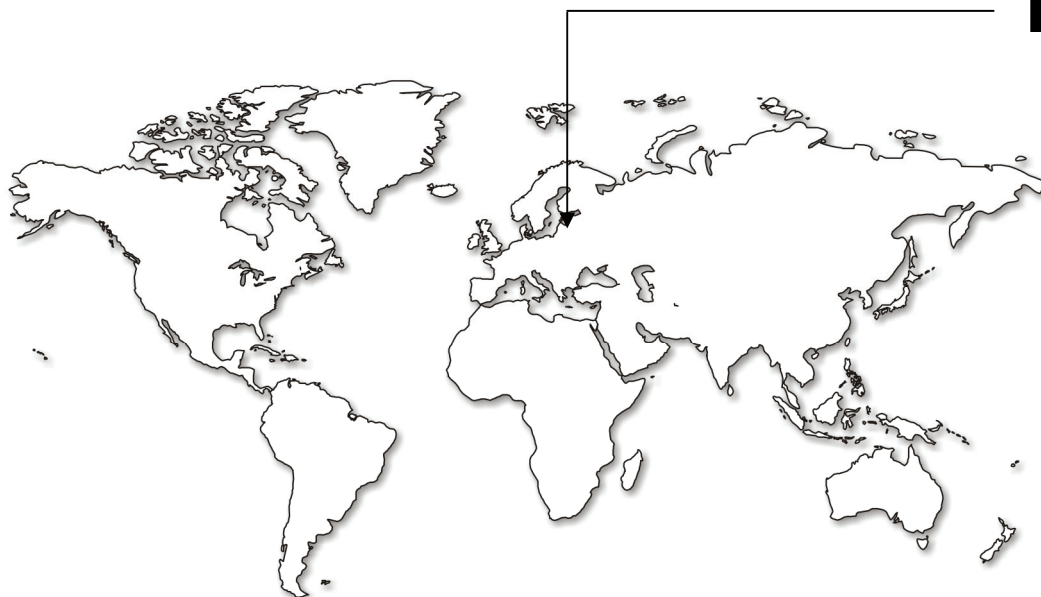# Latvia

Responding institutions:
*Library Association of Latvia and
National Library of Latvia*

Latvia is responding for the third time, with previous responses in 2003 and 2005. This report concerns 870 public library service points and 1 174 research libraries, including 28 university libraries, 1 099 school libraries and 47 government-funded research libraries. (The 2005 report indicated 892 public library service points and nearly 1 200 research libraries – most of which were school libraries. Both figures seem to be slightly higher than the estimates for 2007.)

The Internet penetration for Latvia was estimated at 45.2% in September 2006 (http://www.Internet worldstats.com). In 2003, it was estimated at 13.8% and in 2005 at 40.6%. The country's Internet penetration therefore appears to have increased steadily.

Some 81-100% of public, university and government-funded research libraries offer Internet access to users, and 41-60% of school libraries. (According to the 2005 report, 61-80% of public libraries offered Internet access to users, with high access indicated for research libraries.)

According to the respondents, both local content and local languages are well represented on the Internet. The literacy rate for Latvia is given as 98-99%, which compares well with the 2007 *CIA World Factbook*'s estimate of 99.7%.

Access to the Internet is free of charge to users of all libraries. The state and other library authorities have made extra funding available for Internet access in the library system during the last two years. According to the 2005 report, library users had to pay for Internet access at the time; no reference is made in the 2007 response as to what brought on this change.

According to a third-party source reporting in December 2006, the Bill Gates Foundation will give US$16.2 million to provide public libraries with broadband connections, a wireless network, three computers per library, and training for librarians and users. The particular ministry will also contribute US$21.2 million to the project, and Microsoft Latvia has committed US$7.9 million in software (http://www.ala.org/ala/alonline/currentnews/newsarchive/2006abc/december2006/gatesglobal.cfm).

The library association in Latvia is not in favour of filtering information on library Internet terminals, and the use of filtering software is not widespread in the country.

Regarding special areas of focus, libraries in Latvia are not troubled by anti-terror legislation. There have, however, been several incidents of violations of intellectual freedom.

Libraries have been involved in programmes promoting HIV/Aids awareness, as well as in programmes for providing HIV/Aids information to members of the community unable to read. As the literacy rate in Latvia is very high, libraries have not been involved in initiatives designed to promote women's literacy.

The library association adopted a code of ethics in 2002, which is available on the Internet (the respondents have not provided the URL). Although the IFLA Internet Manifesto has been adopted, the Glasgow Declaration has not yet been adopted. (This is in contrast to the 2005 report stating that the Glasgow Declaration had been adopted.)

User privacy and anti-terror legislation

No anti-terror legislation has been passed in Latvia. The respondents are of the opinion that if such legislation were to be adopted, it would not impact on user privacy, and also that the keeping of library user records would not affect the individual Internet library user's freedom of expression.

Reported incidents/violations of intellectual freedom in the past two years

According to the respondents, there have been incidents of reported violations of intellectual freedom. Apart from referring again to the issue of a book which a Member of Parliament requested to be withdrawn from the collections of public libraries (as reported in 2005), the respondents have noted that a Member of Parliament recently demanded that other books about sex education be withdrawn from public libraries.

A few other incidents of violation of intellectual freedom have also been noted by third-party sources. An example is the dismissal of investigative TV journalist Arta Giga as director of the state-owned LTV's popular weekly current affairs programme "De Facto", which has on several occasions exposed abuse of authority and corruption by politicians. This was reported in June 2007 (http://www.rsf.org/article. php3?id_article=22692; http://www.ifex.org/en/ content/view/full/84405/).

Latvian law enforcement officials were reported in September 2006 to have taped some of television reporter Ilze Jaunalksne's phone conversations in 2005 and 2006. Although she was never charged with a crime, the tapes were leaked to television, Internet and print media in Latvia, who replayed or reprinted

portions of the conversations (http://www.ifex.org/en/ content/view/full/77054/).

HIV/Aids awareness

By means of small local programmes, exhibitions, information stands/booths and publications, libraries in Latvia have been involved in programmes promoting HIV/Aids awareness. The respondents have also indicated involvement in programmes to provide HIV/Aids information to members of the community who cannot read. In the 2005 response, no efforts to reach members of the community unable to read were reported – this should be seen against the literacy rate of 99.7% estimated by the 2007 *CIA World Factbook*.

Women and freedom of access to information

As the literacy rate among women in Latvia is very high, libraries have not been involved in initiatives designed to promote women's literacy. They have, however, been involved in special programmes to promote access to social information and information on the economy, education, health and family planning for unemployed people, who would include women.

IFLA Internet Manifesto

The IFLA Internet Manifesto has been adopted, and was published in 2005 in the local library journal *Biblioteku Pasuale* ("World of Libraries", 31: 18-27).

IFLA Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom

Unlike the 2005 report stating that the Glasgow Declaration has been adopted, the respondents have indicated that it has not been adopted. It is, however, the intention do so within the next two years.
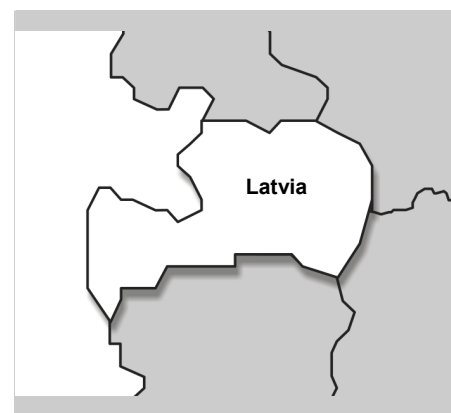
Ethics

The library association adopted a code of ethics in 2002. (According to the 2005 report, a code of ethics was adopted in 1995; the reason for the contradicting dates is not clear.) The code is available on the Internet, but the respondents have not provided the URL.

Main indicators

Country name:	Latvia
Population:	2 259 810 (July 2007 est.)
Main language:	Latvian (official) 58.2%, Russian 37.5%, Lithuanian and other 4.3% (2000 census)
Literacy:	99.7%
Literacy reported by respondents:	98-99%

Population figures, language and literacy are from the
CIA World Factbook, 2007 edition
(https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html).

Latvia

Libraries and Internet access

Latvia contributed to the World Report series in 2005 and 2003. The following section compares data and answers from 2007 with the 2005 IFLA/FAIFE World Report and adds context from the respondents' estimates, where possible.

Library services

Estimated number of public libraries*:	870 (2005: 892)
Estimated number of school libraries:	1 099
Estimated number of university libraries:	28
Estimated number of government-funded research libraries:	47
Source of these numbers:	Library statistics compiled by the National Library of Latvia

Internet access

Population online**:	1 030 000 Internet users as of Sept. 2006 (45.2%) (2005: 40.6%)
Percentage of public libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100% (2005: 61-80%)
Percentage of school libraries offering Internet access to users:	41-60%
Percentage of university libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
Percentage of government-funded research libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
In your estimate, how much local content*** is available on the Internet:	Very much
To what degree is content on the Internet available in local languages:	Very much
Is the library association in favour of filtering information on library Internet terminals:	No (2005: No)
Is the use of filtering software widespread in your country's libraries:	No (2005: No)
Is it free of charge for library users to access the Internet on library computers:	Yes, in all libraries (2005: No)
Has the state or other library authorities made any extra funding available for Internet access in the library system of your country in the last two years:	Yes (2005: Yes)

* Public library service points, including branch libraries.
** Online population numbers are from Internet World Stats (www.Internetworldstats.com).
*** Local content is defined as content that originates in the country.