

2014

# Library

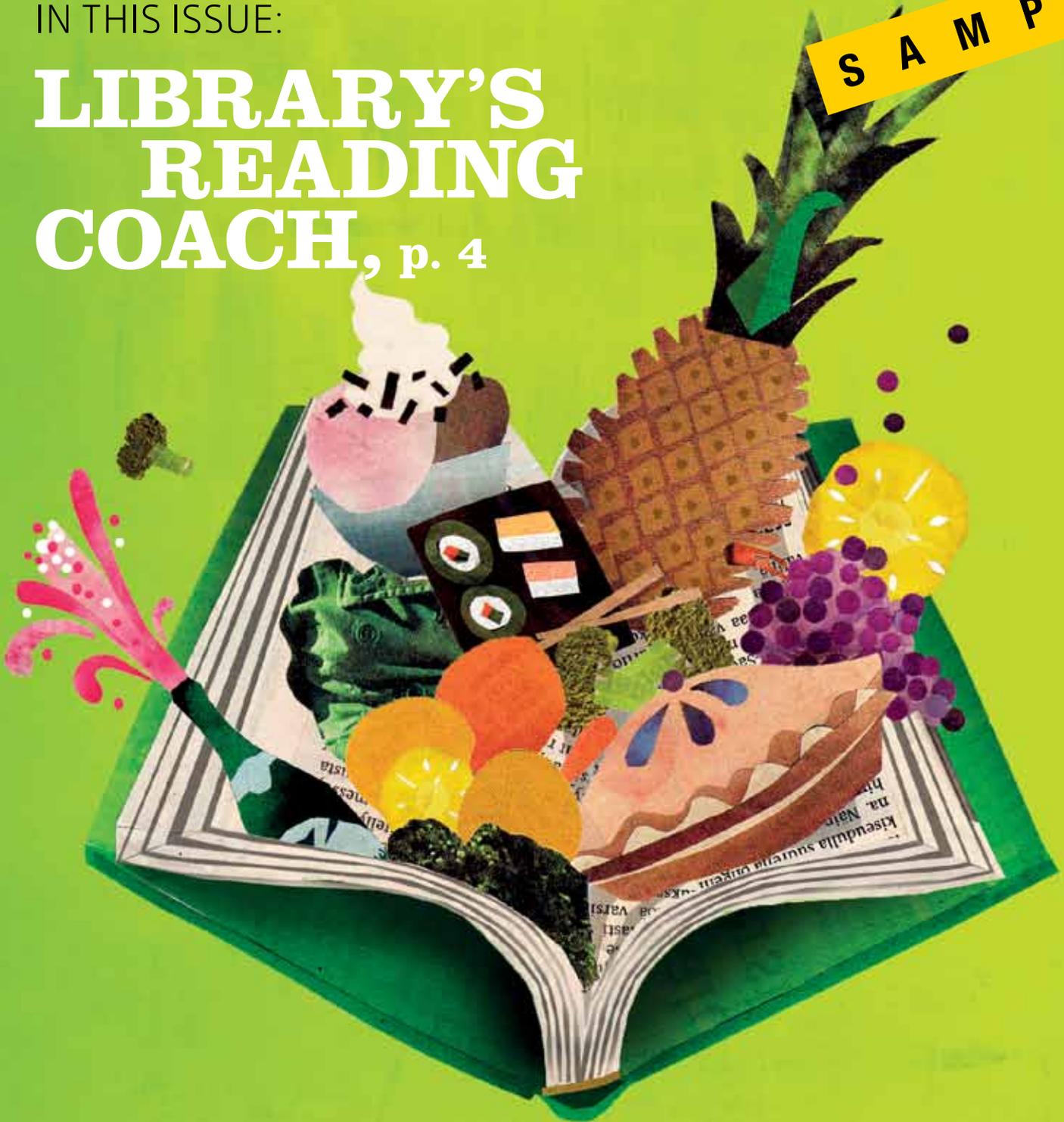
JOURNAL

MINI VERSION OF THE FINNISH LIBRARY JOURNAL!

IN THIS ISSUE:

## LIBRARY'S READING COACH, p. 4

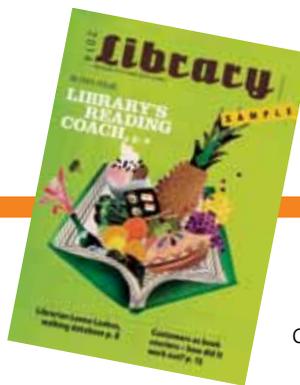
SAMPLE



**Librarian Leena Laakso,  
walking database p. 8**

**Customers as book  
couriers – how did it  
work out? p. 13**

# Contents



COVER: JONNA KOSKI

## 3 WHAT'S THE PROFIT?

Editorial

SALLA HONGISTO



## 4 PERSONAL READING TRAINER

Library Professions, Part 3: Reading coach

## 6 WHAT CAN NO MACHINE REPLACE?

Interview with Erkki Karvonen, Professor of Communication Studies

## 8 LIBRARIAN LEENA LAAKSO, WALKING DATABASE

Interview

## 10 THE CRÈME DE LA CRÈME OF ART BOOKS

Forgotten Gems Book Column

## 11 A LIBRARY IS THE FIGURATIVE SHOP WINDOW OF AN ENTIRE MUNICIPALITY

Column

## 12 YES AND NO

Column

## 13 CUSTOMERS AS BOOK MESSENGERS

How did it work out?

## 14 MOBILE LIBRARIES IN FINLAND

This is how statistics should be presented to decision makers

## 16 SINIKKA SIPILÄ – FLYING LIBRARY AMBASSADOR

Personal interview



PIRJO SALLMÉN

## TUNING CORNER

TEXT AND PHOTO MAIJA MÄNNISTÖ

In this column, the Kirjastolehti editorial team tunes books.

# A bag from a book!

With a little effort, you can turn a worn-out book into a chic bag. Step-by-step illustrated instructions at <http://kirjastolehti.fi/artikkelit/artikkeli/46/tuunaa-kirja/?category=3>



# What's the profit?

**IT IS NOT** an exaggeration to say that values have become increasingly materialistic during the past twenty or so years. Everything is measured in money. In addition to children and the elderly, traditional cultural institutions, such as the library, also suffer from the effects of this development. The common denominator for children, the elderly and the library is that they bring joy, happiness and wisdom to our society but not cold, hard cash.

**ACCORDING TO Erkki Karvonen**, Professor of Information and Communication Studies (pp 8–10), this development is a result of the neo-liberal social values that spread in Finland in the 1980s. At that time, market economy principles started to be applied to the public sector. "Today's market-oriented values and technological development have led to a situation in which quite a few traditional services or institutions face a legitimacy crisis. You have to justify your right to exist," Karvonen says.

**WHEN** you read magazines like *Taide (Art)* or visit library professionals' discussion forums, you can sense frustration and despair. If we start to measure the value of art or libraries in terms of money, our society is on the road to disaster. Culture brings a lot of good things to us, but it does not receive money in return.

**WE ARE** being persuaded to buy the idea of having a **Guggenheim Museum** in Finland with promises of high profits in the form of art tourism. A municipal library is not a tourist trap, but it certainly brings economic wellbeing to its environment. The impact of a library is, however, indirect, and therefore it is difficult to prove in a credible manner.

**ON THE OTHER HAND**, one may ask how sensible it is to measure the value of a library in terms of money.

**IN HIS BOOK *Visible Hand: Towards the Economy for Common Good* (2013)**, Christian Felber, Professor of Economy at the University of Vienna, offers a socially fairer economy for common good instead of today's market economy, which fosters selfishness. In the Common Good model, stock exchange value is replaced by use value as a measure of economic success, i.e. the basis for measuring the economic success of a company is its usefulness to society rather than stock exchange figures. In this model, fair companies which take care of their employees and pay their

taxes are rewarded, and exploitative companies which operate on selfish principles are sanctioned.

**IN HIS BOOK, Felber** also lists the indicators that can be used to measure the output of common good. The measurement is based on five values: human value, solidarity, ecological sustainability, social justice and democracy.

**THE CITY LIBRARY OF HELSINKI** is seeking funding for a research project to establish how the economic impact of libraries can be measured. The idea behind the initiative is probably the need to justify the necessity of libraries to those who do not understand their value. Maybe a better idea would be to measure the impact of the common good provided by libraries. That, for sure, would be impressive. 🌟



JOONAS PETRELL



**KIRJASTOLEHTI** <http://kirjastolehti.fi>, Volume 107, ISSN 0023-1843

Runeberginkatu 15 A 6, Helsinki.

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS** Ira Koivu, [ira.koivu@fla.fi](mailto:ira.koivu@fla.fi)

**EDITOR** Titta Baer, [titta.baer@fla.fi](mailto:titta.baer@fla.fi), **LAYOUT/AD** Kari Långsjö, [kari.langsjo@welho.com](mailto:kari.langsjo@welho.com).

Published by Suomen kirjastoseura (Finnish Library Association), [info@fla.fi](mailto:info@fla.fi), [suomenkirjastoseura.fi](http://suomenkirjastoseura.fi)

**SECRETARY GENERAL** Sinikka Sipilä, [sinikka.sipila@fla.fi](mailto:sinikka.sipila@fla.fi)

**OFFICE MANAGER** Kristiina Kontiainen, [kristiina.kontiainen@fla.fi](mailto:kristiina.kontiainen@fla.fi)

**ADDRESS CHANGES, SUBSCRIPTIONS, MEMBERSHIP MATTERS** [riikka.rajala@fla.fi](mailto:riikka.rajala@fla.fi)



441 612  
Painotuote



Noudatamme  
journalistin  
ohjeita.

## Part 3: Reading Coach

The series presents different library professions. Previously published: 1) Pedagogic Information Specialist and 2) Procurement Officer.

PHOTOS AND TEXT: SALLA HONGISTO

A message pings into Reading Coach **Silene Lehto's** inbox. A customer has replied to the questions preceding actual coaching: What kind of literature would you like reading tips for? Who is your favourite author?

Lehto, who works at the Kallio Branch Library of the Helsinki City Library, prepares a comprehensive list of recommended reading on the basis of the answers. If required, Silene will go through the list in a one-hour discussion with the customer.

"In coaching, the need for reading tips and recommendations meet in an ideal way", Silene Lehto says.

The Helsinki City Library started reading coaching at the Kallio Branch Library in April 2013. Since then, the idea has been adopted at least by the Itäkeskus Branch Library, if not more.

### Time to prepare

Book recommendations are part of librarians' everyday work, but normal customer service rarely allows enough time for deeper discussions on literature. "Sometimes the best ideas come to mind when the customer has gone," Lehto says. Reading coaching improves the situation. The reading coaches are allowed to concentrate on collecting reading lists for a few hours every week. This gives them an opportunity to utilise their literature expertise.

Coaching means time dedicated to the customer with no rush, and this deepens the customer relationship. In order to find the best books for differ-

ent reading tastes, the librarians have brainstorming sessions in which they prepare reading lists.

"For instance, I am not particularly keen on fantasy literature, but some of my colleagues are."

In the beginning, reading coaching often means putting out feelers for the right ideas. If the recommendations are off slightly, they nevertheless act as a basis on which to continue the coaching process.

### Reading coaching put to the test

The email received by Reading Coach Lehto is from me. I hope that reading coaching will give me new ideas and inspiration for my thinking. Once again, I am stuck with my all time favourites Franz Kafka and Milan Kundera.

One hour with Silene Lehto in the cosy Dekkarikirjasto (Detective story library) meeting room of the Kallio Branch Library is extremely rewarding. We go through 20 books selected for me by Silene. Most of them are completely unknown to me and some of them already on my list of books to read. Only one book in the list is one that I have already read. Excellent!

The book list meets my expectations, and I leave the library with four books in my bag.

I start with a book that I already know. Peter Høeg's *Borderliners* fascinated me when I was a high school student.

According to Lehto, this book is worth reading more than once. When I read it, I realised how right she was.

A professional knows her job. ☺

”

**In coaching, the need for reading tips meets recommendations in an ideal way.**

### What is reading coaching?

- Reading coaching is suitable for everybody.
- You can register for coaching by email. If you do not have an email address, you can phone the local library or visit in person to ask about it.
- There are three types of coaching available. You can either order a reading list direct to your email address or a reading list plus the books to be collected from the library, or you can have a one-hour face-to-face discussion with a reading coach. The reading list includes a short introduction to each book.
- You can participate in reading coaching as many times as you need or your interests require.



In reading coaching, you can choose a reading list of 10 or 20 books.

Specialist Librarian  
Silene Lehto, M.A., is  
one of the first reading  
coaches in Finland.

# Personal reading trainer

A reading coach guides the customer in finding new books and interesting literature.





”

**We cannot be stupid enough to make ourselves redundant, can we?”**

“The library is a basic service in a democratic society. It is a must in a civilised country”, Professor Karvonen sums up.

# WHAT CAN NO MACHINE REPLACE?

Professor Erkki Karvonen contemplates change, jobs and values.

**I**n early 2014, the media published a report by the Research Institute of the Finnish Economy (ETLA) according to which at least one third of jobs could be replaced by automation. **Erkki Karvonen**, Professor of Information and Communication Studies, discussed the issue last year when an Oxford University report on future jobs in the USA was published.

According to the report, half of jobs can be replaced by robots and artificial intelligence. In the world of ICT, new jobs are not created in the same way as in the chimney industry. New jobs are, however, created all the time.

"The new jobs could also include library jobs. One major trend has seen machines replace a large amount of manual labour. The increasingly intelligent technology is also able to perform intellectual and mental work, especially if the work consists of routine tasks.

According to Karvonen, the moral of ETLA's report was that machines cannot replace work that requires creativity and improvisation. The human mind is unrivalled when creative solutions are required.

In libraries, the jobs that will disappear include those that contain a lot of routines. On the other hand, professionals who design content or chief librarians managing versatile library services will probably be in equal demand with hotel managers, who were given as examples of safe jobs in the news on ETLA's report.

### Materialistic values

According to Karvonen, the neo-liberal social values that spread in the 1980s paved the way to the current situation. At that time, market economy principles started to be applied to the public sector.

Today's market-oriented values and technological development have led to a situation in which quite a few traditional services and institutions face a legitimacy crisis. "You have to justify your right to exist," says Karvonen.

In Karvonen's opinion, libraries' justification for existence could be democracy. "The value of democracy is hard to deny. The library is a basic service in a democratic society. It is a must in a civilised country. The library brings about a lot of necessary and good things, and it enjoys wide public support."

Researchers have put forward eight sets of values in terms of which we can contemplate the right of existence. The sets of values related to industry, marketing and projects place high value on efficiency and competitiveness. But there are also sets of values related to nationality, inspiration and environmental friendliness. If libraries' right to exist is based on these values, there is certainly a lot of work that cannot be replaced by machines.

### A world without human contact?

The first form of automation at libraries was the self-service loan machine, and now development is heading towards entirely self-service libraries. Automated loan and return machines have freed librarians from routine work. Self-service has extended opening hours, but how far are we prepared to go?

"It is certainly possible that libraries will be developed in the same direction as postal services. i.e. towards full automation. But what will we lose in the process? We cannot be stupid enough to make ourselves redundant, can we?" Professor Karvonen says with wonder in his voice.

Why don't we appreciate service culture and human contacts? Will technological development deprive us of something irreplaceable and destroy customer service?

According to Professor Karvonen, we have been conditioned towards self-service. Savings and efficiency may, however, be more apparent than real. If we take a wider view of the development, we may see that savings in one place may create costs in another. Savings and self-service may eventually have a high price label, Karvonen continues.

"We should also put a price on self-service in terms of the national economy. If an office employee is laid off at a university on the pretext of making savings, the teachers and researchers will have to do his or her work and spend their time on work that they are not educated for. Productivity would

suffer if people didn't work overtime to compensate for the lost working hours. Today's systems have led to a situation in white-collar jobs where in profitability and savings are created through unpaid overtime."

In addition to blue-collar work, services can also be automated and turned into self-service. This process of development has perhaps only just begun. On the other hand, new service jobs are created all the time. "Technology has the potential to destroy customer service and replace it with self-service solutions at shop check-outs and at airports, for example. Technology probably cannot destroy all customer service, however. There is increasing demand for various kinds of coaches, for instance."

In Professor Karvonen's opinion, a library professional could help library users by making literature recommendations much in the same manner as personal trainers or wine specialists help their clients. Some libraries already have reading and music coaches.

### Unemployment or experience production?

Sociologists have predicted a transfer from the production of goods to the experience industry, i.e. the production of experiences and adventures.

"Machines work more efficiently and cost-effectively than human beings. This scenario includes a utopian possibility that people, having been freed from work, could take it easy and focus on e.g. creative activities."

"A bleaker scenario is that most people will face unemployment and exclusion, and those who still have jobs will have too much work and they run the rat race towards burnout," adds Karvonen.

To reach a balance, we need discussion on values and creative economic thinking. According to Karvonen, the mainstream economics of today is the economics of supply. Consumer demand and purchasing power are largely sidelined.

"If people have no work, they cannot afford to buy products and services. The worker's alter ego is the consumer. Today, prices are low and the consumer is king, but the workers' situation is getting tighter and their purchasing power continues to weaken. In the end, this will lead to decreased consumption." 🌟

# Librarian Leena Laakso, walking database

The core of library work is concretised in Librarian Leena Laakso: She is a walking database, able to help when Google can't.

---

PHOTOS AND TEXT IRA KOIVU

---

**“Y**ou should really interview somebody else,” says Leena Laakso trying to persuade me to change the subject of this story. I do not give in. It is precisely Leena that I want to interview. Why? Because **Leena Laakso** is an interesting person with a wicked sense of humour, photographic memory and odd hobbies, and also because she has worked as a librarian for 34 years and probably knows the Finnish institutional and home service library field better than anybody else in the country.

Even though institutional libraries have existed since the 1940s, this kind of library and home service libraries are not very well known among the public. The strange thing is that no major investments are made in the home service library system even though there is increasing demand for the service as the baby-boom generation gets older. No statistics are compiled on the service, either. This is a cause for which Leena Laakso has campaigned since 1988 when she was Chairperson of the Home Service and Institutional Library Group of the Finnish Library Association. “What is not statistically recorded does not exist. It can be made to disappear at any time,” she says.

## “Socks are a luxury one cannot afford in my pay bracket”

I meet Leena in her office at the Laakso Hospital, where she works part

of the week. The rest of her working hours are spent at the Roihuvuori Old People's Home. The library is in the basement of the building, and the temperature there is quite cool. Leena walks barefoot in the office. “Socks are a luxury one cannot afford in my pay bracket,” she usually answers when people wonder why she is barefoot.

“I have worked in libraries for 34 years. Everything has changed in library work except the pay. When you tell people how much money you make, they don't believe you at first, and when they recover from the shock, they tell you it is your own choice or a matter of job selection. It is not a good pay policy to create jobs in which you can only manage financially if you have inherited money or married a rich man.” In library circles, Leena Laakso is known as a good storyteller and a passionate collector who has amassed an incredible amount of information on some very odd subjects. The national newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* published an article on her murder-related collection of articles and materials on *Bodom*, one of the most intriguing unsolved murder cases in Finnish crime history. Leena also collects material related to the well-known Finnish author **Mika Waltari**, not to mention paper dolls, scrap pictures, Christmas magazines, Easter cards, library related articles, you name it. She has also given lectures on most of these subjects.

You can't help wondering how crowded the collector's home might be. “It is not crowded at all. There is plenty of room there. A library professional is also an expert in organising information in such a way that it is in a compact format and easy to find,” Laakso states.

“Then there is the old rule: one in,

two out. That's how archives are kept in order.”

## “We have the best customers”

Even if librarians' pay level sometimes gets on her nerves, Laakso loves her work and the library. She has had many different kinds of library jobs, but she likes the institutional library best. In Laakso's opinion, work in an institutional library represents the true core of all library work; personal information service.

“Besides, we have the best customers. Their experience of life is broad, their work has made this country what it is now, and they are still interested in everything that happens in this world.” One of Leena's customers in the 1980's was a school girl when Governor General **Bobrikov** was shot by a Finnish nationalist in 1904. The girls at the school were told to wear black ribbons in their hair, but by way of demonstration, they wore red ribbons.

Work in an institutional library is also very independent even if it is the entire personnel works together. “Independent work in which cooperation is power”, Laakso sums up.

## Personal information service

Today, more and more psychiatric hospitals are closed down, even if the need for them has not decreased. In Laakso's opinion, the need for institutional libraries is highest in psychiatric services.

“Mental health patients are often quite young, and reading is part of rehabilitation.”

Work in an institutional library is extremely diverse and personal – it cannot be replaced by self-service. Work



**Everything has changed in library work except pay.”**

Librarian Leena Laakso loves her work but not librarians' pay.

involves meeting people at a personal level. It requires a good knowledge of literature and the ability to manage databases. You have to be prepared to answer any questions at any time. We have Google but you can't find a ready answer to everything on the Internet. You have to know cultural history in order to know what to look for and where. A library professional knows.

**Institutional libraries are not advertised enough**

One week later, I meet Leena again in the library of the Roihuvuori Old People's Home. She works there two days a week. Two of Leena's regular customers, **Anja** and **Mikko Laine**, are also there. They visit the library regularly and use the whole range of services that the library offers. They are still in good physical condition and do not live in the old people's home.

The Laine family has lived in Roihuvuori since 1972, but it was only 8 years ago that they found this library. Insti-

tutional libraries are not advertised widely even if their services are available to local residents.

"There were periods in my working life when I did not have time to use library services, but now I have time for hobbies," Anja Laine says.

Both Anja and Mikko have been bookworms all their lives. This mentally and physically active couple represents an ever-increasing group of people: well-educated pensioners with long careers behind them. They have

the time and opportunity to engage in different kinds of activities and they know how to demand services. They borrow books, they visit exhibitions, they participate in literary and other cultural events, they do exercise, they learn how to use computers and communication devices...

What if this library did not exist? "My life would be emptier. I have had spells of illness, and books have filled empty places in my life," Mikko Laine says. ☺

**Anja (77) and Mikko (88) Laine have been regular users of the Roihuvuori Old People's Home library for eight years.**



# The crème de la crème of art books

The popularity of art books is often connected with ongoing exhibitions.



MANU RANTANEN

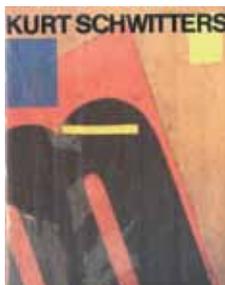
The Richardinkatu Branch of the Helsinki City Library specialises in visual arts. “We have quite an extensive art book collection covering a wide time span and compiled with a fresh approach”, says Specialist Librarian **Jyri-Petteri Volkoff**. According to him, customers are especially interested in books on Finnish

arts and modern art genres. The popularity of art books is often connected with ongoing exhibitions.

Volkoff believes that a book on Kurt Schwitters’s art might interest people who are looking for books on collage art “The book is not, however, indexed very well. If you don’t know the artist beforehand, it is difficult to find”, Volkoff continues.

Books on sculpture are not art books that are borrowed frequently. This is reflected in the low popularity of the book titled *Puu veistäjän käsissä* (Wood in the hands of a sculptor). According to Volkoff, the popularity of Elsa Beskow’s children’s books continues, even if her personal history may not attract so much interest.

## REVIEWS



### MODERNISM

*Kurt Schwitters 1887–1948*  
Sprengel Museum Hannover 1987  
**Latest loan:** 3/2012  
**Loans, total:** 43

Kurt Schwitters is a visual artist who is connected with several modernistic and avantgardistic art movements and who is at home with different art genres and expressions. The German-language

art book titled *Kurt Schwitters 1887-1948* is based on a retrospective at the Sprengel Museum Hannover. Schwitters’s works have been considered to represent e.g. dadaism, constructivism and surrealism. Experiments with different expressions are characteristics of his works. Schwitters is also known for his Merz collages, in which he creates dadaistic installations of fragmented reality. This book, heavy in weight and heavy in substance, offers a comprehensive information package on Kurt Schwitters to a reader who understands German. Even those who cannot read German will certainly appreciate the high quality of this book, which gives a great insight into Schwitters’s art.



### ILLUSTRATION ART

**Margareta Sjögren**  
*Elsa Beskow och hennes värld* (*Elsa Beskow and her world*)  
Bonnier fakta 1983  
**Latest loan:** 2/2012,  
**Loans, total** 32

Elsa Beskow (1874 – 1953) was a Swedish author and illustrator of children’s books. She is well known for her fascinating story books and

illustrations of children’s books. Margareta Sjögren’s *Elsa Beskow och hennes värld* (*Elsa Beskow and her world*) is a Swedish-language Elsa Beskow biography which describes the artist and her art in words and pictures. The photographs, especially the vivid nature and animal motifs, shed light on the person behind the artist and complement the texts describing Beskow’s life. The central role in the book is played by Beskow’s illustration art in its perceptiveness and timelessness. The gentle world of colours and humour bring comfort in the unpredictable, fast changing world. Sjögren’s book is an excellent basic source of information for those who love Elsa Beskow’s art.

**KRISTIINA KONTOAINEN**  
Office Manager



SUOMEN KIRJASTOSEURA  
FINLANDS BIBLIOTEKSFÖRENING  
FINNISH LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

# A library is figurative shop window of an entire municipality

**FOR A TOURIST**, a library is the figurative shop window of an entire municipality. At its best, the library provides more and better information on the municipality than any paid advertisements or glossy brochures. Municipal decision makers would do well to remember this when they consider the significance of a library for a municipality. A visitor is able to draw vital conclusions on a municipality and its spirit by visiting its library.

**A SMALL LIBRARY** provides a snapshot of the most essential elements of a library: appropriate facilities and equipment, professional staff, up-to-date materials and sufficient opening hours. From a tourist's point of view, at least two things have to be in place: well-displayed local material and opening hours that are not restricted to office hours. If the library's collection is compiled in a professional way and takes the special features of the municipality into consideration, even a visitor who has never been engaged in sports might become interested in shot-put.

**THIS YEAR**, libraries are under threat of being closed down in at least twenty municipalities. In many municipalities, a self-service library has been considered as a possible alternative for closedowns. When the opening hours are extended through the use of self-service facilities, the premises and materials are better accessible to the

customers. However, the only library in a municipality cannot be converted into a full self-service library. According to the Library Act, libraries shall have library and information service staff available to the customers. This may sound like stating the obvious, but this basic requirement needs to be regularly pointed out.

**THERE ARE** also other snags along the road. How does a tourist access a self-service library if the door only opens with a key card? Children under 15 years of age would also be in the same situation if key cards are not granted to them. The Finnish Library Association has received comments from concerned customers who wonder how invisible the work of library professionals will become if libraries are only seen as a kind of logistics centre. Municipalities are also questioning the need for appropriately trained library staff or their need for further education and training.

**THIS SPRING**, more grants than usual have been made available to library staff. The Finnish Library Association, the Finnish Library Foundation and the IFLA Fund have distributed a total of EUR 50,000 in grants to a total of 59 library employees. This also provides indirect support to library employers, as library employees enhance their knowledge and skills with funding that they acquire themselves. ☀



**How does a tourist access a self-service library, if the door only opens with a key card?**



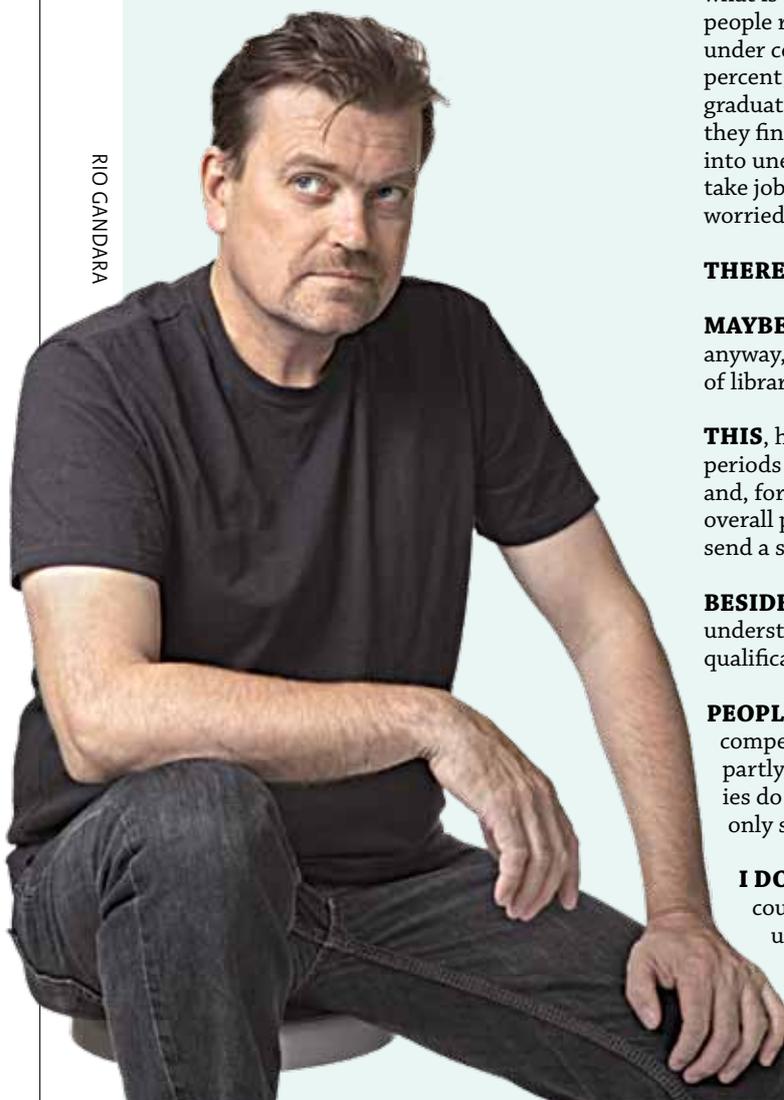
IRA KOIVU

**JUKKA RELANDER**  
CHAIRMAN OF THE FINNISH LIBRARY  
ASSOCIATION

”

**My sincere answer is, “Yes, of course, and no, never.”**

RIO GANDARA



# Yes and no

**A HOT TOPIC** among library professionals has been whether libraries are allowed to use voluntary staff. Both the Library Association and its Chairman have been asked to outline their points of view on the issue. The Finnish Library Association has given its opinion, and I try to give mine here.

It is, however, difficult, and my sincere answer is, “Yes, of course, and no, never.”

**THOSE WHO** participated the IFLA conference in Singapore had an opportunity to visit a library maintained by a Buddhist Temple and run by volunteers. The library, located in the historic Chinatown district, had already been closed down once, but the Temple and the volunteers managed to restore the meeting place for the use of local residents.

**WOULD IT HAVE BEEN** better if the library had been closed down for good? Surely not. People should have put pressure on the decision makers, mount the barricades and write critical articles in newspapers. This is what we would have done here in Finland.

**WELL**, the difference between Finland and Singapore is that we have what is called democracy. In Singapore, meetings of more than six people require a permission, and the press is, to a certain degree, under censorship. Besides, the unemployment rate in Singapore is 2-3 percent, whereas in Finland it is about 8 percent. In Finland, the newly graduated often have work in temporary jobs for several years before they find permanent employment. In the worst case, they graduate into unemployment. In other words, In Singapore, volunteers do not take jobs from professionals. Nor do they in Finland, but people are worried.

**THEREFORE**, we do not need volunteers, do we?

**MAYBE**, we don't. It may as well be that municipalities will make cuts anyway, and some sort of civic activity would help keep the usage rate of libraries at least at a moderate level.

**THIS**, however, involves two fundamental problems. The job-security periods after the first municipal merger round in Finland have expired, and, for instance, the City of Kouvola has announced a 10 percent overall personnel cut. In a situation like this, it would be madness to send a signal that libraries can be managed by volunteers.

**BESIDES**, Finnish library professionals are highly qualified, and I fully understand if they resent the idea of having people with no proper qualifications working in libraries.

**PEOPLE** have a very narrow understanding of library professionals' competencies, and this also applies to municipal decision makers. It is partly because general perception and understanding of what libraries do has not changed since the 1970s, and partly because people only see a small part of the work done in libraries.

**I DO NOT** find it impossible that in certain cases active citizens could help libraries expand their service offering, increase their usage rates and open their doors to e.g. meetings.

Case by case, however, and considering carefully what the consequences may be. 🌀

# Customers as book couriers

The Jyväskylä City Library tested a *Kirjasto kotiin* (or *Library to Your Home*) service, in which library customers delivered library materials to each other for a small fee. For the customer, the service was free. How did it work out?

---

---

IRA KOIVU

---

---

## **What kind of feedback have you received on the experiment, Juha Halinen, Web Service Designer at Jyväskylä City Library?**

“Practically all the feedback has been positive. The customers who ordered the service were satisfied and hoped it would continue. The collection of due books from home was the most popular form of service.”

## **How many people signed up to deliver books, and who were they?**

A total of 140 people signed up. About 20 of them were active and carried out 90% of the deliveries. We are carrying out a survey on the service, but based on the preliminary results, the couriers were primarily female (83%). They were active cyclists and their main motive was an interest in trying something new. Most of them were 25–35 years old.

## **How much were the people paid?**

The normal fee was 2 euros, and a little more for a longer trip (max. 5 euros).

## **How many loans were made?**

“The number of deliveries was about 100, half of which were home deliveries and the other half deliveries of due books to the library. (The number of individual loans was therefore a few hundred).”

## **Were the deliveries made on time?**

“Yes, they were. To ensure that the deliveries would reach the customers on time, we had a local pizza delivery employee on call. He made a few

deliveries when no couriers were available. On the other hand, the number of people who volunteered was more than we needed.”

## **Could this service replace a library bus?**

“I don’t think so. Library buses serve customers who like to browse the material selection of the bus and choose their loans themselves.”

## **Were there any surprises? Problems?**

“There were small surprises along the line, but that’s what you’re trying to weed out in a pilot project. The biggest surprise was that there were more volunteers than customers interested in the service. According to the customers who said they did not need the service, the reason was that they liked to visit the library in person.

## **Did you lose any materials?**

“No we didn’t.”

## **How did you ensure that the people making deliveries did not see what the customers’ loans were?**

“The library personnel packed the loans in reusable RePack bags and sealed the bags with stickers.”

## **Will the service continue, and if so, will it continue like this or will there be any changes?**

“The customer survey is still in progress, and there will still be a report and conclusions to be made. I don’t think the service will continue in exactly the same format, because it causes quite a lot of extra work for the library personnel. The service would also require increased automation in the library system. Based on the preliminary results of the survey, the customers who use the service would be prepared to pay a euro or two

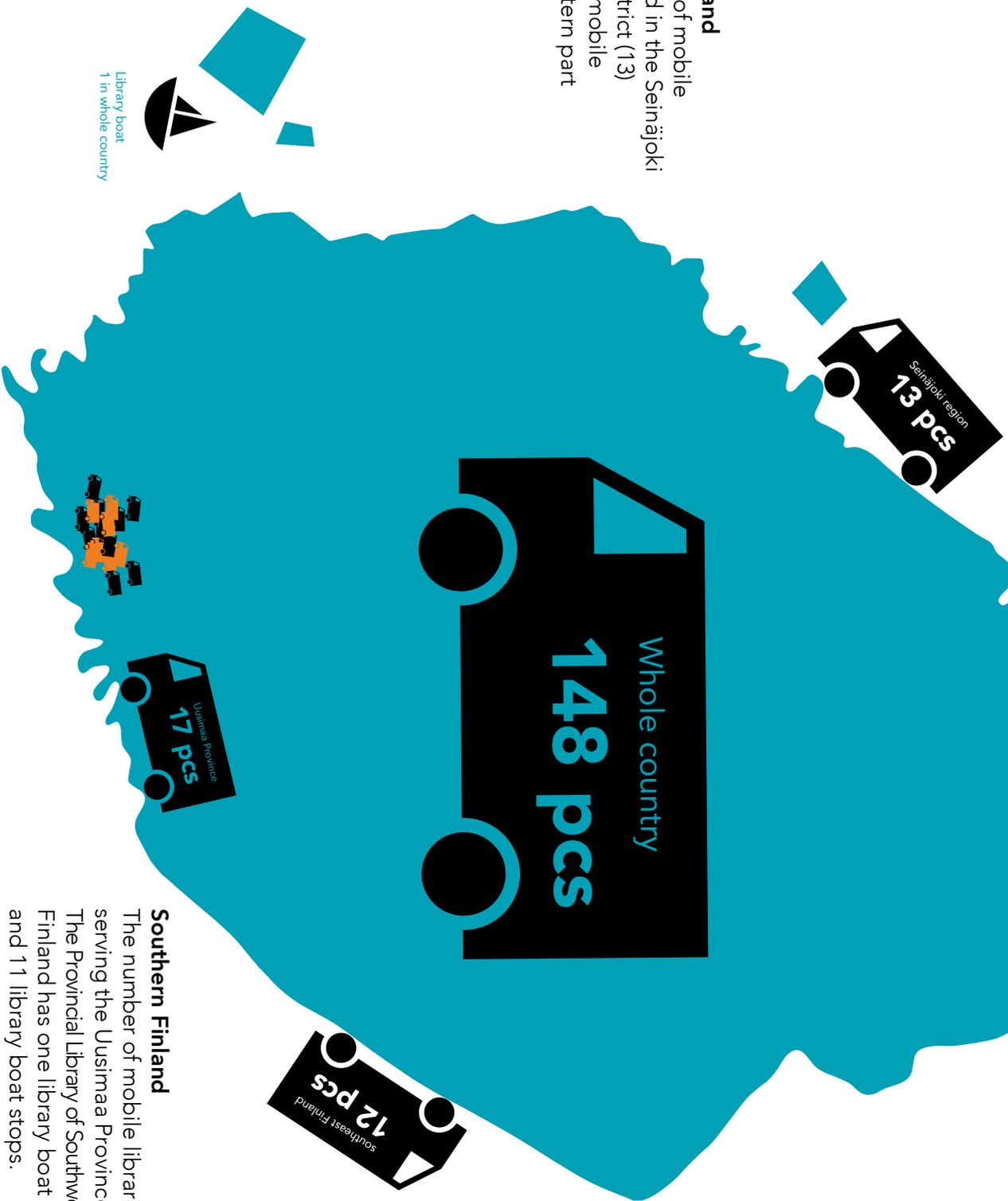
for the delivery. Another question is whether it would be enough for the couriers when the novelty wears off. We are also looking into how we could reach the elderly and the mobility impaired by e.g. integrating the system with home care services. This customer group was not sufficiently represented in the experiment. Some of them also found the registration with the PiggyBaggy web service and the use of the Internet in general quite difficult and complicated.”



“This suits me fine. I cycle a lot anyway!” says Annakaisa Lahti, one of the book couriers.

### Central area of Finland

The highest number of mobile libraries can be found in the Seinäjoki Provincial Library District (13)  
The total number of mobile libraries in south-eastern part of the country is about the same (12).



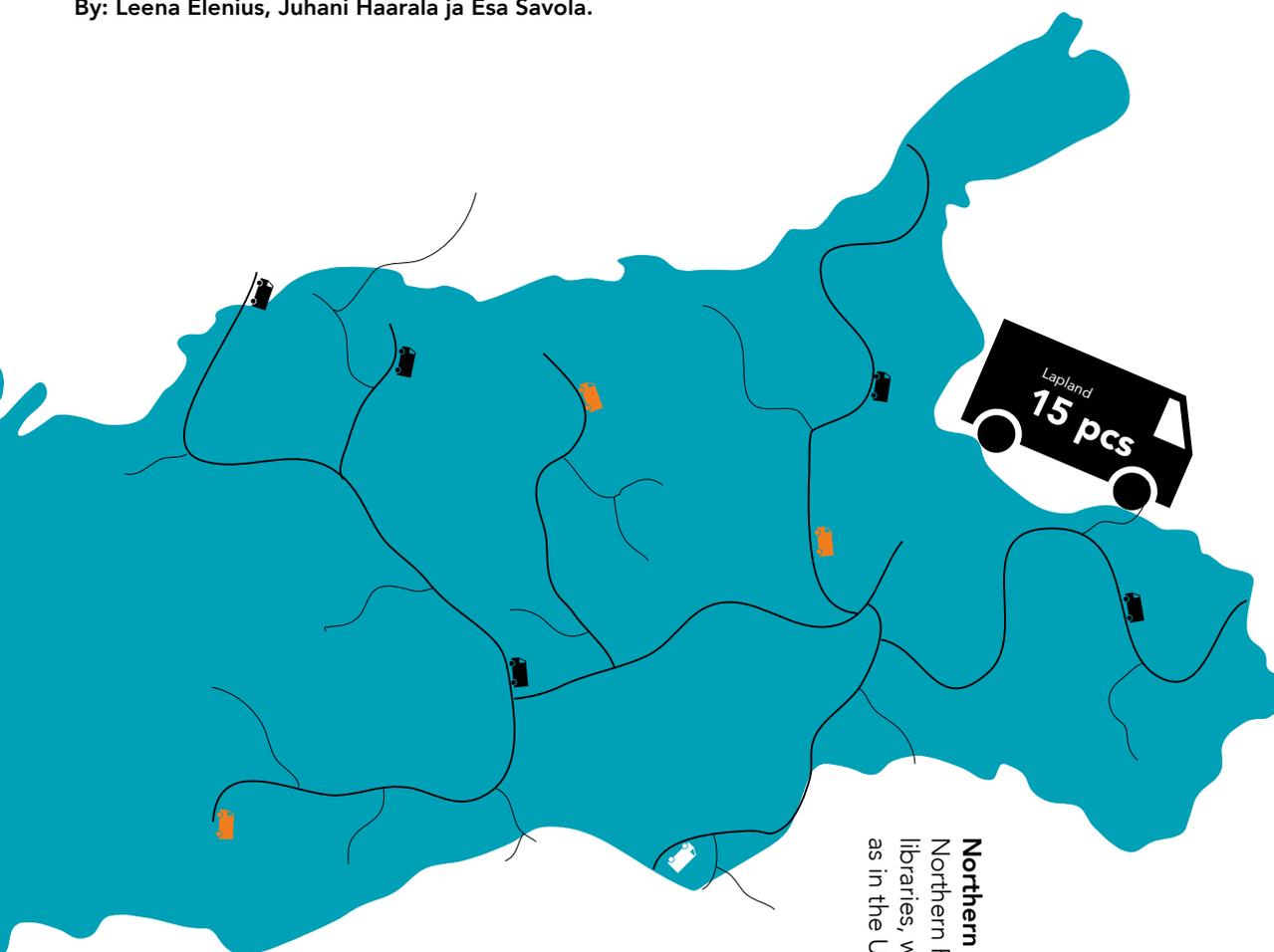
### Southern Finland

The number of mobile libraries serving the Uusimaa Province is 17. The Provincial Library of Southwest Finland has one library boat and 11 library boat stops.

# Mobile libraries in Finland

By converting statistics into graphics,  
we can provide municipal decision  
makers with information in an interesting  
and easily understandable format.

By: Leena Elenius, Juhani Haarala ja Esa Savola.



**Northern Finland**  
Northern Finland is served by 15 mobile  
libraries, which is the same number  
as in the Uusimaa Region.

# Sinikka Sipilä - Flying Library Ambassador

Sinikka Sipilä's road to the top of an international organisation is a good example of the Nordic career progress model. There is no money, power or nobility in her family.



"Previous Presidents have been native English speakers and most of them have had hired speech writers available to them. I rely on a support group that consists of Finnish IFLA group members and international experts," Sinikka Sipilä says.

PÄIVI LITMANEN-PEITSALA  
PHOTO PIRJO SALLMÉN

Three years ago, **Sinikka Sipilä**, Secretary General of the Finnish Library Association, was elected President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). She was elected not only for her personality, but also

about the views that she represents. These were summarised in the so-called President's Theme. Sinikka's theme was "Strong libraries, strong societies".

The President's work, statements and actions focus around this theme. Above all, it means lobbying and making presidents, ministers and experts aware of the significance of libraries.

## Country girl conquers the world

Sinikka Sipilä's road to the top of an international organisation is a good example of the Nordic career progress

model. There is no money, power or nobility in her family. She is a country girl from a small village called Hauho. The local municipal primary and lower secondary schools provided children with access to the world of education. The first steps in internationalisation were taken in the form of foreign penpals. The idea of popping over to a European capital for a weekend would have been like planning a trip to the moon. It is, therefore, no wonder that Sinikka Sipilä emphasises people's individual right to education thereby to the general good of the whole community regardless of their financial or social backgrounds.

## Refugee Camp Librarian

Sinikka Sipilä worked in the City of Hämeenlinna Library for several years.

She completed her Master's thesis on prison libraries in 1990, and at that time, she decided to put her idea of trying something completely new into practice.

A refugee camp maintained in Tanzania by the anti-apartheid organisation ANC had a library funded by Finland. Sinikka decided to go and work in the library, serving refugee children and their families.

"Before I left for Tanzania, I was especially concerned whether the black people who had suffered from the apartheid policy would accept a white woman working in the library. The reality came as a surprise. In everyday life, the colour of your skin did not matter. We lived in the same building with refugee families and shared life with them. This helped us understand each other. Of course, there were some conflicts between people. That is quite normal. Sometimes, you just had to bite your tongue. A Besserwisser attitude did not get you anywhere."

The art of not interfering unnecessarily is also something that Sinikka is known for among the Finnish librarian community. Rather than telling or ordering people to do things, Sinikka expects people to be able to settle their disputes through dialogue and mutual understanding.

"As President of IFLA, I aim at getting everybody involved in decision-making. I am not a politician, but the issues that I deal with are political, as well. For instance, talking about democracy does not promote equality in all countries. Therefore, I often speak about enablement. You have to be able to present a matter in a manner that makes others at least consider it rather than oppose it outright." ☀