

PREFACE

Information is the currency of policy debate and so it is important to make available consistent and timely data about the operation of libraries, if these essential institutions are to be developed in tune with modern needs. To this end many people in each of the 29 countries described in this study have collaborated to share their information in order that their own library services can be seen in proper perspective. Their efforts should neither be underestimated, nor overlooked, and the purpose of this study is to reveal the scope, scale and dispersion of libraries and relate these to the resources they consume, so their value can be better understood.

The surveys which underlie this study are ongoing and a truly international database has now been established which it is hoped will inform continuing policy review. In the meantime, this study provides a “snapshot” of the state of European libraries at the start of a new millennium.

The principal author of this study was John Sumsion OBE. He was supported by Claire Creaser in the validation of the data, and David Fuegi in the assembly of the survey response.

The wider team included Adolf Knoll and David Spiller who respectively contributed technical support for the survey processes involved. The concept described in this study is a continuous survey based on the internet - this makes the processes of collecting, and making data available without the constraints of publication deadlines. We hope this method of working will develop and eventually involve a wider community of participants. In the meantime, the study team would like to express their thanks to UNESCO and IFLA for their support, and to all the contributors of information listed in the Annex to this report. All of us appreciate the foresight of the European Commission for making this work possible.

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