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Introducing Finnra Library by Sirpa Haapamäki, Head of Library

The Finnish National Road Administration (Finnra) is a government organization located in Helsinki, Finland. Finnra maintains public roads and provides all road users—vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians—with the means of travelling safely and conveniently. Finnra also cooperates with the other parties in the transportation sector in improving and planning the overall transport system. The number of staff, including headquarters and regions, is 6,500. Approximately 450 of the total staff are researchers or other experts.

Finnra operates as an agency divided into Road Administration and Production. Administration is a public authority commissioning road maintenance services, while Production specializes in road management products and services and is responsible for practical road management. The Council of State recently decided to make Production an independent company, which will take effect in 2001.

The Department of Transportation annually assigns several goals to both Administration and Production. Administration's current main goals involve traffic safety, transportation flow, the environment, and pedestrian and bicycle lanes. Production's goals are concerned with the economy and market competition.

Finnra was launched as early as 1799 when the Royal Finnish Committee for the Clearing of Rapids was founded. Our library is not that old, but even its history goes back to the 1860s. Our oldest marked books are from the eighteenth century. Over the years, Finnra Library has developed from an internal office library into a public road and transport library in Finland.

Finnra Library's main objective is to support the work of Finnra staff. We provide our professionals with appropriate and relevant information and

publications to promote research and development carried out in our institution. We specialize in acquiring and collecting road- and transportation-related literature and information.

Finnra staff members are our primary customers, but we also welcome external customers to borrow Finnra reports and directions. Due to our limited resources, we are unable to lend all publications to external customers, but all items are available for reference use. Everybody can read reports, books, and journals and make copies of articles in the library. Customers can also search databases using the library's PC.

Our library staff includes two full-time members, a librarian and an assistant librarian. In addition, we get help from a road specialist who indexes technical road-related literature (including technical materials in foreign languages) and acts as an advisor for customers' technical questions when needed. A part-time library assistant routes periodicals.

We have a comprehensive collection of all Finnra reports and monographs, and compile annual catalogs and bimonthly recent-acquisitions catalogs of our publications. These are available on the library's Web site (<http://www.tieh.fi/libr.htm>). Most of our publications are in Finnish and include an English abstract, but there are also reports entirely in English. A separate list of Finnra publications in English is available on the Web site.

We acquire and receive on exchange approximately 1,200 books and reports annually, and subscribe to more than 300 periodical titles. Several electronic journals are also available.

Our collection, more than 30,000 books and reports, includes domestic, Scandinavian, European, and U.S. transport-related materials.

We have close connections with the libraries of other Scandinavian countries and maintain exchange agreements and information exchange with the Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish road directorate libraries.

Most of the U.S. publications in our collection are received through exchange agreements. Our collection of U.S. items has increased considerably in recent years, thanks to the membership of, and successful cooperation with, the SLA Transportation Division. We have agreements, for example, with the Minnesota Department of Transportation Library and the ITS (Institute of Transportation Studies) Library at the University of California, Berkeley. TRB (Transportation Research Board) has regularly provided us with its transportation research records since 1975. Our most remote exchange partner is the ARRB Library in Australia.

Our library system, Prettylib, is a Finnish product used in several domestic special libraries. The system contains ordering, lending, interlibrary lending, and cataloging as well as database searching. Our own library database, LIPPI, includes more than 10,000 records since 1990, with older items in a manual card index.

We search external databases, e.g., domestic bases, databases of Scandinavian road directorates, EU-databases, and TRANSPORT. We also encourage our customers to do searches on their own. Among the three databases in TRANSPORT, the IRRD (International Road Research Documentation) of OECD is the most essential. More than 300,000 scientific references can be found there, each with an informative abstract. Also, records of Finnra publications that are of international interest are available in IRRD. Approximately forty citations of our new publications, including at least an English abstract, are added annually into IRRD.

TRIS by TRB is another essential database among the international sources. Several records

of Finnra publications are also available in TRIS. One of our exchange partners, the ITS Library in California, inputs our records into TRIS.

In recent years our library has assisted our FinnT2 unit in its Technology Transfer program aimed at the Baltic countries. Our library has participated in T2 seminars, guided the library staff of the Baltic road directorates in searching databases, and provided their libraries with relevant transportation items and information.

A year ago our library started an initiative to consolidate the efforts of the road directorate libraries of Scandinavia and the Baltic and create a "Northern circle" of transportation libraries. We invited one delegate from each road directorate library in these countries to attend a colloquy in Helsinki (our location) in order to share common interests. It was a successful meeting supported and subsidized by our international unit. We decided to continue annual meetings (the second one took place in Oslo in December 1999 and the third one will be held in Sweden next autumn), exchange publications regularly, and inform each other via e-mail about current topics.

Our membership in SLA Transportation Division has proved essential to our library. Networking with U.S. libraries has been extremely rewarding, especially when publications and information are needed. The most convenient way to receive unpublished reports is to contact a colleague at a university or Department of Transportation library, thus avoiding the need to order materials through brokers. Our U.S. colleagues have been extremely generous in providing us with information and publications; by the same token, our library welcomes transport-related requests from abroad. We are happy to forward requests to other Nordic libraries if we don't have a needed item.

In order to promote Finnra's work and provide

our staff with high-level, economical library services, our library needs to strengthen its professional network, both domestic and international. The successful connection with

the corresponding Northern libraries and the SLA Transportation Division has opened new avenues and made our daily work rewarding and challenging.



From left: Heli Alen, Library Assistant, Riitta Makela, Assistant Librarian, Sirpa Haapamaki, Library Director, Martti Eerola, Indexing and Document Description.



Sirpa Haapamaki, Library Director



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