representatives of large cities. In addition, each provincial library region chooses a representative for a two-year period.

The council coordinates between public libraries on a national level and represents them in

issues related to the activities and development of national library networks. It also makes joint resolutions and statements on current issues that affect libraries.

By law, the municipalities are responsible for organising library operations but the professionalism and impact are, above all, the result of library expertise and mutual networking. With this publication CPL wants to advance equal rights of citizens as library users.

In the autumn 2013 CPL decided that the current strategy for the years 2011–2016 will be updated for the years 2016–2020. The task of producing The Way Forward for Public Libraries 2016–2020 was appointed to a working group.

### Members of the working group:

Salla Erho, Deputy library director  
Rovaniemi City Library – Lapland Provincial Library

Tuula Haavisto, Library director  
Helsinki City Library – Central Library for Public Libraries

Pirkko Lindberg, Library director  
Tampere City Library – Pirkanmaa Provincial Library

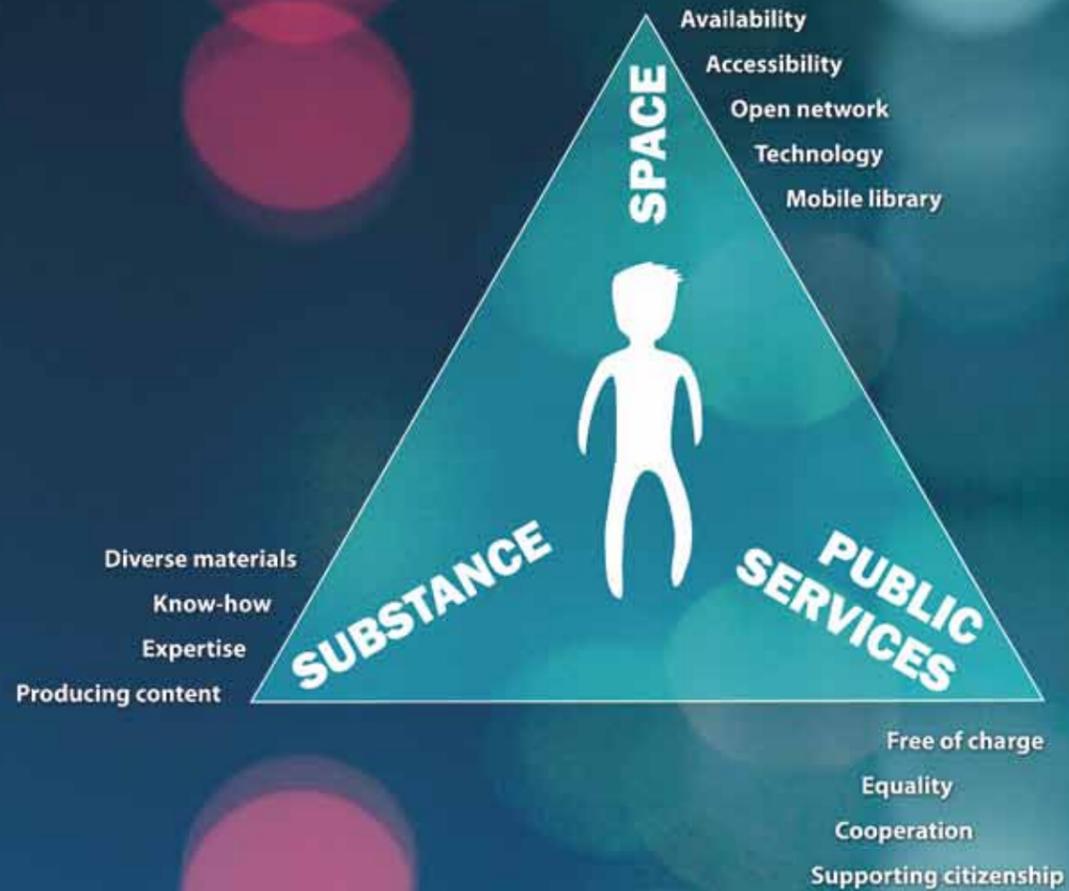
Rebekka Pilppula, Director, cultural and library services  
Joensuu Regional Library – North Karelia Provincial Library

### Secretaries:

Päivi Litmanen-Peitsala, Communication planner  
Central Library for Public Libraries, Libraries.fi

Erkki Lounasvuori, Senior library adviser  
Helsinki City Library – Central Library for Public Libraries

## Libraries provide opportunities



## The basis of library services

In the digital era libraries support active citizenship. At the same time citizens need libraries even more than before.

### The cultural rights of the citizens

The Constitution of Finland guarantees that everyone has an equal opportunity to develop themselves also after basic education. Destitution cannot be an obstacle.

Library legislation reform is underway simultaneously with the Way Forward for Public Libraries

document. The aim of the reform is to promote citizens' participation and cultural rights in the network of the civil society, as well as ensure equal access to information and culture. The central goal is to promote the development of democracy and strengthen the prerequisites for operation in the rapidly changing environment.

### Vision for 2025

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities presents a vision for libraries in 2025 (Direction for Civilisation document): "Library

*and information services will promote equal opportunities in accessing information, gaining reading experiences as well as in cultural and civic activities and lifelong learning. The services are organised to serve local needs and are mainly free of charge."*

As a part of a well organised Finnish library network, every municipal library is more than a local service. Provincial libraries and voluntarily founded joint-use libraries are an integral part of developing libraries.

## Challenges

- Changes in legislation.
- Population and services centralise in cities.
- Decreasing number of municipalities.
- Locally provided services.
- Majority of use on-line.
- The widening gap in skillsets.
- Loneliness increases.
- Immigration and multiculturalism increase.
- English as a preferred language in media.
- Understanding of text and literacy deteriorate.
- Things are shared in the form of photos, film and visualisations.
- Only some citizens are interested in longer texts.
- Schools are teaching multiple reading skills.
- Wider use of digital technology.
- In addition to specific information, we need understanding of phenomena.
- Mass media and publishing become centralised and international.
- Information can be found on-line, search services become international.
- People are more often willing to pay for culture and information.
- The concept of privacy changes.
- The self-evident nature of data protection brakes down.
- International agreements limit access to free information.
- Citizens meet on-line and face-to-face.
- Increasing number of people work remotely or as entrepreneurs.
- Citizens participate in developing social services.
- Citizens can publish material themselves.
- Searching and sharing on-line becomes more popular.

## Managing challenges with cooperation

The networking of libraries enables diverse services. Cooperation stems from the customer's needs and it surpasses municipal borders. The possibility to use libraries across municipalities, joint mobile libraries, and sharing staff expertise make cooperating libraries' work more versatile. The municipal status of libraries will become stronger because more citizens can use other municipal services in library space.

There are no municipal borders on the internet. Provincial region or joint-use library is a small unit compared with on-line services. In fact, it is more effective to produce many services together nationally or even internationally. The mutual cooperation and new national solutions are a necessity in the digital world.

Different groups and library associations promote professional development as well as development of the entire library world. They champion the rights of citizens.

In addition to national cooperation, international cooperation is crucial for libraries. Common standards, sharing experiences, and cooperation for example on copy right issues are an important tradition. This becomes

even more important when the publishing world becomes more international and centralised and information resources are moved behind paywalls.

### International advocacy

Finnish libraries actively seek international partners. Participating in world-wide development projects and promoting open access to information continue to be important to our civil society.

The most significant places of promoting library issues are IFLA<sup>1</sup> and EBLIDA<sup>2</sup>. Both of them aim at guaranteeing good working conditions for libraries and to publish documents about the international field of libraries.

- IFLA Trend Report
- IFLA Joint Statement on Literacy
- EBLIDA Wien Declaration

The public libraries in Finland want to influence the international debate via Finnish Library Association and other organisations.

### Literature brings operators together

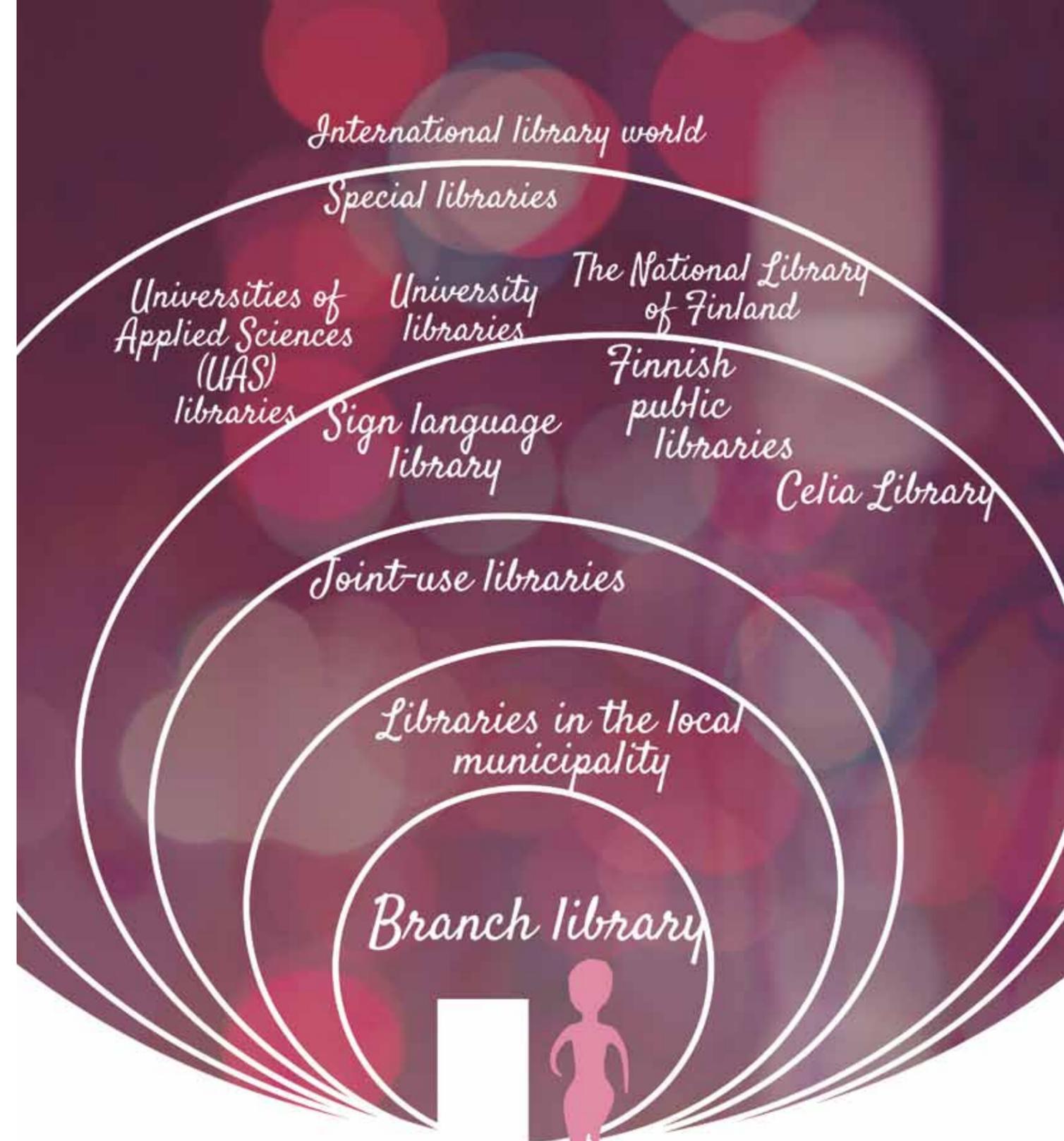
Libraries are a vital part of the ecosystem that is Finnish literature.

Preserving Finnish literature requires close cooperation between authors, publishers, service providers, book shops, and libraries. We must be able to offer customers e-collections on a reasonable cost. In addition to quality content, libraries have a unique role in teaching citizens electronic reading skills. Only libraries provide equal access to e-collection for all citizens.

### Accountable municipal networking

Each library is an active service provider and partner in their municipality.

Public services are being digitised, citizens are encouraged to participate in planning services, and the forms of volunteer work become more diverse. Libraries can offer information, share know-how, and provide space for participation. This is how library becomes part of an effective public economy.



## Branch library is the gateway to all libraries

**Libraries are the most actively used part of the nation's collective memory.**

<sup>1</sup> International Federation for Library Associations and Institutions  
<sup>2</sup> European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Associations

## Follow-up for the Way Forward document

CPL has approved this document for the years 2016–2020. Its implementation will be reviewed yearly in the spring and autumn meetings.

Above all, this document is an operational tool for each municipal library. CPL wants to stress the meaning of cooperation and highlight relevant points that library professionals can use to appeal to the decision makers. The work done within the framework of Way Forward for Public Libraries 2016–2020 can be seen at its best when the library's own strategy is compared with these goals.

### The national projects for public libraries

Public libraries are partners in many national projects and in planning new services. In the near future many of those will have impact on local work, as well. Information about these projects and plans can be found in Kirjastot.fi, in the CPL webpage.

# Values

### The way to interpret the values:

- Stating the emphasis at the top →
- Defining of *goals* in the middle →
- List of **actions** at the bottom →



- **Equality**
- **Responsibility**
- **Sense of community**
- **Courage**
- **Freedom of speech**

Values are deeply embedded in libraries. As our environment changes we need to **emphasise** our **goals** in order to fulfill those values. Changes in our emphasis are reflected in various ways in our **actions**.

*Everyone has the rights and skills to use information resources*

Supporting media skills

Staff expertise

Free of charge

Making guidance services visible and easily approachable

Keeping library equipment and software updated

Taking care of complementary education of the staff

Increasing customer guidance and learning from other libraries' experiences

Defending the free of charge principle of libraries

Dividing responsibilities of keeping up with the on-line content between staff members

# Equality

Emphasis

*Goal*

Action

*Everyone can access digital information and literature*

Agreement negotiations

Common national services

Lobbying the legislation

Participating actively in user rights debate

Digitising local collections for national use

Public Libraries Consortium and FinELib organise and negotiate for all libraries

Bringing important collections to the national eLibrary

Integrating national services actively to the customer instruction

Aiming at a common digital media licensing for public libraries

*Everyone has the right to participate and influence the society and living environment*

Supporting civic skills

Active instruction and event organisation

Helping customers to discover and use information

Taking note of multiculturalism when allocating resources

Allocating resources to customer contacts and content discovery

Re-defining information services

*Everyone has the opportunity to visit library*

All-encompassing and accessible library network

Expanding library services

National authentication

Offering customers the user rights to libraries outside their own municipality

Planning opening hours and location according to the needs of the customers

Utilising volunteer work

Open access to information

Taking care of the quality of digital services and providing mobile services

Paying attention to special groups

Quality descriptive information

Offering joint services

Taking changing search habits into account

*Library collections are easily found and combined with other information*

Strengthening mobile libraries and services

Investing in services so that libraries are easy to find on-line

Producing services that make library expertise search engine friendly

Finding a common solution in producing descriptive information

Offering digital services to be combined with other public services

Making libraries and services easily recognisable

Networking in all operations

Jointly agreed duties both locally and nationally

*Customers will get the expertise and know-how of all libraries from their own library*

Cooperation as a guideline in management

Introducing national services and participating in their production

Appreciating and utilising the know-how of others

Offering customers the know-how of other libraries actively

Familiarising ourselves with different materials

Recognising quality and reliable material with the help of analysis and choice

*Customers can trust libraries' knowledge of content also in the future*

Investing in expertise in different fields and sharing it with everyone

Guiding customers on-line and in face-to-face contact to find and identify quality material

Expanding the understanding and knowledge of collections to cover new media

Telling about the diverse searching opportunities in on-line search engines

Acknowledging open access information as a content type

# Re- sponsi- bility

Managing library as a part of the municipal services

Emphasis

*Goal*

Action

Making governance with information as a practice

Using tax funds responsibly

*Library as an effective part of the municipality*

Participating actively in transadministrative cooperation

Managing library according to municipal goals

Acknowledging the equal availability of municipal services

Using available research material in planning

Emphasising the benefits for citizens in the library budget

Deciding how to participate in providing other services and guidance

Being independent from equipment and utilising national on-line services

Creating space that respects privacy

Data protection in on-line library services

Taking note of customer privacy in guidance

*Library data protection can be depended on both on-line and in physical space*

Telling customers about the risks on-line and instructing customers how to avoid them

Protecting private customer details so that only library professionals can access them

Guaranteeing the data protection of library's own systems and contracts

Taking note of the privacy in library's working space

Guiding customers while at the same time preserving their privacy

# Sense of community

Emphasis

Goal

Action

Interactive operations

Aiming at cooperation

*Citizens participate in the planning of library services*

Engaging citizens in service plans at an early stage

Bringing citizens to participate in producing services

Utilising inclusive planning in management

Learning to know local social media

Engaging actively in local media

*Library participates in the community on-line*

Developing library services that encourage participation and crowdsourcing

Planning the social media participation

Customer guidance also in informal on-line communication

Engaging actively in local media

Organising events together with local agents

Bringing library services to new spaces

*Library goes to places where things happen*

Organising guidance and services outside the library space

Embedding library services in other municipal services

Telling about on-line services and e-borrowing in other municipal spaces

Taking library services to events

Contacting local businesses

Establishing guidelines

Multilateral service production

*Libraries cooperate with businesses for the benefit of the community*

Ensuring that the cooperation benefits citizens

Establishing guidelines for cooperation of public and private partners

Cooperation based on library-citizen-business model

Joint services for different administrative officials in library space

Releasing library space for communal use

*Library space open for diverse use*

Offering library space for partners to be used in events and guidance services

Offering library space and expertise to educational purposes

Using spaces together with other public services, NGOs and cultural operators

Paying attention to small businesses and freelancers in our planning

**Emphasis**  
**Goal**  
 Action



# Courage

Developing work with experiments

Observing the changes in the environment

Courage to fail

## *Library questions its own actions*

Reacting to citizens' needs regarding information and user practices

Seeking development outside library field

Seeking ideas actively from staff and customers

Experimenting with service concepts and discarding those when necessary

Seizing the big challenges, such as service network, logistics, or division of work

Efficient in-service education

Ensuring modern technology

Open-minded attitude

## *Library domesticates technology to be part of customer service*

Introducing the same technology the citizens use

Planning compatible technological solutions to serve customers' needs

Engaging in close cooperation between libraries with the help of technology

Utilising cloud services and guiding customers with the most common on-line services

Promoting open solutions in the municipality

Supporting cooperation of people with different skills

Unlearning and embracing new ideas

## *Professional know-how changes as the environment changes*

Shifting work assignments towards multiprofessionalism

Utilising experts from other fields in service production

Centralising services allows us to re-allocate resources

Planning in-service education and workplace learning together locally

Championing customer's rights

Emphasis on services as a resource in reducing inequality in the society

## *Library promotes good life for citizens*

Introducing services actively

Utilising studies and reports that relate to quality of life and changes in the environment in planning and governance

Adopting impact assessment as a part of local and national work

Promoting customers' rights to access collections

Understanding the social role of libraries

Courage to act

*Library becomes an advocate in public debate*

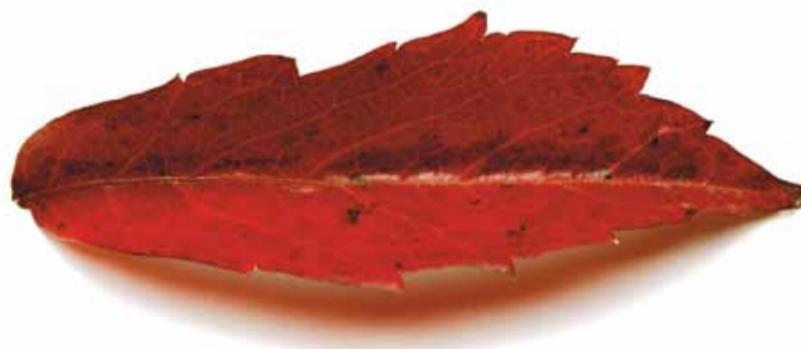
Emphasis  
Goal  
Action

Prioritising openness in all actions

Organising open discussion meetings

Ensuring library is a safe environment for discussion

Taking a stand for customers' rights and following the *Professional Codes of Ethics for Librarians*



Supporting media skills

Promoting content

*Library promotes citizens' open access to information*

Highlighting alternative materials and data resources from digital sources

Helping customers with technology and information retrieval questions

# Freedom of speech

Diversity in all activity

Paying attention to multiculturalism

Accepting various opinions

*Library helps citizens to get their voice heard*

Providing space and equipment for citizens' own media productions and events

Facilitating the visibility of different social and cultural groups

Supporting social activity and discussion by creating space for them

Uncensored content

Diverse collections

Materials are easy to find

*Library respects the customer's choices*

Providing space for everything that is legal

Planning open databases, accessible search methods, and expert information services on customer's terms

Drafting a policy regarding collection and making it public

Offering excellent collections with depth

The Council for Public Libraries  
[www.kirjastot.fi/neuvosto](http://www.kirjastot.fi/neuvosto)

The Way Forward for Public Libraries 2016–2020  
[www.kirjastot.fi/neuvosto/suunta](http://www.kirjastot.fi/neuvosto/suunta)

Design: Harri Oksanen, photographs: Jonas Tana, translation: Nimmi Sandelius

