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**Development of information skills - a national policy  
for Finland?**

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As a matter of fact, there is no national policy specifically for this area in Finland. A national strategy for "Education, Training and Research in the Information Society" (Helsinki: Ministry of Education, 1995) was approved by the Ministry of Education in 1995, and this document, however, among the other aspects of development of the information society, also covers the educational issues affiliated with the information society.

The document emphasises the need for new ways of learning and teaching, which again, requires developing of information skills. It is expressed that basically "it is the task of general education to provide every girl and boy with the versatile basic skills in acquiring, managing and communicating information which are necessary in the information society and essential for successful further study". Add to this, the vocational institutes and universities need to ensure that the skills needed by students in the information society develop as technology changes. The authorities should also determine and follow up how well these skills are taught. The document also emphasises the importance of developing the corresponding skills among the whole adult population. From these points of view it is important that ability of the libraries and information services to serve their customers should be strengthened. The libraries should be able to act as nodes in the open information network. The document also underlines that libraries' role in providing user support should be developed. Improvement of these skills among teachers, librarians and information specialists is taken up as a practical measure and key issue to reach the general goals of the strategy document.

Even development of information skills by user education in the libraries is not explicitly mentioned in the strategy document, development of user education is obviously involved in the objectives mentioned above.

Amazingly, there has been practical implications of the document of the Ministry of Education: the universities received in 1996 special allocations to strengthen the information technology, and the development is promised to be continued in the approaching years, too. Considerable amount of these funds have been used to improve information technology and access to network at the university libraries, even the development has varied from university to university. Due to the new possibilities, an increasing amount of attention has been paid for teaching new information skills among the library staff. Along with this development and possibilities, novel methods, revised

contents and a growing trend of user education is a reality at the Finnish universities at present.