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# **State of Retrospective Conversion in Major Finnish Research Libraries - LINNEA Libraries**

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## **Aims of the survey**

A survey of retrospective catalogue conversion in major Finnish research libraries was conducted in April 1991 by sending inquiries to 22 libraries with the aim to find out:

- to what extent bibliographies or card catalogues of monographs in these libraries have been converted into machine-readable form and to what extent conventional catalogues are still used along with the automated system;
- how the retrospective catalogue conversion project had been carried out:
  - in-house project, i.e. in the library along with current cataloguing without additional resources such as staff, equipment, funding - special in-house project, i.e. in the library with additional resources
  - external service project
  - co-operative or joint project between libraries;
  - how much costs varied depending on the source material and the project type.

## **Libraries**

Access to the collections of these 22 libraries is essential to the transfer of scientific information in all research areas in Finland. The batch-based automated cataloguing system, coordinated by the Automation Unit of Finnish Research Libraries, was started by 17 of them in the 1970's or in the 1980's. They all, except for one (the Library of the Central Statistical Office), are called LINNEA libraries, i.e. they have or will have the same local integrated system with the VTLS software installed, they will be linked into a single network, LINNEA, using the existing network of Finnish universities, FUNET, for communications, and finally they will rely on the services of the central system.

The network with the central system will create an ideal environment for libraries to benefit from existing records even in retrospective conversion.

Altogether these libraries incorporate the basic structure of Finnish research libraries: they include the National Library, the National Resource Libraries (10), the Academic Libraries (11), and the National Repository Library.

#### **Retroconversion activities**

The survey showed that the libraries with national responsibilities, the National Library and six of the National Resource Libraries, have been the most initiative in converting their catalogues of monographs into machine-readable for within the past five years.

Helsinki University Library, functioning both as the National Library and the National Resource Library for Art and Humanities, has played an important role in the conversion activity: by now 40% of the national bibliography material has been converted and about the same amount of the general research collections; the Library's Conversion Unit is also speeding up the process.

Of the National Resource Libraries - apart from Helsinki University Library - the Library of Parliament, the national resource library for law, Jyväskylä University Library, the national resource library for pedagogy, psychology, and physical education and the University of Tampere Library, the national resource library for social sciences, journalism and library and information sciences, have converted respectively c. 13%, 14% and 8% of their monographs collections by experimenting with different types of projects.

The Central Medical Library and the Helsinki University of Technology Library, the national resource libraries for medicine and technology, have converted c. 48% and 40% of their considerably smaller monographic collections, while the Helsinki School of Economics Library and the Library of the Central Statistical Office as well as the Agricultural Library and Forestry Library are only planning the conversion of their pre-1980 monographic collections; the automated catalogues cover the most heavily used sections of their collections.

The Academic Libraries, functioning primarily as the library of one particular university or college, have, perhaps, been considering more local needs than the libraries with national responsibilities. Turku University Library is planning the first project to be carried out, Abo Academy Library and Oulu University Library have converted some 3-6% of their research collections - in Abo Academy Library they have not yet been able to estimate the total number of titles to be converted.

The Universities of Joensuu and Kuopio are just over 20 years old and the majority of their monographic collections are on computerized files; whereas the Vaasa School of Economics, dating from the late 1960's, will make use of the card catalogue until the new integrated system will be installed. The Lapland

University Library and the National Repository Library have had automated systems from the very beginning.

### **Project types**

Most of the libraries had carried out the conversion as an inhouse or special in-house project.

Services by external agencies have been used by Helsinki University Library, the Central Medical Library (Saztec Europe Ltd) and Jyväskylä University Library (Access Innovations Inc.).

The Finnish Library Service Bureau has contract with Helsinki University Library, while Kotka Conversion Unit has just completed a project for the Helsinki University of Technology Library and has just started one for Jyväskylä University Library, and the project of Turku University Library will follow in due course later this year.

No library had experimented with what they could call co-operative or joint project between libraries.

### **Costs**

Costs varied from 3.29 FIM to 30 FIM per record depending on the project type. However, it is difficult to compare the costs without a clear idea what is included.

### **Concluding remark**

Almost 600,000 monographic records in major Finnish research libraries have been converted into machine-readable form and are available in FINMARC format. According to the inquiry just over 4 million titles in these libraries remain to be accessed through conventional catalogues. How many of the "unconverted" titles are worth converting, how many are redundant, how many already exist in machine-readable form? These questions may be easier to answer within two years or so when all the LINNEA libraries will have had their local systems installed and will be benefiting from the networking functions for cataloguing.