

**Public library services in Galicia:**  
**a comparative overview**

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## ABSTRACT

*Since achieving autonomy in 1980, Galician national and local governments have been pursuing a policy of creation of infrastructures that includes the development of a national library system. A legal framework has been created, and resources have increased enormously, particularly over the last decade, including a 407% increase in funding for libraries.*

*In 2003 there were 275 public library authorities and 389 public libraries. The majority of the network is conformed by small community libraries, managed by local authorities. Buildings, staff, opening hours, collections, and other standard indicators show average figures that fail below international recommendations. 50% of all libraries have less than 100 m<sup>2</sup>, and 87% less than 230 m<sup>2</sup>. The ratio of library staff per 1,000 residents is 0.17. Opening hours in 2003 averaged 26.30 per week. The current figure of items per resident is 1.024 and acquisitions 0.063 items per capita. There is approximately 1 public PC per 5,000 residents in Galician public libraries.*

*Urban library systems are underdeveloped and need to be created in four of the seven cities, and there are important provincial imbalances. In addition to this, the Galician Library System lacks some of its essential elements, particularly coordinating, inspecting and standards services.*

*Provision of public library services, with the possible exception of ICT related services, and performance statistics are relatively poor as a result of this situation.*

*Comparison with well developed, advanced systems (UK) confirm the need to improve the framework and resources of the Galician Library System to achieve high quality services and satisfactory performances.*

*I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that all sources have been acknowledged.*

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## **Introduction**

This dissertation aims to present a general overview of public library services in Galicia, from a comparative perspective. General background factors, history of public libraries and legislation are all considered before attempting the statistical study and analysis of resources, services and performance of the Galician Library System and its component parts. A comparative study between these and the national library system of the UK, with case studies of Corunna Library Services and Wandsworth Libraries, is also included, to investigate similarities and differences between developed and expanding systems. Conclusions and recommendations extracted from this analysis are offered in the final section of the work.

Primary sources, including legislation, official publications and statistical data are the main sources for this study, but some secondary sources are used as well, particularly for the subjects of history and development of public libraries in the UK and general comparative studies theory. Secondary sources on the subject of Galician libraries are very scarce and are used for factual information primarily.

## **1. Public Library services in Galicia**

### **1.1 Background**

Galicia (or *Galiza*) is one of Spain's autonomous regions, a territorial entity with political authority to implement its own powers in accordance with the 1981 Autonomy Statute. Its 29,434 Km<sup>2</sup> surface area makes up 5.8% of Spain's territory (*I*). It is bordered on the south by Portugal, which, along with Spain, makes up the Iberian Peninsula. The capital of the autonomous region of Galicia is Santiago de Compostela. The territory is divided into four provinces (Corunna, Lugo, Ourense and Pontevedra), 53 departments (*comarcas*) and 315 municipalities. Galicia has a population of 2,751,094 inhabitants (1,131,404 Corunna, 931,688 Pontevedra, 387,038 Lugo, 362,832 Ourense) with an approximate population density of 93 inhabitants per Km<sup>2</sup>. The main demographic features are a low birth rate, high life expectancy and an aging population, which means that Galicia is currently experiencing negative vegetative growth. Another determining factor is the high degree of territorial imbalance, both demographically and economically. For a long time the region's demographic evolution was marked by emigration, a historical phenomenon of great significance in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nevertheless, this situation has changed in recent decades and Galicia now receives immigrants (especially from Latin America) as well as returned emigrants.

Galicia has a highly scattered population distribution due to the large number of small population entities (approximately 30,000). There is also a sharp contrast between the

coast and inland: 73% of the population lives in the western strip called the Atlantic Axis (linking Ferrol-Corunna-Santiago de Compostela-Pontevedra-Vigo).

The main cities are: Vigo (pop. 292.566), Corunna (pop. 243.902), Ourense (pop. 109.475), Santiago (pop. 92.339), Lugo (pop. 91.158), Ferrol (pop. 78.764) and Pontevedra (pop. 77.993).

Galicia's history forms part of the development of Western European history and, particularly, the evolution of the Iberian Peninsula. The first inhabitants that populated Galicia can be located to the Stone Age, at the end of the Lower Palaeolithic. During the Iron Age, a Celtic culture developed based on fortified settlements or *castros*. This world was greatly affected by the arrival of the Romans, who dominated the northwest Iberian Peninsula starting from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Rome would bring about a profound transformation: the Romans built an extensive network of roads throughout the region, as well as the first cities (such as *Lucus Augusti*); they also organized the territory politically in a unitary entity called *Gallaecia* (after the name of one of the main local groups). Latin, which would evolve in the early Middle Ages into Galician, and the Christian religion were also lasting contributions (77% of the current population consider themselves Catholics, even if less than 30% are practicing ones). The Roman Empire succumbed to the Barbarian peoples, one of which (the Swabians) invaded Galicia in the year 411 AD, creating a kingdom that roughly corresponded with the Roman province. Thus began a long medieval period, which, during ten centuries, gradually defined the essential features of the future Galicia.

The territory was organized with a proliferation of towns and villages, parishes and bishoprics; the land was divided up and the feudal land-leasing system arose. At the same time, an aristocratic society, basically rural and coastal, gradually took shape.

This period also experienced a phenomenon of great significance: the spreading, from the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, of the worship of the Apostle James' mortal remains, which ended up making Compostela one of Christendom's main pilgrimage destinations throughout the world by means of the Way of St. James. This itinerary would become an important source of cultural and historical exchange.

After the Moors' invasion of the Iberian Peninsula (711 AD), a Galician kingdom was created in the northwest. It was the starting point of the Reconquest, which culminated in the events of 1492.

This medieval world experienced a crisis in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Kingdom of Galicia is officially integrated into the Kingdom of Spain in 1469, even if that was the case in practice since the beginning of this troubled period. In the midst of this gloomy context, the University of Santiago de Compostela was founded around 1490, quickly becoming an educational and cultural reference point in Galicia and abroad.

The Enlightenment had a considerable impact in the country during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century with thinkers like Feijoo, Sarmiento, Ventura Figueroa or Cornide, who, as in other European regions, proposed reforms for promoting the Galician economic and cultural development.

During the 19th century different ideologies promoting the defence of Galician interests were developed, with federalist (a movement that organized a failed secessionist Revolution in 1848), regionalist or liberal movements. In 1833 the Kingdom of Galicia is partitioned into four provinces (Corunna, Lugo, Ourense and Pontevedra).

Galicia entered the 20th century being mainly a rural country, with very limited urban and bourgeois development, and with an economy based on the agricultural and fishing sectors.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> Spanish Republic (1931-1936), Galician nationalism became more pronounced, and in July 1936 Antonio R. Castelao presented, in the Spanish Parliament, the Autonomy Statute defining Galicia as an autonomous region. However, the outbreak of the Spanish War thwarted its realization.

The war and post-war period would have a strong impact on the social and cultural as well as economic development. After a phase of stagnation, some sectors began to grow; this was the case in the electricity sector, mining, shipbuilding, etc. However, the situation was still dominated by a general context of underdevelopment until the 70s and 80s. In these decades, the scene changed considerably: the industrial sector has diversified and grown significantly, particularly since Spain's incorporation into the European Union. Thus, Galicia now has an important food industry and expansion in sectors such as textiles, cars, electronics, shipbuilding and mining, while tourism is also experiencing growth. GDP in 2003 was worth 39.504 million euros, equivalent to 76% of the average EU GDP per capita. At the same time, the region is undergoing profound transformation and improvement as regards its network of infrastructures.

In relation to its political evolution, the 1978 Spanish Constitution finally acknowledged Galicia as a nation (*nacionalidade historica*) entitled to political autonomy; this was achieved through the 1981 Autonomy Statute, after its approval by referendum.

The Autonomy Statute also ended five centuries of discrimination against the Galician language: Galicia is recognized as a bilingual country in which Galician and Spanish coexist as co-official languages. The native language, Galician (*galego*), is a Romance language with texts going back to the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. During the Middle Ages, it was the Iberian Peninsula's literary language *par excellence* but between the 16th and 19th centuries, Galician almost disappeared from public life, during the so-called

*Séculos escuros* (dark centuries), although it was still used by the vast majority of the population. This enabled its literary rebirth in the mid-19th century by means of the *Rexurdimento* (*renaissance*) movement. Today, Galician is presently spoken by 90% of the population and more than 1,800 books were published in 2003 in this language. This brings the number of titles published in the last 15 years to approximately 20,000 (2).

## **1.2 History of public libraries in Galicia before 1980**

The history of public libraries in Galicia is very closely related to that of the public libraries in Spain. As it was elsewhere in Europe, the development of public library services in both countries is a phenomenon of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, of urbanisation, the rise of the middle classes, liberalism and similar historical factors, but an important peninsular time lag effect applies.

There were very important libraries in Galicia earlier, including numerous religious libraries in cathedrals, abbeys, convents, seminaries, etc., and, since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the library of the University of Santiago de Compostela. Under the influence of the Enlightenment a number of learned societies (*Sociedad Economica de Amigos del Pais*, *Academia de Agricultura de Galicia*) were born in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and these often had libraries for the use of their members (the library of the *Sociedad Economica de Amigos del Pais de Santiago de Compostela* was to become the basis for the popular library of that city a century later).

Of course, some of these libraries were open to the “public”, but could not be considered public libraries in the modern sense, because they were used by members

of the institutions to which they were attached and only a very small number of readers from the general public, the educated minority, as most Galicians were still illiterate.

The 1838 Unproductive Property Confiscation Act (*Ley de Desamortizacion*), part of a set of liberal measures to put in active economic use the properties of the Church, was to have important consequences for the development of public libraries in Spain: the libraries of numerous religious institutions were confiscated by the State at the same time as the land or other assets and their collections increased those of the university libraries of the province where they were located and, in provinces without universities, new provincial public libraries were built to house them. Thus, the University of Santiago de Compostela received very rich collections from various Galician religious institutions, and the first public libraries in the country were created in the provinces without university: the first was Lugo provincial library, established in the 1830's, which housed the collections from the abbeys of San Xulian de Samos, Vilanova de Lourenza and the convent of San Francisco de Lugo. In 1845 a provincial public library was created in Ourense, followed by Pontevedra in 1848. Corunna did not have a provincial library until 1902, which is probably due to the fact that the University of Santiago the Compostela was situated in this province. All these libraries had a strong bias in favour of conservation and historical research, but were open to all and had a wider range of users than any of their predecessors.

In 1856 a School of Paleography (*Escuela de Diplomatica*) was created in Madrid to provide trained librarians and archivists for the new provincial libraries. A section of professional librarians within the civil service was created in 1858.

The 1857 Public Instruction Act (*Ley de Instruccion Publica*), which transformed the primary education in Spain, achieved important increases in the percentage of the

population that was literate (less than 20% in 1857, 37% in 1900, 77% in 1931) (Faus Sevilla, 1990, p. 13). It also recommended the creation of public libraries by local authorities to support learning in schools and to form a habit of reading that avoided relapsed illiteracy. This idea was developed in the 1860's with the creation of popular libraries (*Bibliotecas Populares*) in numerous towns and cities of Spain and Galicia. These small libraries were stocked with lots of books provided by the Ministry of Education and included catalogue-books of the lots. The local authority was expected to provide the library buildings (often part of the town hall) and maintain it, and also to acquire new stock for the collections: extra funds were made available for this. In 1882 the number of popular libraries in Spain exceeded 750 and the number of books that had been provided by the Ministry of Education, 171,000 (Escolar Sobrino, 1990, p. 447) The popular library of Santiago de Compostela (1916) would become remarkable, because it inherited the collections of the library of the *Sociedad Economica de Amigos del Pais*, becoming a much more important library than the majority of its counterparts.

In 1901 the *Reglamento de las Bibliotecas Publicas del Estado* (regulations for State Public Libraries) was published, and in 1902 the cataloguing rules for those institutions, in which there was a new impulse from the Spanish government to improve public library services, was also published. However, the lack of resources hampered this movement, and many of the smaller popular libraries disappeared around the turn of the century.

In 1926, a new fund for the creation of public libraries was made available by the Spanish government in a fresh attempt to develop these institutions, but Galician (and other) local authorities showed their traditional lack of interest in this matter, and a very small number of new ones were created.

With the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931, new educational and cultural policies tried to improve these areas. The Ministry of Education will greatly increased the resources available for public libraries, creating a central acquisitions office and fund, and more than 200 new public libraries opened their doors throughout Spain. In 1932, a section of library assistants within the civil service was created, reflecting the development of the service and a movement to achieve the professionalisation of library work (small libraries at the time were often managed by school teachers or volunteers). A very ambitious Public Libraries Plan was approved in 1939, but with the victory of the Fascist side in the Spanish Civil War it was never implemented.

During the years of Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975), most of the attention that the world of culture in general, and that of libraries in particular, received from the government would be rather negative. In the years immediately after the war, important purges of books deemed contrary to the new ideology were common in public and other libraries. In Galicia six public libraries were closed, all five in the province of Ourense and one in the province of Pontevedra (Escolar Sobrino, 1990, p. 533).

From 1951 feeble efforts to centralise the existing library services conducted to the creation of coordinating centres in every province (part of a new *Servicio Nacional de Lectura*, National Reading Service), under the direction of the Librarian of the provincial public library, to head a provincial library system, and a small number of new public libraries were opened. However, a viable national library system was never achieved during this period and the majority of the population had no access to library services.

### **1.3 Legislation and its implementation**

The 1978 Constitution devolved legislative powers to the different regions and nationalities that constitute Spain, and Galicia approved in referendum its Autonomy Statute in 1981.

The process of transference of competences in libraries started in 1980, with the legal deposit, and ended in 1989 when the six State Public Libraries of Galicia were transferred to the Galician government. This process was slow and in parallel to the development of a Galician legal framework in this area, which started with the publication of the Libraries Act 14/1989 (3).

The transference of competences was regulated through the Orders 1634/80, 2434/82 and 3356/83. The new Galician government approved some secondary legislation during this interim period: Order 16/9/85 on mobile libraries (giving continuity to this inherited service until 1988), Order 313/1986 on Coordination and Organisation of Library Services, abolishing the four old provincial coordination centres and creating a single *Centro de Coordinacion Bibliotecaria de Galicia* and Order 9/12/1986, that regulated new library services provided by this centre.

Finally, in 1989 the Galician Parliament approved the Libraries Act 14/1989, which regulates the Galician Library System. The Act establishes that Galicia will have exclusive competences for this area, with the exception of the six State Public Libraries (Corunna, Lugo, Ourense, Pontevedra, Santiago de Compostela) where special arrangements apply.

The main characteristics of the law are:

- The Galician government will promote the creation of public libraries and the conservation and improvement of existing ones. The different levels of the

administration will provide the necessary means to offer adequate public library services, free at the point of use.

- Public libraries and private libraries of public use, or ones that receive public funding will be subject to this act.
- Public libraries will offer bibliographic and audiovisual materials.
- The Galician government will create and manage a register of libraries offering public services.
- The Galician Library System will be coordinated by the Department of Culture (*Conselleria de Cultura*) of the Galician government, the Libraries Council (*Consello de Bibliotecas*) and the territorial centres (*Centros Territoriais de Bibliotecas*). The System will be integrated by the *Centro Superior Bibliográfico de Galicia (CSBG)* and the libraries that are subject to the Act.

The Department of Culture will be responsible for planning and development, technical support and inspection, proposals for funding, and coordination of the System.

The Libraries Council will be a consultative organ that will advise the government in this area, while the Territorial centres will manage and coordinate the System at provincial level, approving local budgets and distributing central funding.

The CSBG will collect the legal deposit for Galician publications, will be responsible for bibliographic control and the Galician National Bibliography and will coordinate any collaboration and interchange with other Spanish or international library systems.

- The Galician government will establish agreements with local authorities and other public bodies to create and maintain adequate public library services. These agreements will cover all local authorities with a population of 2,000 and above. Local authorities with a smaller population will be covered by mobile library services or community libraries (“*axencias de lectura*”). Cities and towns with a population greater than 50.000 will have a library service with branch libraries and a central library with coordinating duties. Every department (“*comarca*”) will have at least a library in charge of collecting serials and other material of local interest.
- The Galician government will establish standards and norms for resources and services, including personnel, buildings, collections, opening hours, etc.

After 1989, some secondary legislation developing the Act and a small number of agreements with the Spanish government have been approved:

- Agreement (Order 14/12/89) on the status of the State Public Libraries (*Bibliotecas Publicas del Estado*) in Galicia (Corunna, Lugo, Ourense, Pontevedra, Santiago de Compostela). While the state administration retains the ultimate ownership over buildings and collections, the Galician government will manage the libraries and will be responsible for personnel. Order 1531/1989 transferred related funds for this agreement.
- Order 183/1990, creating the four territorial centres to manage and coordinate the System at provincial level.
- Order 36/1991, regulating the legal deposit.
- Order 38/1991, regulating mobile library services. This will be managed by the territorial centres in each province, and includes travelling book cases, mobile libraries and direct home delivery.

- Order 24/1995, regulating the Galician Library System. Six years after the publication of the 1989 Act, the secondary legislation that develops and implements it is approved, defining the different categories of libraries and regulating their services.

The CSBG, in addition to the functions mentioned in the Libraries Act 1989, will act as the central point for bibliographic information, automation, normalisation, central or cooperative cataloguing, technical advice and professional education for public library staff. Five nodal libraries, the state public library in each province's capital city (Corunna, Lugo, Ourense, Pontevedra) and the new Central Library in Vigo (created in 1995), will be the centre of the provincial library system for bibliographic information, automation and inter-library loans. Departmental (*comarcal*) and Central libraries, in rural and urban areas respectively, will act as a centre of their library services.

Some of the minimum requirements for public libraries are: 100 m<sup>2</sup> (40 m<sup>2</sup> for community libraries), 25 hours/week service (15 for community libraries), 2 staff -1 professional, 1 assistant- (1 assistant for community libraries). Collection requirements are not covered by this Order.

This Order also regulates the Register of Galician Libraries, which includes the libraries that are part of the System.

- Order 21/11/1995, on the creation of new public libraries. The creation of new public libraries and their inclusion in the Register of Libraries will be open to all local authorities without any minimum population requirements. The local authorities will be responsible for the building and personnel provision ("adequate"), while the Galician government will provide furniture, an initial

collection of stock (of no less than 1,500 books), periodical dispatches of new stock, technical advice, automation and central cataloguing services, Inter-library loans support and professional development courses for the library staff.

- Order 41/2001, of consolidation of libraries legislation. This order consolidates various separate pieces of secondary legislation on the area.

The practical implementation of this ambitious framework has been problematic: the situation of the Galician library system in 1980 was extremely difficult, with only a very small number of public libraries outside the four provincial capital cities, the biggest city in the country (Vigo, pop. 292.566) relying on a privately funded public library and Corunna the only city with more than one public library (it had two).

After a delay of nine years, the Libraries Act 1989 was approved, but it took an extra six, until 1995, for it to be developed through secondary legislation (Order 24/1995, regulating the Galician Library System) and to be implemented. These delays, and a lack of appropriate funding, both at Galician and local levels, contributed to the fact that the Galician Library System envisioned in these laws, is at present only partially realised, with 275 public library authorities and 389 public libraries (the majority small community libraries) (4), nearly 13% of local authorities (40 of 315) are without any public library services (even when the Local Government Act 7/1985 imposes the statutory obligation of offering this service to authorities with a population of more than 5.000 inhabitants), no mobile library services for local authorities with a population of less than 2.000 inhabitants and without a community library, other than the very reduced “travelling cases” service, and only three cities (Corunna, Ferrol and Vigo) out of seven with extensive library services (more than 3 public libraries

including a central library). In addition to this, departmental libraries and territorial centres to coordinate the system have not been created. Material deficiencies are also important, as is the lack of adequate provision of library staff in a large number of libraries.

## **1.4 Overview of Galician public library services today**

### **1.4.1 General survey**

In 2003 there were 275 public library authorities and 389 public libraries, distributed as follows: 89 authorities and 156 libraries in Corunna province, 60 authorities and 94 libraries in Pontevedra province, 68 authorities and 73 libraries in Ourense province and 58 authorities and 66 libraries in Lugo province. This distribution roughly follows the distribution of population in Galicia, with the 275 local authorities providing library services (out of 315) representing a coverage of approximately 96% of the total population, oscillating from the 98% in Corunna to the 88% in Ourense.

These figures are more impressive when compared with the ones in 1990, a year after the Libraries Act was approved: only 142 public libraries were open to the public then. In 1996, a year after Order 24/95, regulating the Galician library system was passed, the number had increased to 251 libraries. This represents an increment for the period of 1990 to 2003 of 274%, and of 155% in the seven years between 1996 to 2003. However, these positive figures have to be approached with caution: the vast majority of these new libraries are very small community libraries (“axencias de lectura”): 50% of all libraries have less than 100 m<sup>2</sup>, and 87% (338 out of 389) have less than 230 m<sup>2</sup>, the minimum (5) set by IFLA (IFLA, 2001).

The vast majority (98.7%) of Galician public libraries are managed by local authorities, with the only exception being the five nodal public libraries, managed by the Galician government.

There are at present no mobile library services for small local authorities (less than 5,000 residents) without community library, only a small set of travelling book cases (8.000 items) managed by the Department of Culture.

Only three cities (Corunna, Ferrol and Vigo) out of seven have a developed network of public libraries (more than 3 public libraries including a central library). The departmental libraries, an important piece of the system envisioned in the Libraries Act, acting like head of a group of small local authorities libraries, is still to be created. Thus, the Galician Library System is uncoordinated, being composed of very small libraries without any external articulation, and unable to find support to provide quality services to their users. In addition to this, the Galician government has not created the territorial centres to head the system for each province, nor provided technical inspection or support for the member libraries. The Libraries Council created by the 1989 Act, charged with advising the government in the development of library policies has not met regularly and has got small influence (Blanco Pardo, 1997, p.381). The collection of the legal deposit for Galicia and the compilation of the national bibliography have been carried out by the library of the University of Santiago de Compostela, instead of the *Centro Superior Bibliografico de Galicia* (CSBG), and there is no provision of centralised or cooperative cataloguing for the libraries of the country other than that offered by the Spanish Ministry of Culture for the State Public Libraries, which manages the cooperative cataloguing (in Spanish language) venture REBECA.

### **1.4.2 Resources and use**

The collections of the Galician public libraries comprised 2,815,776 items in 2003. Compared with 1,317,312 in 1990 this represents a very significant increase of 213% over 13 years (16.3% per year).

The current figure of items per head is of 1.024, which oscillates between the very low 0.757 b/h in Pontevedra and 1.404 b/h in Lugo. This ratio compares unfavourably with the average in Spain (1.21 b/h) and that in the UK, 1.9 b/h. IFLA recommends 2.5 b/h for local authorities with a population of less than 100,000 and 2 b/h for those above that figure (IFLA, 2001). The average library collection is very small at 7,238 items, with 12% of all libraries having less than 2500 items (IFLA minimum figure for collection size).

The ratio book/ non-book material is very unbalanced, with an average collection formed by 98.7% of books and 1.3% of non-book items.

The acquisitions figures for 2003 were 174,341 items, 0.063 items per capita oscillating between 0.074 in Lugo and the very low again 0.053 in Pontevedra. This ratio also compares unfavourably with Spain (0.088) and the UK (0.18), even when this represents an important increase compared with the figures for 2002 (107,801).

There were 2,967,666 visits to the public libraries in Galicia in 2003, 1,690,017 in Corunna (1.49 visits per head), only 589,006 in Pontevedra (0.63 v/h), 449,482 in Lugo (1.16 v/h) and 239,161 in Ourense (0.65 v/h), averaging 1.05 visits per head nationally, against 1.8 v/h in Spain and 5.28 v/h in the UK.

Registered user figures in Galicia are particularly low: in 2003 there was 230,806 library members, 90,235 in Corunna, 94,314 in Pontevedra, 27,176 in Ourense and 19,081 in Lugo, averaging at only 8.21% of the population, compared with more than 30% in the UK.

Opening hours in 2003 averaged 26.30 per week, representing an extra 3 hours a week compared to the Spanish average, 23.45 h/w.

Loan figures for Galician public libraries are again very low: 1,153,814 loans were served in 2003 (664,474 in Corunna, 234,606 in Pontevedra, 145,808 in Lugo and 108,929 Ourense), 0.419 loans per head that oscillate between 0.593 l/h in Corunna to very poor 0.253 l/h in Pontevedra (and 0.1 l/h in Vigo –1998 data –, Pontevedra's and Galicia's largest city). Loans per head in Spain are 1.044 and in the UK 6.9. Loans per library are also very low, 2,966 loans per year, compared to 5,278 in Spain and 90,378 in the UK. Again the very small size of the Galician typical library has a logical consequence in the poor use figures.

Automation in Galician public libraries has been very slow, with approximately 50% of them fully automated in 2003. A national plan managed by the CSBG, *Proxecto Meiga*, was launched in 1997 to achieve the full automation of the public library system, which at the time was very low with only 10 automated libraries. A survey in 1993 found no automated public libraries in Galicia (Blanco Pardo, 1999a, p.201). Now on version 3, *Meiga* library management system is distributed free of charge to the smaller public libraries, and it is being used at present by nearly 130 of them.

The 194 automated libraries are distributed unevenly, with Pontevedra leading in this area with 61% fully automated libraries, while Ourense has only 38% of its network.

The average in Spain is similar to the Galician at 53%.

The libraries using *Meiga* have also a collective Web OPAC (6), as do the six state public libraries, making the catalogue of nearly 150 libraries available online (38% of all libraries, comparing very favourably with the Spanish figure of 23%). However, only 14% (53) public library authorities have a web site, similar poor average to the

Spanish 13%. The provision of other online services other than OPAC is almost non-existent.

In 2003 there were 548 public PCs available in public libraries (342 in Corunna, 88 in Pontevedra, 60 in Ourense and 58 in Lugo) and 386 staff PCs (or 1 per library).

Internet access was only available in 28% of the public libraries in 2003 (with 444 stations) but a national plan will offer Internet access in every library by the end of 2005. In 2004 198 libraries benefited already from this plan (7). The Spanish average of Internet access availability in public libraries is 47%.

The personnel figures for Galician libraries is low, with 483 employed (401 full time equivalent, FTE), 164 in Corunna, 118 in Pontevedra, 72 in Lugo and 48 in Ourense, equivalent of 1.24 per library and 0.17 per 1,000 inhabitants. This is the same average as Spain but well short of 0.43 in the UK. IFLA sets a minimum of 0.4 per 1,000 inhabitants (IFLA, 2001).

A particular problem has been the understaffing of the nodal libraries (state public libraries): in 1989, at the moment of their transference to the Galician government, they had 70 posts, 66 covered and 4 vacant, but in 1996, of an assigned complement of 111 posts, only 56 were covered and 55 were vacant (Soto Fernandez, 1997, p.40).

Given the significance of these libraries in the articulation of a Galician library system, the lack of qualified librarians in these institutions has had a very negative influence on its development.

The funding of public libraries has improved greatly in the period since 1990, from an approximate annual budget of 2.82 million euros (1 euro per head) to 11.48 million euros in 2000 (4.1 euros per head), an increase of 407% in ten years. The average for Spain is similar at 4.78 euros per head, but very short of the 24.98 e/h spent in the UK.

### 1.4.3 Typical services

Public libraries in Galicia are legally obliged to provide certain minimum services that vary according to size and category.

Community libraries (*axencias de lectura*), serving populations of up to 2,000 inhabitants, are only required to offer enquiry, reference and lending services and to have a children's section. To deliver these services the minimum acceptable standards are: 40 m<sup>2</sup> (IFLA sets this at 230 or 350 m<sup>2</sup>.), opening hours 15 hours a week, at least three days a week, and staff of 1 unqualified librarian.

Public libraries, serving populations between 2,000 and 50,000, are required to offer enquiry, reference and lending services and to have children's, local history and periodicals section. To deliver these services the minimum acceptable standards are: 100 m<sup>2</sup> (again very short of the IFLA standards), opening hours 25 hours a week, five to six days a week, and staff of 1 qualified librarian or 1 qualified senior librarian and 1 assistant librarian.

Central libraries of urban library services, serving populations of more than 50,000, and departmental (comarcal) libraries, heading one of the 53 departmental library systems, are required to offer enquiry, reference and lending services and to have children's, local history, periodicals and audiovisual materials sections. There are no minimum standards set for delivery of these services.

Nodal Libraries, heading the provincial library system (Corunna, Lugo, Ourense, Pontevedra and Vigo), are required to offer enquiry, reference and lending services and to have children's, local history, periodicals and audiovisual materials sections. To deliver these services there are no set minimum standards except opening times: 55 hours a week, Monday to Saturday.

Mobile services, covering local authorities with a population of less than 2,000 and without a community library can be served by mobile libraries, “travelling cases” or direct lending. The services offered by mobile libraries are enquiry and lending.

The standards for public libraries in Galicia do not cover collections. The average library collection is very small at 7,238 items, and quite old, with 42.3% of those being ten or more years old, the standard for complete collection renewal set by IFLA. 83% of the stock is circulating and 17% reference or special collection.

Foundational lots of books provided by the Galician government are to be at least of 1,500 books (IFLA recommends 2,500) of which at least 33% will be in the Galician language.

The average proportion of books in the native language is of 24.1% (comparing unfavourable with 50.8% in Catalan for Catalonia and 28.6 in Basque for the Basque Country). There is a historical reason for this small proportion of books in Galician in public libraries: for political and technical reasons (centralised acquisitions in Madrid), there was no significant purchase of titles in this language until the 1970s and particularly the 1980s and 1990s (Vazquez Souza, 2003, p. 32-33).

Only 1.3% of the collections is non-book material and only nodal libraries have got substantial audiovisual collections. In 1996, public libraries in the Corunna province averaged 54 audiovisual items (Blanco Pardo, 1997, p.381).

Inter-library loans services are not on offer in the majority of libraries, and the system is not coordinated at a national level (Blanco Pardo, 1997, p.381). Given the very small size of the average library and collection, inter-library loans should be a useful service to improve delivery and use with limited resources.

A national plan to allow every public library in the system to offer Internet access by the end of 2005 is being implemented at present, and the number of PCs for public

use in 2003 was of 548, approximately 1 PC per 5,000 inhabitants, a ratio that is being used in Canada and Australia, while 3 PCs/5,000 is being proposed in the UK (IFLA, 2001, p.47). Internet and public computing services can thus be considered to be of a good quality.

Nearly 150 libraries have their OPACs available online (38%), in which has been a notable improvement on the situation of a few years ago, but this is still a small proportion compared with other countries like the UK, where the majority of libraries have their catalogues available on the Internet. In addition to this, other online services (electronic resources, electronic request service, etc.) are all but non-existent, and only 14% of public libraries have an institutional web site.

At least 68% of Galician public libraries have a programme of events, including reader development, ICT training, and activities for children. The Galician Department of Culture supports a number of these, particularly those related to Galician culture and language, but the realities vary enormously between different libraries.

## **2. Case study: Wandsworth Libraries and Servicio de Bibliotecas da Coruña**

### **2.1 Servicio de Bibliotecas da Coruña**

Corunna Library Service (*Servicio de Bibliotecas da Coruña*) is managed by Corunna city council (*Concello da Coruña*) and provides library services to the city's population of 244,683. Comprising six libraries, Corunna's urban library system is the most developed in the country and it is widely considered as a flagship council service and a benchmark for other Galician library authorities.

In addition to the municipal library service, the city is served by another two important public libraries (9), the provincial nodal library (state public library "*Miguel Gonzalez Garces*") and the library of the provincial authority (*Biblioteca Provincial da Deputacion da Coruña*), and also various university (University of Corunna) and special libraries (*Real Academia Galega*, etc.).

The Library Service comprises six libraries, two in the city centre (Local studies library - *Biblioteca de Estudos Locais* and Central children and young people library – *Biblioteca Infantil e Xuvenil*) and four branch libraries in different city districts (*Sagrada Familia, Forum Metropolitano, Castrillón* and *Monte Alto*).

Since 1997, a central agency (*Central de Bibliotecas*) has been charged with administrative and financial management, coordination of programmes and services, strategic development and external relations (Blanco Pardo, 1997, p.7). However, libraries enjoy a high degree of autonomy, including independent acquisition budgets and programme of activities.

### **2.1.1 Resources**

The Library Service employs at present 59.85 FTE (Full time equivalent) staff (10), of which 21.35 FTE are qualified librarians. This represents a ratio of 0.24 per 1,000 inhabitants, a figure above the Galician average of 0.17 (11) but well short of IFLA standards (0.4) (IFLA, 2001). The ratio of personnel per library is 8.6, which

corresponds with medium sized libraries as opposed to the average Galician ratio of 1.24, typical of the very small community libraries that are the majority in the system.

Staff time was mostly devoted to customer services (56%), followed by events, teaching and outreach – also customer oriented – (18%), collection management (15%), administration (5%) and coordination (5%). Nearly every member of staff attended training events (94%, with 60% attending two or more) in the year.

The senior management structure, at present conformed by a single City Librarian (*Bibliotecaria municipal*), is under revision in the light of the fast expansion of the service over the last years. Corunna Library Service publishes and makes available to the public an annual report of its objectives, resources, services and activities.

The Library Service also provided work experience placements for 26 university students.

The annual library budget was 2.2 million euros in 2004, which represents a ratio of 8.62 euros per head that more than doubles the national rate (4.1 e/h).

The combined space of the member libraries is at present 3,771 m<sup>2</sup>, averaging 628.5 m<sup>2</sup> per library and 15.5 m<sup>2</sup> per head of population, a figure that is very short of the 56 m<sup>2</sup> recommended by IFLA (IFLA, 2001). Thus, the Annual Report for 2004 identified this shortage of available space as a barrier for further expansion in services and use, and also as a serious obstacle to implement a plan of accessibility for disable users (Servicio Municipal de Bibliotecas, 2004, p. 11).

All libraries, except the Central children's library, have a common policy of opening hours, which averaged 52.6 hours a week for 2004, in 293 days (24.4 days per month). This excellent measure compares again very favourably with the Galician average of 26.30 h/w, reflecting the fact of a larger personnel complement per library and the demand for the service.

The public libraries of Corunna provide 99 PCs for public use (2 per 5,000 residents, double the national ratio) of which 76 have Internet access (1.55 per 5,000 residents).

One of the branch libraries also provides wireless Internet access for the public.

Audiovisual equipment is also available at three libraries, game consoles in five and scanners and photocopiers in all of them.

The municipal Library Service collections comprise 152,293 items, which represents a very poor ratio of 0.62 items per head. However, the existence of two public libraries outside the municipal network, with very significant collections of their own, has to be considered when analysing this figure (*12*). The annual increase for 2004 was of 3.5%, but of 78% since 1998 (85,574 items). The acquisitions budget was approximately 129,500 euros, or 0.53 euros per head.

The stock renovation percentage was 17.6%, above the minimum 10% IFLA recommends, and the stock deselected was 8.7% of the total, just under the 10% IFLA guidelines that aim for a full collection renovation every 10 years.

Non-book material comprised 17% of the stock, an enormous improvement on the Galician average of 1.3%. Important collections of DVD and videotapes are included in this percentage, and are very popular with the users, contributing to the high lending figures of the service. Adult books conformed 41% of the total and children books the final 42%.

### **2.1.2 Services**

The typical services provided by the libraries include enquiry and reference (by email, telephone and in person), lending (books, periodicals, multimedia and audiovisual material), reservation, inter-library loan, home delivery services and Internet access

and other ICT services. Lending rights for adult users is typically restricted to 5 items (3 audiovisual items) for 15 days.

The programme of activities includes user education, outreach, ICT courses for beginners (82,655 students attended these in 2004), basic skills training, Spanish for foreigners courses, reading clubs in three of the libraries and other singular events (conferences, book presentations, etc.). A weekly programme on a local radio station and new signs for some of the library buildings were among the initiatives developed to improve general public awareness and create interest in the service.

Services for children are central to the Library Service according to its mission statement. These include children sections in each branch library and a Central children's library. Story times and other activities in both the Galician and Spanish languages are held every fortnight and totalled 180 with 14,006 participants in 2004.

Library related technical support for schools is offered and the programme of school visits (314) involved 3,006 children and 37 schools.

The libraries offer deaf users services and also halls for hire.

There is an important range of online services: "*Pregunte, as bibliotecas responden*" ("ask a librarian") is available from the municipal libraries web site. This is a programme managed by the Spanish Ministry of Culture that has only two Galician participants, the CSBG and Corunna Library Service. Also available from the very informative and complete libraries' web site is an Internet gateway to recommended resources.

Online legal and bibliographic databases are available on site only, as is the collective OPAC.

### **2.1.3 Use**

There were 1,056,875 visits to the municipal libraries in 2004, representing a ratio of 4.3 visits per head. This is an extremely high figure in the Galician context (1.05 v/h), more than four times the national average and 35.6% of all visits to public libraries in the country (2,967,666) (**13**). This is also a very important increment (168,095) over the figures for 2000 (888,780), 19% in four years.

The number of registered users is also very high: 58,387 or 23.9% of the population. The Galician average is 8.21%, and Corunna users are 25.3% of the national total (230,806).

The increment since 2000 (27,362) has been even stronger, with an extra 31,025 registered users or 113% increase.

Lending figures are 3 times higher than the Galician average (0.419 loans per head), with 380,738 loans or 1.56 loans per head. This figure represents an enormously large 33% of the 1,153,814 loans of the national public libraries combined. It is also an increase in 199,935 loans from year 2000 (180,803 loans), or 110% in four years. The number of loans per library is of 63,456 or 21 times the national average of 2,966, again stressing the difference in size and services between the average Galician library, a small community library, and the larger municipal libraries of the city.

In 2004 99,385 users visited the libraries to access the Internet. Other PC use (office applications, self-learning courses) attracted a further 2,037 patrons.

## **2.2 Wandsworth Libraries**

Wandsworth Libraries provide public library services to the residents of the London Borough of Wandsworth, the largest of the inner London boroughs with a population of 260,380 (14).

The Library Service is considered a flagship service of the Council and, as part of the Leisure and Amenity Services Department, has been awarded a fourth Charter Mark in 2001 and also re-accredited as an Investor in People in 2003. The Council Corporate Performance Plan (CPA) achieved an “excellent” rating in 2003, with the Library Service rating 3 out of the maximum 4. In 2004, 23 out of 26 Public Library Standards (DCMS) were met or exceeded.

Wandsworth Libraries comprise 12 libraries, three major town centre libraries (Battersea, Putney and Balham libraries) and nine branch libraries distributed around the Borough achieving coverage of 99% residents living within 1 mile of a library. The service is managed by a senior management team of six qualified librarians in charge of coordination and strategic development and supported by central administrative and technical resources services. The member libraries have a high degree of autonomy that includes independent budgets, local outreach and activities programming and stock development.

### **2.2.1 Resources**

Wandsworth Libraries employ 50.2 FTE professionally qualified librarians, 84.23 FTE posts for other staff and 12.02 FTE casual weekend assistants, a total of 146.45 FTE posts. This represents a ratio of 0.56 per 1,000 inhabitants, a figure above the UK average of 0.43 and the IFLA recommendation of 0.4 (IFLA, 2001). The ratio of personnel per library is high at 12.2, reflecting the important size (medium/large) of the component libraries. A feature of Wandsworth's library services is building-based

professional staff, with a minimum of a Branch Librarian, supported by a qualified Children's Librarian, at every library. The town centre libraries have more than two professionally qualified staff, including specialist librarians (audio-visual services, Asian languages, Black writing, etc.).

All staff receives a minimum of four days training per annum, including workplace training, and the budget for the programme was £12,850 in 2004.

The annual library budget was in 2004 £6.3 million, which represents a ratio of £24.50 per resident that is considerably higher than the national rate (£14.70). Between 1998 and 2003, the Council's Library Service received a total of £0.6m from government funds for various projects.

The libraries have different opening times according to size and other characteristics, between five to six days and 43 to 56 hours a week. Average hours per week are 48.9 and the combined figure for the Borough is 587 h/w.

The Borough's libraries are part of the People's Network and have received a Government grant of £290,224 that enabled the installation of a 2Mb network and 74 additional PCs. This means that approximately 150 public terminals offer free Internet access in local libraries, representing a ratio of 2.88 PCs per 5,000 population that is very little short of the proposed standard for the UK (3/5,000) (IFLA, 2001, p.47). All children's libraries have at least one PC and all branches have at least one PC with assistive and adaptive hardware and software to support users with special needs.

Fax, scanners and photocopiers are available at every library.

The library service's collections comprise approximately 524,000 items, which represents a ration of 2 items per head, in line with the national average (1.9) and the IFLA standards (2 items per head for populations of this size). Approximately 82,000 new items were purchased in 2004, and the acquisitions expenditure was £700,000 or

£2.69 per resident. The rate of renewal for the lending stock is a very good of 6.4 years, considerably faster than the 10 years IFLA recommendation. Collections of books and other materials in the diverse community languages are present in every library, reflecting the diversity of the local population.

### **2.2.2 Services**

The typical services provided include enquiry and reference (by email, telephone and in person), lending (books, periodicals, multimedia and audiovisual material), renewal and reservation (including online), inter-library loan, home delivery services and Internet access and other ICT services. Lending rights for adult users is typically restricted to 15 items for 21 days.

The libraries also deliver various non-information related services on behalf of the Council, including issuing freedom passes (travel permit) and housing Council helplines.

The programme of activities is focused on ICT (183 learners completed 8 hour courses) and basic skills' training but also includes user education, outreach, reading clubs in every library and singular events (conferences, book presentations, etc.).

Services for children are delivered by a team of 12.5 FTE children's librarians coordinated by the Library Service Development Manager for Children and Young People and every library has a separate Children's Library.

The Library Service had 1,910 class visits from local schools in 2004, while Children's Librarians made 341 visits to schools.

Events for children included the Summer Reading Challenge (5,076 participants), weekly story times (12,000 participants), reading groups, homework help clubs at two branch libraries and other reading development activities. With 19 books issued per

resident under 14 in 2004, the children's services are very successful and appreciated, and are central to the libraries' strategy.

Wandsworth Libraries also organize the distribution of Bookstart packs to parents of 8-month-old babies. The packs contain two books, an invitation to visit and join the local library and information leaflets.

Online services are being expanded gradually to meet the fast changes in the ICT area. These include a web OPAC that makes possible to reserve, renew, check and change membership details and join the Library Service online. Wandsworth Libraries have recently entered in a consortium with another two authorities in the London metropolitan area, Redbridge and Havering, and share its online catalogue with them under the name of the London Libraries Consortium Library Catalogue. This cooperative venture allows readers to use the services of the three partners, as they share a unique database.

Also available through the extensive and informative libraries' web site is a resources gateway that offers 24/7 remote access to a collection of high quality reference resources like Britannica online, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography or newspaper and bibliographic databases.

Other services offered by the Borough's libraries are: Local History library, Asian Community library, African Caribbean Community library, Music library and Reference library. There are hall hire facilities in some of the libraries.

### **2.2.3 Use**

2.65 million visits were made to the libraries in the Borough in 2004, or 9.8 visits per resident. These figures have remained relatively stable since 2000 and represent nearly the double of the UK average, 5.28.

The number of registered users was 129,120, a considerably high proportion of the population, 47.9%, particularly when compared with the national average of 30%. However, there has been a decline in membership numbers over the last few years of approximately 2% per annum.

Lending figures are also in decline, averaging 1% a year since 2000, from 2,450,303 to 2,320,576 in 2004 (8.91 loans per resident; national rate 6.9). However, this has to be set against an overall national decline of 5% p.a. The ratio of issues per library is of 193,381.

In addition to this figures, 750.000 renewals and 45.000 reservations (free of charge since 11/03) were made that year.

In 2004 there were 185,000 PC/Internet sessions of an average of 50 minutes.

Wandsworth Libraries, in line with the national practice and to improve the delivery of its services, realize an annual reader survey, which provided very good results in 2004: 89% of users rated the service overall as good, while just 0.8% rated it as poor, with the higher rate of disapproval with services in the two smaller libraries of the service. Every library displays customer feedback forms, and 314 were completed in 2004, of which 257 were complaints. User consultation groups for each library were created in 2003.

### **2.3 Analysis and comparison**

### **2.3.1 Corunna**

Corunna Library Service is a developing urban library network that has seen a very strong and continuous expansion over the last ten years, with at least half of its current components created after 1995. The libraries of Castrillon (Silva Carles, 1999, p.232) and Forum Metropolitano (Teijo Gomez, 1999, p.174) opened in 1996, while the coordinating centre and Monte Alto Library were created in 1997 and 1998, respectively (Blanco Pardo, 1999b, p.7-8).

The municipal libraries performance is remarkably better than that of their Galician counterparts, receiving an average of four times more visits per resident (4.3/1.03), having three times more registered users (23.9%/8.21%) and issuing more than three times more items per resident (1.56/0.41) and 21 times more per library (63,456/2,966).

Behind these very impressive figures there are strong development policies (annual plans, etc.) and an important allocation of resources, with municipal libraries spending averaging 8.52 euros per resident, doubling the national ratio of 4.1. The resources of the Library Service have expanded consequently, with an increase in the collection size of 78% since 1998, and in use, with a 19% increase in visits, 119% in registered users and 110% in loans since 2000.

Medium sized libraries (628.5m<sup>2</sup>) with a personnel provision that is 7 times larger than the Galician average (8.6/1.2 per library), larger opening hours (52.6/26.30 per week) and modern, high quality services that include up to date book stocks and good ICT (2 public PC/5,000), multimedia and audiovisual material (17% of the stock/1.3% Galicia) and children services provision, combined with an active campaign to attract

the public, have proven to be able to create a service that is the benchmark for urban library networks in Galicia.

However, the city libraries face a number of important challenges to this expansion. The nature of the very good response by the public will increase the demand and expectations from the service, including adequate local provision. Large areas of the city are not served by the existing libraries and the current ratio of 15.5 m<sup>2</sup> per head of population is very short of the 56 m<sup>2</sup> recommended by IFLA (IFLA, 2001) (15). The possibility of further expansion is also thwarted by a deficit in human resources: the ratio of 0.24 staff per 1,000 residents doubles the Galician average of 0.17, but falls well short of IFLA standards (0.4). This situation may also compromise the excellent programme of activities, training courses, etc. offered by the service. The senior management structure is also in need of restructuring to respond to the changes of the last decade, with Wandsworth Libraries' senior management team providing a possible model for this, with a small team of professional librarians (4) in charge of both different areas (children services, technical resources, staff training and outreach and education) and groups of libraries, a head of libraries (strategic management) and a deputy head librarian (technical management).

ICT services are also in need of improvements to maintain an adequate provision in this rapidly developing area: while public PC provision is of good quality, the online services offered by the municipal libraries are very limited. To be able to provide modern 24/7 library services, web OPAC (including facilities like renewal and reservation) and quality resources (reference and other databases) remotely accessible are essential.

Collection development is another area of concern: with 152,293 items (0.62 items per resident), the municipal stock would be insufficient for a population of this size.

Applying IFLA standards, 2 items per resident for populations of this size, an appropriate collection for Corunna would comprise nearly half a million items. However, as there are two other independent public libraries in the city (*see note 12*) with collections of some 150,000 items each, the real figure for material provision is closer to 1.83 items per resident.

This situation raises a final and fundamental question about library services in Corunna and elsewhere in Galicia: there is no real coordination with other library services or institutions and very little support from the Galician Library Service. This isolation results in duplication of efforts, poor use of available resources and lack of technical support or standards inspection. The municipal effort has then to compensate for deficiencies in national policy (*16*).

In the specific case of the existence of multiple authorities managing different public libraries within one city, as is the case in Corunna (but also in five other cities), a unification of services (for example, with the provincial authority library being integrated in the municipal service as a central library, as it does not support any national system responsibility) or a formal framework of permanent collaboration between institutions, encompassing membership (single card), circulation (unified regulations, intercity free interlibrary loan), technical procedures (common acquisitions policy, record sharing) and online services (collective web OPAC, common web site), would be essential to offer efficient and economically affordable quality services.

### **2.3.2 Wandsworth**

Wandsworth Libraries constitute a well-developed and mature urban library network that has been serving the local population since the 1880's (*17*). The boroughs of

Wandsworth and Battersea merged in 1965 creating a united library service, and the following decade saw the last period of creation of new public libraries in the area: 99% of the residents live within one mile of a library since then. The quality of the service has been confirmed by inspections (Charter Mark, Investor in People, CPA rated “excellent”, 23 out of 26 Public Library Standards met or exceeded) and user surveys, and compares very favourably with other public library services in London and the UK, and also with the IFLA Guidelines standards.

In 2004 the performance of the service achieved substantially better results than the UK national average, receiving 85% more visits per resident (9.8/5.28), having 18% more registered users (47.9%/30%) and issuing 30% more items per resident (8.91/6.9). However, a slow decline is evident in some of the indicators, with a reduction in membership numbers over the last few years of approximately 2% per annum and 1% a year decrease since 2000 in lending figures (set against an overall national decline of 5% p.a), while visit figures remained relatively stable, probably indicating that this decline pattern applies mostly to “traditional” library services (i.e. book and audiovisual lending) rather than to the whole service.

The ratio of issues per library (193,381) would confirm the fact that libraries in Wandsworth are of adequate size (medium/large) and well staffed, with 12.2 staff per library. The average rate of personnel per 1,000 residents is, at 0.56, considerably better than the UK average (0.43) and the IFLA recommendation (0.4). This is a reflection of a policy of building-based qualified library staff (branch librarians, children's librarians, specialist librarians for audio-visual services, Asian languages, Black writing, etc.) that focuses resources on high quality end user services.

Collections in the Borough are also of an adequate size, with 2 items per resident, in line with the national average (1.9) and the IFLA standards (2) and reflect the

diversity of languages and cultures of an Inner London borough. The rate of renewal for the lending stock is very good with 6.4 years, considerably better than the 10 years IFLA recommends.

The provision of ICT services is of very good quality, at the forefront of current practices, with a public PC provision of 2.88 PCs per 5,000 residents that is very little short of the proposed standard for the UK (3/5,000) and an important range of online services available through the libraries' web site on the Internet. These services include a collection of high quality reference resources available 24/7 to library members and a web OPAC that makes possible to reserve, renew, check and change membership details and join the Library Service online. This service is provided under the name of the London Libraries Consortium Library Catalogue in partnership with another two authorities in the London metropolitan area. This cooperative venture allows Wandsworth and its partners to offer an improved service while reducing operational costs, in an excellent example of this approach to service delivery.

The cost of the library services averaged in 2004 £24.50 per resident, a rate considerably higher than the national figure of £14.70, but lower than that of many of the other London metropolitan services, and it represents excellent value for money for the residents in the Borough.

### **2.3.3 Comparison**

The mission statements for the two library services are remarkably similar: both are based on an overall vision of libraries as “the hub of local communities, providing everyone with an equal opportunity to access books, information, learning and online services through a quality library network” (Wandsworth Borough Council, 2004,

p.9) (18) and both mention children and young people as priority objectives of the service. Wandsworth Libraries also mention explicitly both a compromise to contribute towards the Council's objectives and the objective of doing so in a value for money approach. Corunna Library Service's mission statement adds its obligation to support learning in schools and to conserve local bibliographic materials and act as a centre of excellence for local studies.

Without obviating the specific realities of Inner London and Corunna, particularly the differences in population composition, but also important economic, social and cultural divergences, a comparison between the two library network's delivery of their objectives, including services and resources, and the degree of success that they achieve in doing this, results in a number of similarities and differences and also offers some suggestions for the development of Corunna's public libraries in the future.

Public libraries confront today the pressure to stay relevant in a society where individualism, higher incomes, the development of new technologies and other factors contribute to erode the public demand for "traditional" library services, particularly public reading. The decline in lending and library membership in the UK for the last decade has not yet been evident in Galicia, but this is only due to the poor penetration of public library services until now.

A number of strategies to achieve this relevance are common to Wandsworth and Corunna, including the integration of services, the development of online and other ICT services and a customer oriented approach to service delivery. Forum Metropolitano, one of Corunna's public libraries, houses a social services and a local police office, while Wandsworth Libraries issue pensioners' travel permits and house council helplines. Cooperation and collaboration with other local authority

departments (and external institutions) transforms libraries into communities' gateways to social, educational and other public services.

Online and other ICT services in libraries should respond to the rapid transformations in the areas of information management and delivery, and are essential in the development of digitally inclusive societies. Both Wandsworth and Corunna provide good public computing services, and offer 24/7 online services on the Internet (limited in the second case).

Customer oriented services are also an essential element to attract public to the libraries, be it through building based qualified librarians delivering specialist services (local history and children services in both Corunna and Wandsworth, music, African Caribbean and Asian services only in Wandsworth), the assignment of staff time (74% of staff time in Corunna is devoted to customer services), extended opening hours (52.6 hours/week in Corunna) or the development of attractive programmes of activities, courses, events, etc. (common to the two authorities).

Differences between the two library services are profound and numerous. Wandsworth Libraries are a developed, mature local library service, with the advantages but also the problematic derived from this fact: refurbishment and modernisation of library buildings is needed to be able to offer attractive and high quality services, for instance, while the high degree of social penetration achieved increases the difficulty of developing new or extending the existing ones. A certain degree of decline can even be appreciated in relation to the performance in areas like lending or membership figures.

Corunna Library Service is a developing public library system with a rather different set of problems, derived from the need of expansion. Attracting new users (keeping current ones and recovering relapsed ones is also an important issue at Wandsworth)

and securing the extra resources needed to be able to develop new services are some of the key ones.

The resources managed by Wandsworth Libraries are considerably more important than the ones available in Corunna (*see Table 1*). Budgets, personnel, library buildings, collections, etc. conform all to this pattern. There are exceptions to this, particularly in ICT related resources. Figures for public PC provision, for example, are not too dissimilar, with 2 and 2.88 public PCs per 5,000 residents respectively, and the Galician service offers some services (wireless Internet connection) not available at Wandsworth.

Typical services are similar in the two services, with some exceptions (web OPAC), but given the disparity in available resources, use figures (*see Table 2*) are better in Wandsworth than Corunna. This is particularly remarkable in areas where the differences are bigger, for instance in collections (0.62/2 items/resident) and loans (1.56/8.91) (**19**).

There are two areas of practice common in UK libraries where Wandsworth experience could be of interest in Corunna: cooperation between different library authorities and the production of reader surveys. In spite of the fact that its resources are more generous, Wandsworth Libraries is part of various cooperative ventures, particularly the London Libraries Consortium, and informal collaborative networks that improve service delivery and resource management. Corunna Library Service has no similar degree of involvements, with its “ask a librarian” service the only important example of this.

The production of annual reader surveys is an essential means to investigate reader profiles, needs and satisfaction rates, and is used in Wandsworth as an important tool in the strategic development of the library services.

There is, finally, an essential differential factor between the two library networks, of enormous consequences in their provision of services. Wandsworth Libraries is part of an established, well-developed national library service, operating within its legislative, strategic and technical framework and receiving its support, while Corunna Library Service delivers its services with very little external assistance or support.

The UK national framework for public libraries includes national policy directives (*Due for Renewal*, 1997, *Building Better Library Services*, 2002), extensive legislation that includes the *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*, the *Local Government and Housing Act 1989*, the *Library Charges (England and Wales) Regulations 1991 (SI 1991 No.2712)* and the *Local Government Act 1999*, a strategic framework (*Framework for the Future: Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade*, 2003), strategic development agencies at national and local level (The Museums, Libraries, and Archives Council, ALM London and London Libraries Development Agency) and finally, inspection and standards, including the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for local authorities and the Public Library Standards of the Department of Culture Media and Sports, published in *Comprehensive, Efficient and Modern Public Libraries* (2001).

Wandsworth Libraries has received since 1998 £0.6 million of external funding from various central government bodies for different projects of national or regional scope, The People's Network being the more important of those.

There is not equivalent framework in Galicia to support its public libraries (*see section 1.3 Legislation and its implementation*) and progress in the area is slow. The Galician government has recently published service guidelines based on the IFLA/UNESCO ones, *Pautas sobre os servizos das bibliotecas publicas* (Xunta de

Galicia, 2004), but these are only informative and therefore will have only a limited impact on service provision.

Table 1: Resources/Services

<b>RESOURCES / SERVICES CORUNNA</b>	<b>RESOURCES / SERVICES WANDSWORTH</b>
6 libraries/pop. 244,683	12 libraries/pop. 260,380
59.85 FTE staff (0.24/1,000)	146.45 FTE staff (0.56/1,000)
21.35 FTE qualified librarians	50.2 FTE qualified librarians
52.6 av. opening hours/week	48.9 av. opening hours/week
2 public PC/5,000	2.88 public PC/5,000
0.62 items/resident ( <i>see note 12</i> )	2 items/resident
2.2 million euros budget = 8.62 euros/resident 0.53 euros/resident acquisitions	£6.3 million budget = £24.50/resident £2.69/resident acquisitions
5 items/15 days (adult)	15 items/21 days (adult)

Table 2: Use

<b>USE CORUNNA</b>	<b>USE WANDSWORTH</b>
4.3 visits/resident	9.8 visits/resident
23.9% residents registered users	47.9% residents registered users
1.56 loans/resident	8.91 loans/resident
63,456 loans/library	193,381 loans/library

### **3. Conclusions**

The delivery of modern, high quality library services is only possible within a developed national library system. A properly articulated system should encompass a national policy, a legal framework, a strategic framework, and coordination, inspection and standards agencies. It should also be adequately resourced in order to be able to provide its services.

The Galician Library System has at present only partially achieved this, and lacks some of its essential elements, particularly coordinating, inspecting and standards services.

Coordinating centres and libraries (provincial territorial centres, departmental libraries, urban central libraries) are needed to provide support to the smaller members of the System.

There is also a need to increase the material and human resources that are available for public libraries.

Historically, library services provision in Galicia has not been a priority for local authorities and has therefore been directed by the central government, Spanish before 1979 and Galician since then. In the past this has resulted in ambitious national plans, usually not adequately resourced, that have not been successful in creating a dynamic public library movement.

Since today 99% of all public libraries in Galicia are funded and managed municipally, a balance between local autonomy and national coordination should be achieved. Lack of funds to provide good services should be addressed at both levels in order to improve their quality. Buildings, staff, opening hours, collections, and other indicators show average figures for Galician public libraries (*see section 1.4.2*

*Resources and use*) that are well short of international standards, despite the very important efforts made by local and other authorities over the last decade. This efforts should be maintained and increased to achieve an approximation to those standards and that of the more advanced national systems elsewhere. An increase in resources will produce high quality services and will create public and political interest in these, as Corunna Library Service demonstrates. Current use figures show that the average Galician library, a small community library, is not able to offer these services unsupported and therefore its performance is poor. Urban library systems are also underdeveloped and need to be created in four of the seven cities. Provincial imbalances (particularly the poor performance of Pontevedra) need also to be addressed.

Comparison with well developed, advanced systems (UK) confirm the need to improve the framework and resources of the Galician Library System to achieve high quality services and satisfactory performances.

## Notes

1. All statistical data in this section is taken from the official publication *Galicia 2005* (2005).
2. Data from the Association of Galician Publishers web site (*Asociacion de Editores Galegos*). Available 21/08/2005 at:  
<http://www.editoresgalegos.org/edicion/interior.php?txt=cifras&lg=gal#>
3. Galician and Spanish library legislation accessed online (21/08/2005) at:  
[http://www.mcu.es/jsp/plantilla\\_wai.jsp?id=121&area=bibliotecas](http://www.mcu.es/jsp/plantilla_wai.jsp?id=121&area=bibliotecas)
4. Galician and Spanish library statistics, for 2003, taken from *Estadísticas de bibliotecas públicas españolas* (2003). Additional data from *Las bibliotecas públicas en España. Una realidad abierta* (2001) and *Las colecciones de las bibliotecas públicas en España. Informe de situación* (2003). UK library statistics, for 2001, taken from: *International library statistics: trends and commentary based on the Libecon data* (2004).
5. 230 m<sup>2</sup> is the minimum size set by IFLA for libraries that are part of a network. As these libraries are in theory part of a departmental (“comarcal”) library system headed by a departmental library, I am using this figure as the appropriate standard. For independent libraries the figure would be 350 m<sup>2</sup>. (IFLA, 2001).

6. <http://www.opacmeiga.rbgalicia.org/Portada.aspx>
7. *Galicia Digital* (17/2/2005). Accessed 20/8/2005 at:  
<http://www.galiciadigital.com/images/noticias2/nota.php?id=1102>
8. See note 5.
9. These libraries are not part of the municipal library service: the provincial nodal library is managed directly by the Galician government and the provincial library (*Biblioteca Provincial da Deputacion da Coruña*) by the provincial authority (*Deputacion da Coruña*). There is no formal coordination between the different services. These two libraries are not included in the comparative case study.
10. All data 2004 (Servicio Municipal de Bibliotecas, 2004).
11. Figures for the rest of Galicia are 2003, not 2004.
12. See note 9. The respective collections of both libraries comprise some 150,000 items each. If added to the municipal collection the combined figure would be of more than 450,000 items, or 1.83 items per resident, double the national rate of 1.02, and close to the IFLA recommendations for a city of this size (2 items per resident).
13. The population of Corunna represents 8.9% of the Galician total.

14. All data 2004 (Wandsworth Borough Council, 2004).
15. Plans for a new public library (Rosales) are under consultation at present (Servicio Municipal de Bibliotecas, 2004).
16. See section 2.3.3 *Comparison* for a discussion of the wider implications of this situation.
17. Wandsworth adopted the Public Library Act 1850 in 1983 and Battersea and Putney in 1887. The new libraries opened in 1885, 1887 and 1888, respectively. (Kelly, 1977, p.476)
18. *“Las Bibliotecas Municipales de A Coruña son centros públicos de información y promoción lectora que contribuyen a la igualdad de oportunidades y prestan sus servicios a los habitantes de A Coruña haciendo especial hincapié en la población infantil. Proporcionan apoyo a la educación formal no universitaria, recopilan, conservan y difunden el patrimonio bibliográfico local y facilitan el acceso a la información en los soportes tradicionales y mediante las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación.”* (Servicio Municipal de Bibliotecas, 2004, p.5).
19. The difference between services in borrowing entitlements (*see Table 1*) also reflects this, and has an influence on the lending performance.

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