

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. AIMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF LIBECON2000 IN CONTEXT

i. CONTEXT AND PREVIOUS SURVEYS

The LIBECON2000 study traces its origins back to 1986 when the [then] Directorate General 13 of the European Commission was undertaking the policy analysis which led to the Telematics for Libraries Programme. At that time there was no easily available source of up to date statistical and economic data on libraries in Europe. Accordingly, a study was commissioned and produced called “A Study of Library Economics in the European Community.” This was updated and extended to include not only EU countries but EFTA[†] too in a publication entitled “Library economics in Europe: An Update-1981-90”¹ As plans for enlargement of the Union gathered pace in the 1990s and DG13’s interest in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe grew, the study “Library Economics in Central and Eastern Europe”² was commissioned and published, providing data and commentary for an additional 10 countries. The present study extends its scope to 29 European countries in all and updates the data to the latest possible year. A further year will be added to the LIBECON2000 database and made available on the website in 2000. The focus on Europe reflects the policy interests of the funding body.

The study adds value to the original source material and makes it accessible, transparent and useful. The source material is often obscure and unknown outside its country and sector of origin so that researchers, policy makers and other users cannot easily obtain it. It is often available only in the original language which makes it inaccessible for many users. It needs to be as up to date as possible. It needs to be formulated to a common standard and free of errors. It needs to be grossed up in appropriate cases to produce valid trend lines. For financial data, currencies need to be standardised to allow comparisons between countries and over time. Producers and users of the data are relatively few and far between and benefit from contacts with each other which the web site facilitates. Above all, a commentary is needed and provided here to interpret the data and clarify key trends.

ii. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of LIBECON2000 are:

- To maintain an up-to-date monitor of the scope and scale of library activities throughout Europe, to inform policy direction and promote greater awareness of their impact;
- To provide a framework that develops standardisation for better consistency of information about libraries through international links, for example with ISO and UNESCO;

[†] EFTA – European Free Trade Agreement.

¹ Ramsdale, Phillip. Library economics in Europe: An Update-1981-90. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publication of the European Communities, 1995. ISBN 92-826-9197-7.

² Ramsdale, Phillip and Fuegi, David, Library Economics in Central and Eastern Europe. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publication of the European Communities, 1997. ISBN 92-828-1562-5.

- To encourage better forms of collating statistical information;
- To create a virtual community of those who create and use library statistics of European countries, to reduce their isolation and to improve access to their data.

Libraries are developing an ever increasing role in the supply of knowledge and it is estimated that at the end of the decade in the main countries of Europe, total expenditure on libraries amounted to 14 billion euros per year. As we progress to the end of the century, rapid progress in methods of distributing knowledge by electronic means is being made and librarians are playing a key role in managing this information revolution. In this context, we have a concern to monitor the economic place which libraries occupy and it is the objective of LIBECON 2000 to provide the appropriate statistical evidence to better inform policy judgements and investment appraisals by international, national and local governments. As the policy focus shifts to encompass the converging role of all the “knowledge institutions” [libraries, archives, museums] in making a reality of the Information Society, it is apparent that the benefits conferred by the LIBECON2000 study on policymakers, managers and researchers of the libraries sector could usefully be extended to the other relevant sectors in the future.

iii. IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The whole database plus newsletters, contacts list, bibliography and discussion list is available on the website. Cooperation and interest from colleagues in most countries has been excellent and the result is a rich and easily accessible statistical resource of value to practitioners, policy makers, researchers and private sector firm selling into this market.

The material for this study is ideal for web publishing which can:

- Overcome language barriers;
- Potentially achieve more rapid publication than print [though LIBECON currently draws mainly on published sources];
- Achieve wider dissemination than print sources to users who are scattered and mainly require facts rather than whole publications;
- Facilitate communication between producers and users.

The project has impacted on the revision of ISO2789. A number of questions in the LIBECON2000 questionnaire piloted changes being considered for adoption by ISO. As a result of the LIBECON experience, the Working Group in ISO’s committee TC 46 is proposing to drop the sector “Other Major non-specialised libraries” altogether, and break up the “Specialised” sector into distinct groupings. A consultation draft has been produced within TC 46 incorporating these changes which were recommended by previous LIBECON studies.

The project is having a beneficial impact in a number of countries which are either adopting ISO2789 as a result or else are planning to carry out surveys for the first time or in an improved format. These changes result, of course, from a wish by the authorities in the countries concerned to improve their data but this desire is stimulated and reinforced by the annual nature of the LIBECON survey and the stimulus which it provides.

iv. SOME PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Gathering consistent information about the part played by libraries in developing the information resources within Europe is a difficult process and involves overcoming a number of practical problems. A major problem is that one can only collect data which exists - unless one has budget for primary survey work; this would not be appropriate even if it were affordable as it would involve an additional survey burden and redoing the work of the responsible agencies at national or in some cases, provincial level. Using existing data presents some or all of the following problems, the position varying from country to country:

- Missing data, for example:

Sectors³ missing [e.g. no survey or sampling of school libraries in many countries]

Sectors incomplete [some libraries missing from the response to a survey]

Sectors not internationally comparable⁴

Data not available [questions not asked or not answered]

Data on the impact and penetration of new technologies in libraries.

- Language problems

To improve the quality of the data, all these problems have been addressed by the project.

v. SOME FUTURE CHALLENGES

The future of this activity [the collection and publication of library statistics on an international basis] is surrounded by some uncertainties as the new millennium opens. UNESCO, which pioneered this work in the 1970s has reduced the numbers of its statistical staff and it is not clear what the consequences of this might be for library and other cultural statistics. EUROSTAT, which collects statistics for the European Union, has recently been asked to compile cultural statistics at the EU level but has not included libraries in its programme. A continuation of LIBECON2000 could meet this need for Europe cost-effectively. Better still would be to include comparative data for advanced countries outside Europe. Even better, would be to tackle the whole sector of the knowledge institutions [libraries, archives, museums], underpinning research activities and policy analysis and improving management and transparency across the board.

³ Sectors means types of libraries as defined in ISO 2789 [public libraries, national libraries etc.]

⁴ The Other Major Non-Specialised and the Specialised Sectors gave the most headaches in the past though the new ISO proposals should in time resolve this.

II. SITUATION SUMMARY

OPERATIONAL TRENDS [ALL SECTORS]

i. Staff

We estimate that about 374,000 staff were employed in libraries, an increase of 3.7 % since 1991. This increase in staffing numbers is weighted towards the professional staff whose numbers increased by 4.9 % over the period. The increase in Trained staff occurs mostly in EU States.

The number of trained librarians in all sectors of libraries (206,000) is higher than previous estimates for the mid-1990's (175,800 for 1991). However, the number of other support staff is substantially lower than previous estimates. Proportionately the returns for 'Other Staff' are appreciably lower in the CEE than in the EU.

Table 1 Staff FTE * (000s)

	Qualified	Other	Total
1991	196	165	361
1992	195	163	357
1993	191	164	355
1994	195	163	357
1995	199	162	361
1996	201	159	360
1997	206	160	367
1998	206	168	374

* Full Time Equivalent, i.e. part time staff count as fractions in proportion to hours worked

ii. Materials

The overall position and trends are summarised in this table:

Table 2 Trends in Materials Provision (millions)

RESOURCES	1991	1998	% change
Book stock	2,778	2,944	+ 6
Audio Visual stock	104	127	+ 22
Periodical subscriptions	19.5	21.3	+ 9
Manuscripts	29.5	32.0	+ 8
Microforms	316	313	- 1
ANNUAL MOVEMENTS:			
Book Additions	171	171	=
A/V Additions	9.7	12.1	+ 25
Inter Library Loans (received)	15.2	29.0	+ 91

The trends in annual additions to stock appear to vary between sectors. National libraries report a growth in their annual additions in books and audio-visual materials. Public libraries book acquisitions fell between 1991 - 1995 but have since stabilised, while their audio-visual materials have increased steadily. With a large increase in the population served by Tertiary Education, so have their book acquisitions grown hugely, but there has been a decline in audio visual additions.

iii. Use and users

The count of Registered Members increased in total from 126 million to 139 million - an increase of 10.5 per cent. As this count includes those who use several libraries the proportion it represents out of the total population (484 million) - 29 per cent - is disappointingly low. But the trend is moving upwards. Estimates for Loan Transactions at 3,543 million and Visits at 3,468 million are close and show only a small difference in trend: + 5.2 % against - 1.3 %. When taken together the ratio for Loan Transactions per Registered Member point to high intensity of use - moving from 26.8 to 25.5.

iv. Modernisation

Overall total estimates show the following: Workstations for users increased more than fourfold from 74,000 in 1991 to 310,000 in 1998. The stock of CD ROMs went up exponentially during the second half of the period, going from an estimated 456,000 in 1991 to 2,500,000 in 1998. The percentage of catalogue records automated is estimated to have gone up from 36 to 46 per cent.

v. Service points

Including all sectors, it is estimated that in 1998 there were 224,000 service points throughout the study area. There has been a considerable contraction since 1991, averaging 7.1 %, but this has taken place particularly in the Central & Eastern European countries (CEE) where the proportionate drop was 14 % and where the main closures took place in public libraries.

III. FINANCIAL TRENDS

Note on financial results

Estimates of expenditure and income have been derived by a careful and sophisticated set of calculations aimed to extract the maximum value from those data provided, but there are particular notes of caution to be borne in mind. First, data for some large countries are missing. This weakness affects estimates of absolute value much more than it does estimates of trends over time, where there can be good confidence. Second, there are some heads and categories with a particularly low response where the confidence in the total estimates has to be qualified. For example, the tables on spending on electronic materials and on automation were completed by very few responders.

There has been greatly increased activity in Tertiary Libraries and lack of growth - overall - in the Public Library sector, with modest growth in National Libraries. The obvious expectation from this is that levels of expenditure have increased more in the Tertiary sector than in others. Here we look at the situation overall.

Table 3 Main trends in financial results (All sectors of library)

(€ millions) EXPENDITURE	1991	1998	% change
Staff	5,007	6,697	+ 34
Materials	2,342	3,121	+ 33
Electronic information	317	528	+ 67
Total revenue exp.	10,347	13,965	+ 35
INCOME ITEMS			
Fees & Charges	382	648	+ 70
'Other' (i.e. special funds)	432	1,034	+ 139
CAPITAL PAYMENTS	487	695	+ 43

Since staffing costs represent the largest part of the budget, expenditure on staff has increased at a rate reflected by the charge in total expenditure.

The total expenditure on conventional materials also shows an average increase, but this average conceals an estimated + 64 % for Special Libraries, + 40 % for Tertiary, + 27 % for National, + 33 % for Schools, and only + 1 % for Public Libraries.

The data show a dramatic (67 per cent) increase in expenditure on electronic materials. This is heavily concentrated in the Tertiary and Special Libraries sectors - and Special Libraries are more fully represented in these statistics than ever before.

It is significant, however, that the 1998 results show electronic information still at only 15 per cent of total materials expenditure - so confirming that conventional materials are still dominant.

Perhaps the most surprising revelation in this set of statistics lies in the specifically identified 'Income Items'. The magnitude of the increase in Fees & Charges - 70 per cent - is impressive, and the pattern is virtually universal across all countries. This is a new trend.

i. The importance of the library sectors

One would expect, even over a lengthy period, to find little change in the relative size of the various library sectors. Estimates in previous surveys showed that, between 1981 and 1995 public libraries and higher education libraries increased their share of total spending on libraries - with the share of other sectors largely unchanged. In this survey we find a very different result - as illustrated in this table:

Table 4 Library sector shares

SECTOR	<i>by total expenditure</i>		<i>by total staff</i>	
	PREVIOUS ESTIMATE		PRESENT ESTIMATE	
	<i>1981</i> *	<i>1995</i> §	<i>1998</i>	<i>1998</i>
National	6.0 %	5.9 %	5.4%	4.1%
Higher Education	15.3 %	16.9 %	19.9%	16.5%
Public	47.3 %	49.5 %	45.0%	45.2%
Special	8.6 %	8.6 %	21.3%	16.7%
Other Major	4.9 %	4.5 %	0.8%	2.2%
School	17.8 %	14.7 %	7.7%	15.5%

* EU States only § estimated in *The Historic Database*, Libecon2000 Project Deliverable D, 1998

The main reason for these changes is the stricter application of sectoral definitions and better returns for the Special Library sector in this later canvass. In view of this major change Table 4 above also includes a column to show how different the sector proportions appear when analysed by the numbers of staff employed rather than by expenditure.

ii Tertiary education sector

Between 1991 - 1998 staff plus Student totals in Tertiary education went from 1,534,000 to almost 2 million. Changes in expenditure are as shown in the following table 5.

Table 5 Tertiary libraries expenditure and income - all states

Responses No.	%	EXPENDITURE	1991 € millions	1998 € millions	%ge change	1991 %	1998 %
16	86	Employees	799	1,210	+ 51	44.7	43.5
22	93	Materials	559	780	+ 40	31.3	28.1
5	30	Electronic materials	17	81	+ 376	1.0	2.9
4	34	Automation	59	81	+ 37	3.3	2.9
6	36	Premises	170	277	+ 63	9.5	10.0
5	53	New Building & Ref't	2	5	**	**	0.2
17	56	Other expenses	183	347	+ 90	10.2	12.5
17	62	TOTAL EXP'RE	1,788	2,780	+ 55	100	100
INCOME							
13	53	Institutional	1,686	2,466	+ 46	94.0	88.7
12	51	Fees & charges	38	77	+ 103	2.2	2.8
12	51	'Other income'	64	237	+ 270	3.8	8.5
7	32	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	83	78	- 5	4.6	2.8

iii. National Library Sector

Financial trends for national libraries are as shown in the following table.

Table 6 National libraries expenditure & income - all countries

Responses No.	%		1991 € millions	1998 € millions	%ge change	1991 %	1998 %
		EXPENDITURE					
19	68	Employees	272	373	+ 37	50.2	49.2
21	66	Materials	78	99	+ 27	14.3	13.1
10	8	Electronic materials	3	11	+ 267	0.5	1.4
13	79	Automation	§ 1	3	**	0.1	0.4
11	39	Premises	41	51	+ 24	7.5	6.7
14	44	New Building & Ref't	29	40	+ 38	5.3	5.3
19	77	Other expenses	120	181	+ 51	22.1	23.9
21	78	TOTAL EXP'RE	544	757	+ 39	100	100
		INCOME					
17	52	Institutional	434	608	+ 40	79.8	80.3
16	46	Fees & charges	73	103	+ 41	13.8	14.0
16	49	'Other income'	35	44	+ 26	6.4	5.7
12	30	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	33	127	+ 285	6.1	16.8

§ '3' in 1993

iv. Public libraries sector

Over the seven years, service points have decreased by 18 per cent. The scale of this decline is much influenced by the position in Poland (decrease from 10,300 to 3,565). But most countries show decreases between 8 and 15 per cent.

The following general conclusions emerge from the data:

- There is a huge difference in the scale of public library operations between those countries which have had a well resourced public library service for many years and those countries without this historical tradition.
- There are some countries developing their public libraries from a low base showing significant increases since 1991 - and others with no apparent development. Many countries have a long way to go to begin to match the activity levels accepted as normal elsewhere.
- There are obvious connections between high levels of Stock, Loans and Additions to Stock - which can be studied in the statistical database.
- There are well publicised initiatives to develop networking, IT and the Internet in public libraries. So far, with the possible exception of the UK, this does not seem to have diminished the take up of traditional services.

Table 7 Public libraries expenditure and income - all countries

Responses No.	%		1991 € millions	1998 € millions	%ge change	1991 %	1998 %
		EXPENDITURE					
21	75	Employees	2,585	3,348	+ 30	50.2	53.3
22	77	Materials	758	762	+ 1	14.7	12.1
4	26	Electronic materials	0.8	4.6	x 6	0	0.1
5	24	Automation	103	167	+ 62	2.0	2.3
7	30	Premises	726	808	+ 11	14.0	12.9
10	38	New Building & Ref't	58	60	+ 3	1.1	0.9
21	63	Other expenses	914	1130	+ 24	17.8	18.0
20	59	TOTAL EXP'RE	5146	6279	+ 22	99.9	100
		INCOME					
15	37	Institutional	4870	5632	+ 16	94.6	89.7
13	44	Fees & charges	135	316	+ 134	2.6	5.0
13	32	'Other income'	142	331	+ 133	2.8	5.3
12	51	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	353	448	+ 27	6.9	7.1

IV. SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS TO POLICY MAKERS ARISING FROM THE DATA

1.i LIBRARY SIZE & ECONOMIES OF SCALE

(a) Tertiary sector – Service points/decentralisation

Some countries are already moving towards fewer small service points. Other countries with a user population below 2,000 per service point should investigate the effectiveness of such a model which may be dictated more by academic convention than by considerations of library efficiency.

(b) Tertiary sector – Periodicals

With the exception of Poland, the results for Eastern Europe are a long way below average. Furthermore, provision has declined markedly in every Eastern European country since 1991.

(c) Public Libraries - Administrative units.

Policy makers in countries where there are very small local government administrative units should consider sponsoring international bench marking studies to examine the pros and cons of larger units - with particular reference to their ability to apply modern technology.

1.ii AUTOMATION & TECHNOLOGY

(a) Workstations for users.

This metric which is relevant and significant for all major sectors avoids the complexities of measuring electronic use in detail, which is currently impossible at the international level. The development of networking, IT and the Internet in public libraries have great significance in many policy areas in support of Information Society initiatives. Policy makers at national level are urged to adopt this metric and to benchmark the results internationally.

(b) Percentage of Catalogue Records Automated.

States should be encouraged to produce informed estimates even if based on one off special surveys. The data points to CEE states being substantially behind norms in Western Europe.

1.iii PUBLIC LIBRARY PROVISION

Disparities in provision between countries and regions are of great concern. Policy makers should consider the construction of an international policy framework and effective initiatives to tackle this issue.

2. ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE COVERAGE, QUALITY AND STANDARDISATION

2.i Value of continuity.

It is recommended that the Libecon2000 data continue to be collected on an annual basis and that the LIBECON2000 website be maintained and updated.

2.ii Improved coverage of sectors in some countries

Regional workshops of key players are needed to encourage all to benchmark on the best. Work in this area should focus on encouraging consistent interpolation and provision of standard tools such as model questionnaires and sampling methods.

2.iii Improved presentation of data

A new LIBECON should make recommendations about the presentation of national data based on an examination of original publications. The use of graphs, ratios and time series in national publications would improve many presentations and the conclusions to be drawn.

2.iv Other data improvements

- (a) Public library interlibrary lending and Interlibrary lending in Academic Libraries.** Any follow up to LIBECON2000 should investigate the statistical methodologies of the reporting countries.
- (b) Schools:** The possibility of a Europe-wide sampling exercise with standardised methodology should be explored. The investigation should see how far some countries include the provision of text books and whether these should be counted separately.
- (c) Other major non specialised libraries.** This category should be discontinued from 2001, i.e. 1999 data should be the last to include this sector.
- (d) Special Libraries.** There is important research to be continued and extended across Europe to discover the features of libraries in the sub categories. These survey results demonstrate the potential as well as the problems.

2.v Coverage of other advanced countries

It would further improve the value of the database for research and policy development if it could be extended to include other countries with advanced library services[Europe] as far as possible.

2.vi Production of annual factsheets

A statistical factsheet should be produced annually covering libraries and knowledge institutions in Europe for distribution to key stakeholders in the countries concerned and to serve as a model for national factsheets.

3. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

3.i Improved coverage of information technology in library statistics

The new draft of ISO 2789, by providing definitions and outline methodologies, provides an opportunity to collect data in this area. An action is needed within the LIBECON context to encourage all European countries to adopt these definitions and methodologies to allow meaningful international comparisons. A series of regional workshops could speed up and coordinate this activity.

3.ii Convergence of data on knowledge institutions

It would be useful to investigate the possibility of bringing together data on all the knowledge institutions [libraries, museums, archives], in one place, covering the major areas of finance, staff, visitors and extent of digitisation of collections.

