

# Impact of Finnish Libraries - The National Impact Evaluation Group

## Impact of Finnish Libraries

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The libraries must be able to systematically show the quality and impact of their operations to citizens and financiers. Also changes economical thinking makes it important to show the value and advantage of the library operations also in the other way than just traditional library statistics. We have gathered from different library sectors some key figures and indicators that make it possible to evaluate the importance of libraries in general. On these pages we present some samples of library statistics and results of national customer survey to show the input, output and outcomes/impact of libraries.

The structural development of higher education institutions taken place in Finland during the past few years is reflected in the organizational development of the libraries, too. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, an efficient university network requires more cooperation and the joining of forces (Ministry of Education, Structural development of higher education project 2009). These objectives are supposed to be achieved by forming bigger units that are functionally stronger, and have better preconditions to develop an internationally high level of quality and effectiveness. There are also cost savings associated with such mergers. As a result of mergers, since the year 2010 a new group of libraries of the higher education has been formed by merging the libraries of universities, the universities of applied sciences and the libraries of research institutes. This new group is called the joint libraries of the higher education has been formed.

## Libraries improve quality of life and make the study and research more effective

The National library has coordinated the nation user survey for all library sectors in the years 2008 and 2010. In the last survey there were 13 484 respondents from public libraries and 19325 from the libraries of the institutions of the higher education. Most questions were same for both sectors but some were sector specific. So the customers of public libraries were asked about the impact of libraries to quality of life and customers of the libraries of the institutions of the higher education were asked about the impact of libraries to the quality of work, study and other activities. The results give a strong signal that use of libraries improves quality of work, study and life (fig. 1.).



Figure 1. The customers estimate that the library has substantially improved the quality of their life. The scale: 1=not at all - 2=a little - 3=substantially

## Customers are very satisfied with services

Customers were asked to estimate the libraries services as a whole. They perceived the services very important and the libraries were successful in producing them. It is notable that the answers in library sectors were almost identical.

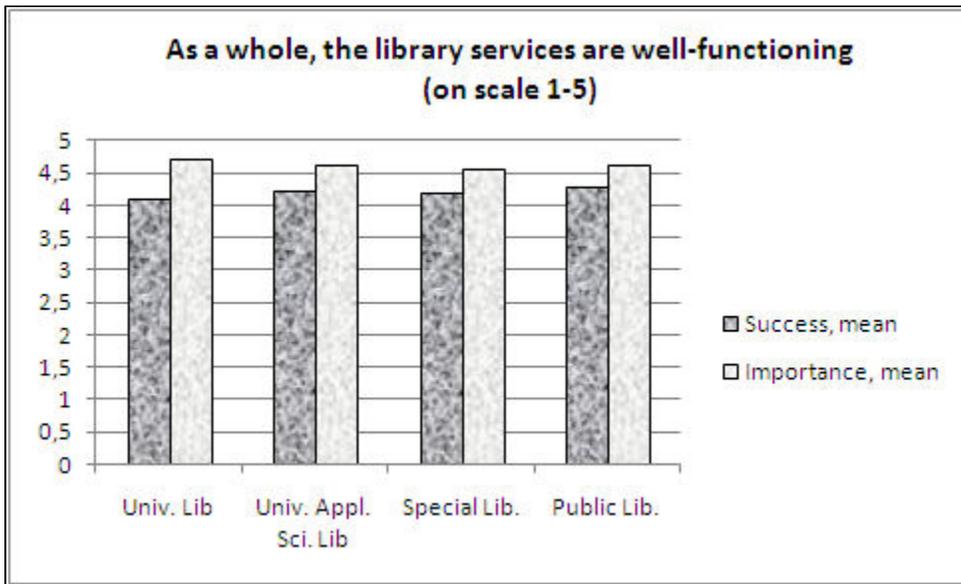


Figure 2. On average, the users are satisfied with the services of the libraries in Finland. The scale from 1 to 5 where in success: 1=very poorly, 2=poorly, 3=moderately, 4=well, 5=very well, and in importance: 1=not at all important, 2=not very important.

### Library visits are changing from physical to virtual

There has been a slow decrease in physical library visits in 2002-2011 (fig. 3). Instead, virtual visits have been increasing in all library sectors. The most dramatic change has been in scientific libraries (fig. 4). For example online search and renewal and reservation services have decreased need of physical visits in libraries. E-books and e-journals have become very important in scientific libraries but not yet in public libraries.

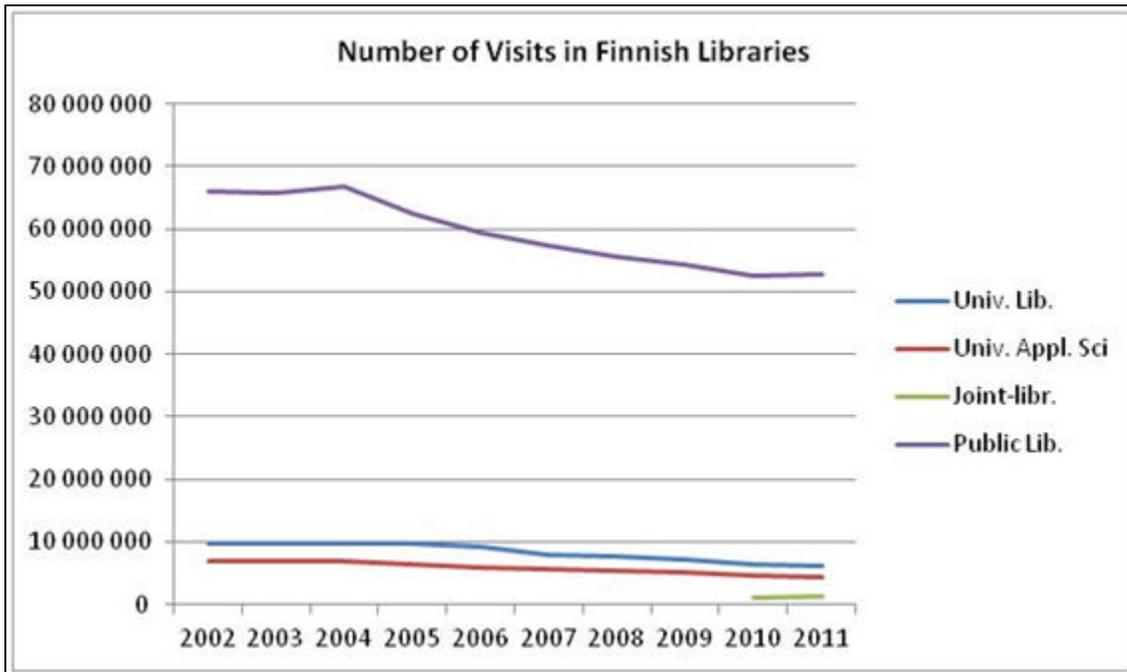


Figure 3. There is a decreasing trend of physical visits in Finnish libraries.

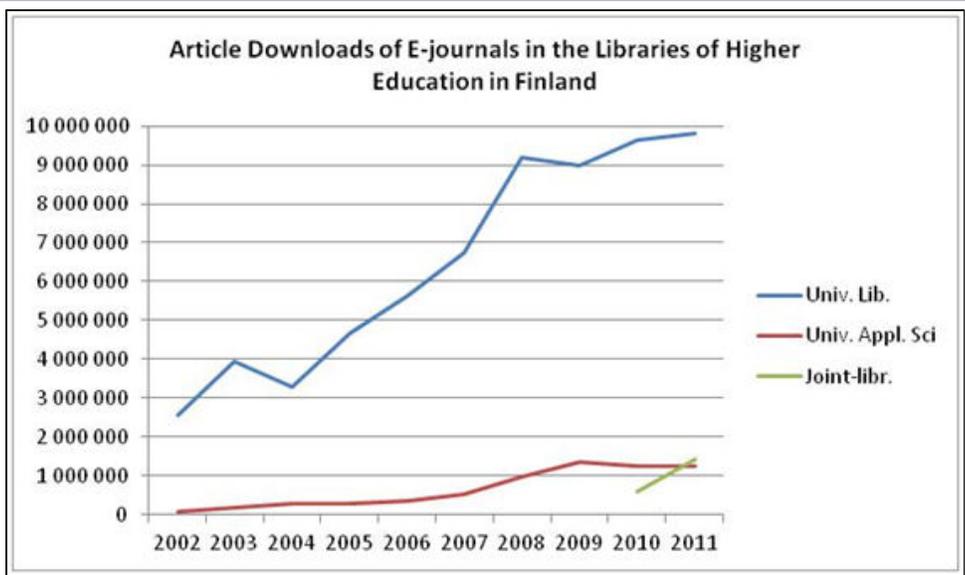


Figure 4. The strong growth of the use of the electronic journals is evident especially in the university libraries of Finland.

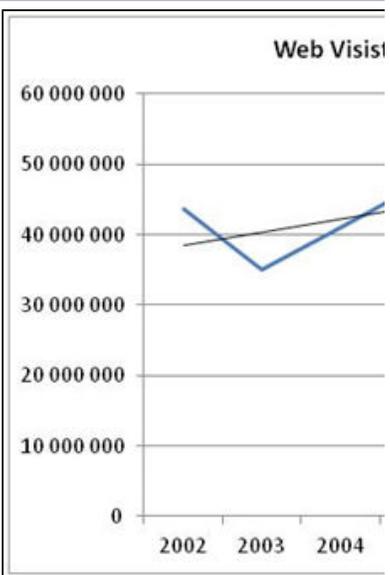


Figure 5. There is an increasing trend of web visits.

### The library expense is connected with the GDP

The investment in the public libraries was 310 million € in the year 2011, and 147 million € in the libraries of the higher education (110,3 million in the university libraries, 29,2 million in the libraries of the universities of applied sciences and 11,7 million in joint-libraries of higher education) (fig. 6). The target population of the public libraries is the inhabitants of the municipalities and that of the scientific libraries are the personnel and the students. Thus, the expenses per target population are notably smaller than in the scientific libraries (fig. 7). There has been a growing trend in library expenses. The growth has been following the growth of GDP so the libraries have received their share of the growth of the economy. During the recession in 2008-2009, the library expenses did not follow the decrease of the GDP (fig. 8).

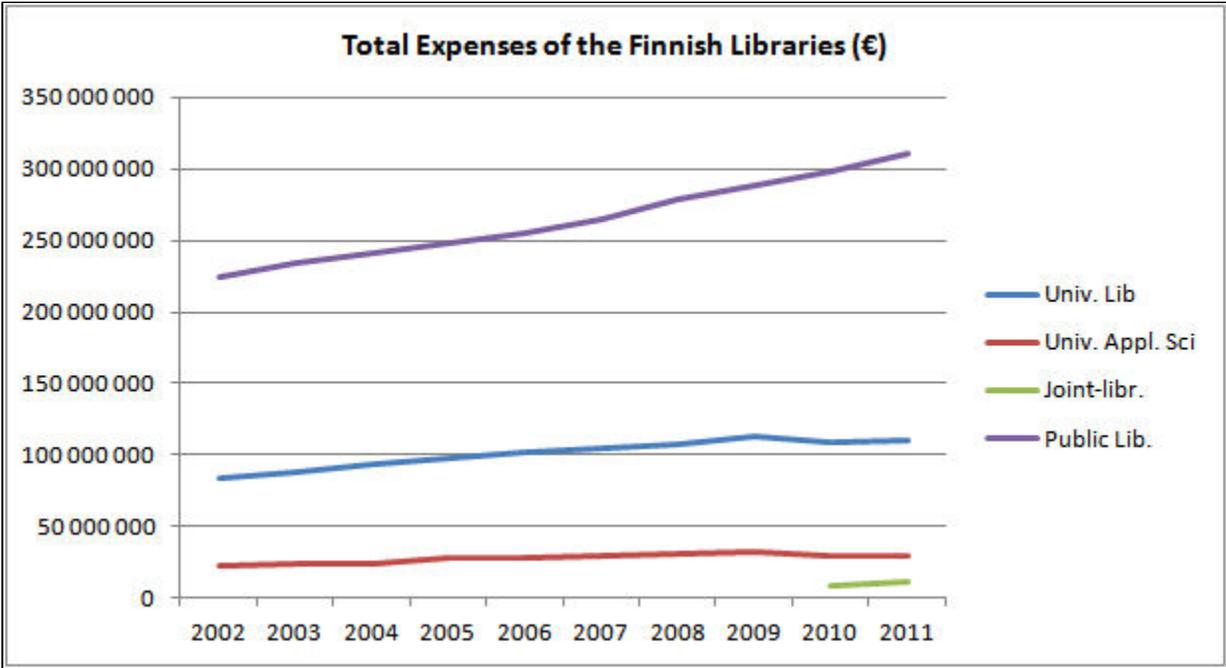


Figure 6. The total expenses of libraries. Source: FPLS and RLSD.

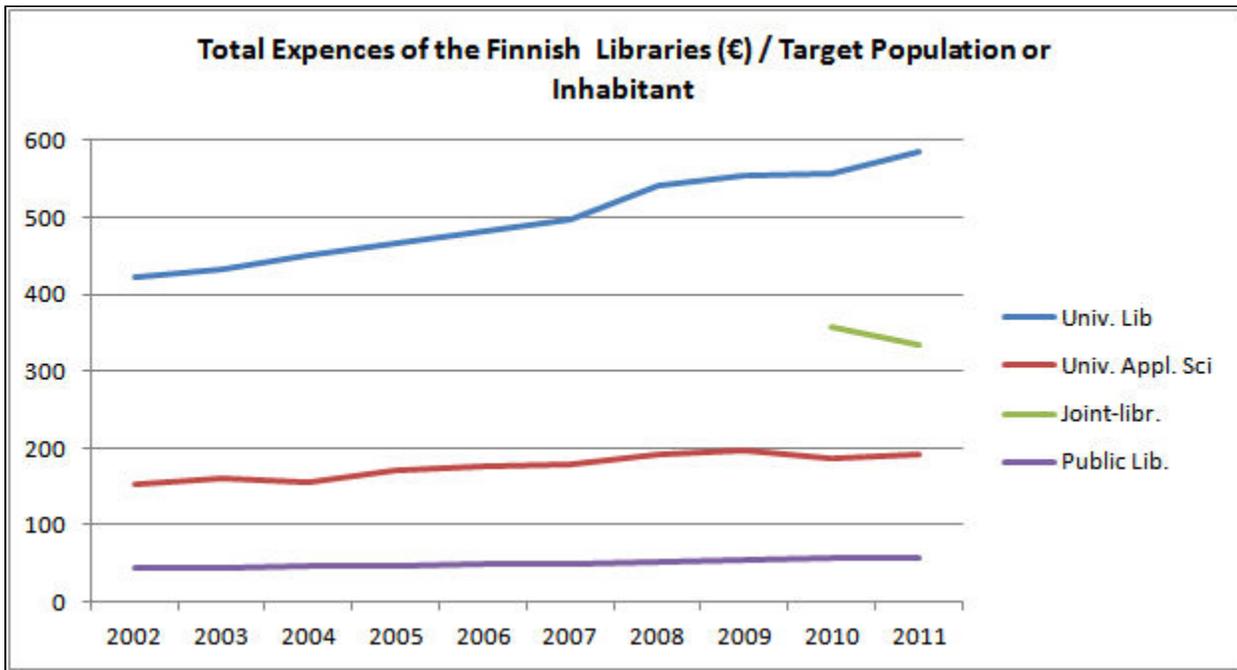


Figure 7. The total expenses of the libraries / target population or inhabitant. Source: [FPLS](#) and [RLSD](#).

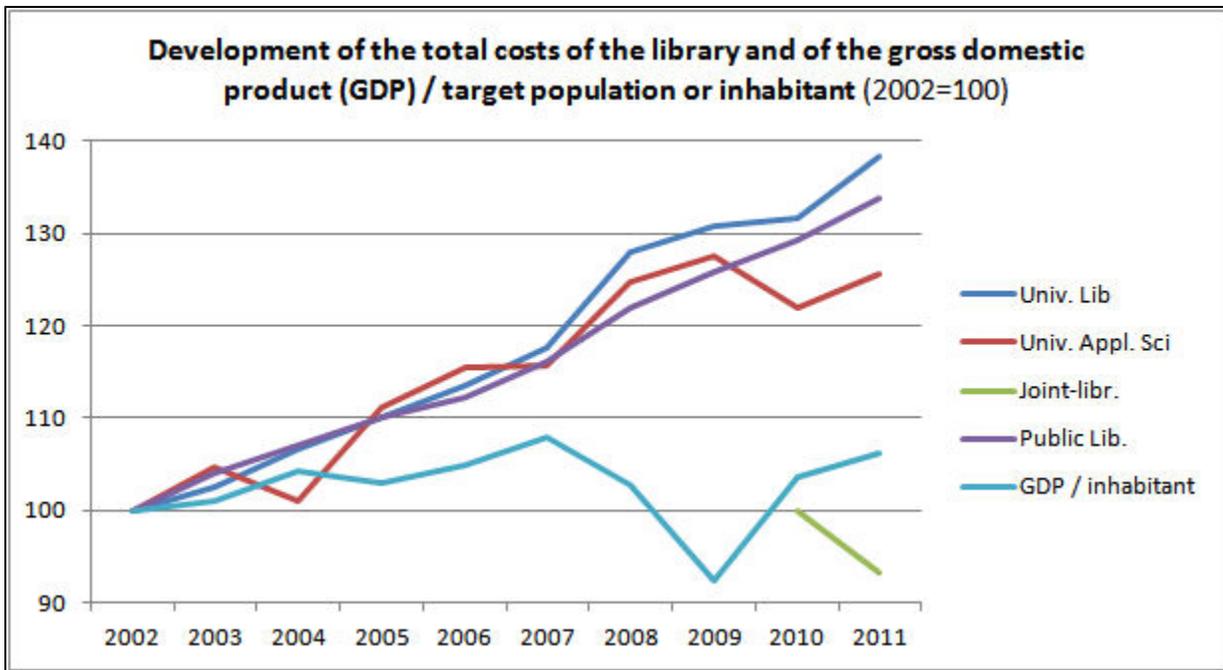


Figure 8. The development of the total costs / target population in libraries compared with the gross domestic product (GDP) / inhabitant. The GDP and the total costs of the libraries are closely connected. Source: [FPLS](#), [RLSD](#) and [Statistic Finland](#).

Sources

- [Finnish Public Libraries Statistics \(FPLS\)](#)
- [Research library statistics database \(RLSD\)](#)
- [Information about national customer survey 2010 \(in Finnish\)](#)
- [Information about FinELib national customer survey about use of electronic materials in libraries \(in Finnish\)](#)
- [Statistics Finland](#)