

## Introduction

**LIBECON2000** is a study funded by DG13 of the European Commission within the Telematics Applications Programme. It uses internet communications to develop a continuously updated database of statistics about library activities and associated costs in the context of their national economies. An internet site [[www.libecon2000.org](http://www.libecon2000.org)] has been established to test and then generate an automatic means of collecting data from respondents in each of 29 countries comprising signatories to the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) and the Association Agreement with the EU in Central & Eastern Europe (CEE). Data collected in past surveys has been added to the database, and visitors to this site can review past trends as well as compare national statistics.

This **Millennium Study** makes use of these datasets to describe the progress and trends in library services during the last decade and provide an account of the overall scale of activities as we begin the next millennium. Foremost, the study aims to inform policy makers of the contribution made by libraries in the various participating countries of the LibEcon community. At the time of this report, a further year of data [1998] has been added to the database for most countries and the next survey of activity [1999 data] is being canvassed.

The study reviews the state of development of library services in participating countries. In comparing situations and trends some suggestions and recommendations are made for further study and development activity.

While data are still not complete, the response to this survey has been most encouraging. As regards national, tertiary education and public libraries the established statistical series (and the response rates) are sufficiently comprehensive to allow interpretation of results and trends with much more confidence than hitherto possible. As regards Special Libraries and Schools Libraries there are weaknesses in the statistics collected and many gaps - but there are more promising lines of development now than ever before, and some most interesting if speculative results to report.

While the questionnaire and data structure are standardised for all sectors, the results - and in some cases the data collection methods - need separate consideration sector by sector. Complete coverage of all aspects in all sectors is not required - for example: 'Inter Library Loans' and 'Manuscripts' hardly count in School Libraries; 'Service Points' have little relevance for National and Special Libraries; 'Sector Population to be Served' has to be calculated differently, and has different significance, for each sector.

The structure of this report should be clear from the contents page. It is not intended that this report should end the LIBECON Project, although project funding ceases at the end of 2000. - but rather it aims (1) to describe the library situation and trends at the turn of the century and (2) to show how the LIBECON data can be used by statisticians, policy makers and professional librarians for particular enquiries and for benchmarking.

Much of the Executive Summary is repeated in the main text - principally in chapters 1, 3, 4 and 11.

**Timing** Where trends are described these are mostly calculated between 1991 and 1998. Where statistics are analysed to describe the present position this is mostly done with reference to 1997 data - since, at the time of writing, it was significantly more complete than the 1998 data. It should be remembered that data accumulation and editing are constant processes, so that the data on which this report is based may be corrected or updated on the website by the time the report is read!