

Library Act

2012 No 150 28 December

Entry into force 3 January 2013.

Any reference in this Act to “the Minister” or “the Ministry” not accompanied by express mention of or reference to a specific field of responsibility shall be understood as being a reference to the **Minister of Education, Science and Culture** or to the **Ministry of Education, Science and Culture** as responsible for the implementation of this Act.

Section I Aim and scope

■ Article 1 *Aim*

The aim of this Act is to strengthen the work and cooperation of libraries so as to allow them to better fulfil their role as repositories of knowledge and educational institutions providing dynamic and varied information services in the largest possible number of areas and, at the same time, to ensure the preservation of the cultural heritage material held in libraries.

■ Article 2 *Scope*

For the purposes of this Act, the term ‘libraries’ covers the National and University Library of Iceland and the Icelandic Talking Book Library, as well as libraries operated at higher education institutions, public libraries, the libraries of upper secondary and compulsory schools, speciality libraries, and the libraries of institutions operated by the state or local authorities, as appropriate.

Collectively, these libraries constitute the country’s library system. They shall have an obligation to take part in library cooperation, and their collections shall be publicly accessible to the extent possible. Information on those collections shall be accessible to everyone.

Section II Organisation

■ Article 3 *Overall supervision*

The Minister shall assume overall responsibility for setting policies for and coordinating the work of libraries covered by this Act.

The Library Council shall advise the Minister and other public authorities on library-related matters.

■ Article 4 *Library Council*

The Minister shall appoint a Library Council for a four-year term. One member each shall be nominated by the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland and the Association of Public Library Directors; two members, representing different categories of libraries, shall be nominated by Upplýsing, the Icelandic Library and Information Science Association; and one member shall be appointed without nomination. Alternate members shall be appointed in the same manner. The same person may not be appointed as principal member of the Library Council for more than two consecutive terms.

- The Minister shall appoint the chair and the vice-chair from among the members of the Board.
- The National Librarian and the Director of the Icelandic Talking Book Library shall attend Library Council meetings with the right to speak and propose motions.
- The Council's running costs shall be borne by the Treasury.

■ **Article 5** *Remit of the Library Council*

- The remit of the Library Council includes the following:
 1. Developing, in collaboration with the National and University Library of Iceland, a policy for the work of libraries and submit it to the Minister for approval;
 2. Establishing rules regarding the compiling and processing of statistics on Icelandic libraries, to be confirmed by the Minister;
 3. Drawing up the Library Fund's award criteria, to be confirmed by the Minister;
 4. Evaluating applications for grants from the Library Fund;
 5. Undertaking other tasks related to the operation of libraries as further decided by the Minister.

Section III Libraries and their activities

■ **Article 6** *Purpose and role*

- Libraries are service organisations operated in the public interest and for the benefit of their owners, and not for the sake of profit. The common purpose of libraries covered by this Act is to provide access to a varied collection of library material and to make information available on different platforms. Libraries shall be a source of support for cultural and scientific activities, education, lifelong learning, industry, the Icelandic language, pleasure reading, and information literacy.
- The role of libraries is to equalise people's access to culture and knowledge. Their holdings shall emphasise the greatest possible variety in the viewpoints represented.

■ **Article 7** *Categories of libraries*

- The National and University Library of Iceland has a leadership role among Icelandic libraries. It shall serve as a catalyst of cooperation, coordination and the development of library practices and provide professional advice to other libraries, carry out research in the fields of bibliography, the history of books, and library and information science, and perform other tasks as outlined in the Act pertaining to it.
- Public libraries are cultural, information and educational institutions operated by local authorities. Every member of the general public shall be entitled to the services of a public library.
- All municipalities must offer such services in the manner stipulated in this Act. Municipalities shall employ the staff of public libraries which they operate and provide them with satisfactory premises and all necessary equipment.
- School libraries are information centres for students and teachers. School libraries shall include in their work an emphasis on improving students' and teachers' information literacy.
- Speciality libraries and the libraries of institutions operated by the state or local authorities shall serve as centres of knowledge in their respective fields.

■ **Article 8** *Public library boards*

- Every public library shall be led by a board elected by the relevant municipal council(s). The boards shall receive a mandate corresponding in length to the municipal council's electoral term. Municipal councils may appoint a single library board for all public libraries operated by the municipality or delegate responsibility for public library affairs to one of the standing committees established in the municipality's ordinance.
- The board of a library shall ensure that it operates in conformity with law and regulations and complies with professional standards in the field of library and information work.