

## PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN GREECE

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As in every country so in mine the main position belongs to our National Library, in Athens. The Library of the House of Parliament follows, which is governed by the Presidency of Parliament.

According to our laws everything printed for the first time, must be given, free, in two copies to our National Library and one copy to the Parliament Library. In this way our spiritual produce is gathered and saved as heritage to future generations. Moreover, the above - mentioned two Libraries have a lot of manuscripts archetypal and of ancient print stating back from the start of the Byzantine Empire. Through this wealth of material researchers and scholars preserve our cultural tradition of our long lasting civilization.

But Greece is not Athens only. So the Greek State since the beginning of the establishment of the Greek State, has started creating Libraries throughout Greece. There are two main "authorities" responsible for the creation of new libraries: the Greek State and the local Municipalities. So today there are (40) forty Public Libraries, governed by the Ministray of National Education and Religion, and about five hunder (500) Municipal Libraries governed by the local councils and the Home Ministry.

**PUBLIC LIBRARIES:** As I have already mentioned there are forty (40) directly governed and financed by the Ministry of National Education and Religion. They are dispersed all over Greece being established in the capital city of each district. They contain from fifteen thousand (15.000) volumes up to one hundred and fifty thousand (150.000) ones. They continually enrich their stock of printed, electronic and visual - aural material. Their operation expenses are met by their regular budget, while expenses for durables (books, electronic equipment and furniture) are met by funds from the Ministry of National Education and Religion which

governs Public Libraries. The personnel salaries are covered by the state budget. The main purpose of all the above is one: to be of service to the common citizen.

Whit the existing material (printed, electronic, visual - aural) the Public Libraries serve the local communities as well as they can, covering a large range of knowledge. They create alongside collections of local interest taking into account the population composition of each district and its cultural interests.

Here I would like to draw your attention to a special part of our Public Libraries; the History Libraries. They date back to the time when our country was occupied by the Ottoman Empire. They can be located in mountainous regions of Peloponnese, Thessaly, Ionian and Aegean islands. These libraries gathered and saved material for about four hundred years (400) up to the creation of the Greek State. Many factors, such as the invulnerability of the regions, the priviledges they enjoyed (Aegean islands), as well as the fact that the Ionian islands were occupied by Venetians and English, helped these libraries to develop and flourish.

Moreover these libraries had museum collections from this dark period of the Hellenism (such as arms, costumes, sacerdotal vestments, folk jewellery, and so on).

**MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES:** There are five hundred (500) governed and funded by each Municipality and the Home Ministry. Furthermore the Ministry of National Education and Religion finance these institutions to buy books. The main aim of these libraries is also to be of service to local communities taking into account all these I mentioned about the Public Libraries. I have to say here that up to (1985) nineteen eighty - five, all Public Libraries were governed by the Civilization Ministry. Since nineteen eighty - five (1985) they have been governed by the Ministry of Education. The philosophy of this change was based on the fact that Public Libraries greatly supported education and reasonably they should belong to the institution responsible for the education of Greek citizens, that is the Ministry of Education.

What is in store in the future seeing that the State continually creates new libraries either Public or Municipal ones? The question is how (Popular) Folk

Libraries, under the jurisdiction of different authorities, will be able to function following a uniform policy of development. For us the parameters of the question are the following:

- 1) **PREMISES:** All the libraries both Public and Municipal one must have their own premises

designed to be used as libraries. Our Ministry has already initiated a project of housing all the libraries under its charge. Six of the Public Libraries have moved to their own new buildings and ten more have been housed to traditional buildings which have been renovated, where historical libraries have their premises. There are two more under construction one in Larissa and the other in Serres; they will be completed in two years' time. The project of housing libraries is in progress and we believe that it will finish in the near future either by building new premises or providing existing buildings by local authorities.

Municipalities follow the same policy as far as their libraries are concerned **PERSONNEL**; up to now neither Public nor Municipal libraries have enough competent staff according to international standards. Moreover they are not educated in the science of being a librarian. Neither they know the use of computers in libraries. We strive to change the existing laws concerning the operational number of persons working in a library so that more people can work in them.

We want to have specialized personnel in computers, perseverance and book - binding staff, administration as well as finance staff. There is already a committee, of which I am honored to be a member, which is working to draw up a new law which will meet all our needs. In this way we believe that we will solve the shortage of staff and it will open the work marked for the graduates of the School of Library of the Ionian University and of the Technological Institutes of Athens and Thessaloniki, as well as of various other specialties.

**UNIFORM ORGANIZATION:** After resolution of the Council of Ministers the creation of a National Net of Libraries was created, which take charge of all Public and Municipal Libraries was created, which take charge of all Public and Municipal Libraries first and then gradually the Academic and all other Libraries will be under its jurisdiction. In this way a uniform function will be achieved: of operational form and development policy.

An essential condition for the operation of the Net is the adaptation of computers and generally of modern technology, along with the training of the existing personnel which nowadays is not educated to the degree it should be.

**COMPUTERIZATION:** For the past ten years there has been an effort to computerize the Libraries of our country. A weapon and tool in this effort was and still is the Library Automation System - ABEKT.

A system which is entirely of Greek conception. I believe that a presentation of this system, though theoretical, is necessary as it is fundamental to the function of the Net of our Public Libraries.

### **NDC National Documentation Centre**

#### **Library Automation System - ABEKT**

##### **Introduction**

During 1986 the National Documentation Centre (NDC) started the development of the library automation system ABEKT as part of its government enactment obligations. The system under development needed to satisfy the needs of libraries that had little or no experience in library automation system as well as no expertise in computers in order to install or maintain such systems. Since then and until 1995 ABEKT was developed and successfully installed in more than 1000 libraries across Greece. These first software versions (1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0) were developed for the DOS operating system and offered - apart from the cataloguing, searching and retrieving of information - the following functions:

- Circulation control in order for the librarian to know *who has what* and *what is charged to whom*
- Periodical issue management in order to monitor the subscriptions of every serial copy
- Monitoring of the acquisitions
- Data Interchange in order to import and export bibliographic records formatted in UNIMARC

The rapid development of information and computer systems gave rise to new trends in library automation, expanding their needs and demands for state of the art equipment and software. NDC, responding to these trends, developed ABEKT 5.0 for the Windows platforms.

### ABEKT 5.5 System

ABEKT 5.5 has been developed for the Microsoft Windows (95/98/NT) environment requiring a minimum of 32 Mb RAM and a 200Mb of disk space for 30,000 records. It runs either as a stand-alone program on a single machine (under any of the previously mentioned operating systems) or on a Windows NT based Network.

In the near future, an ABEKT client system will be able to communicate with a server running an RDBMS - ORACLE 8.x. The diagram illustrates this system's general architecture.

ABEKT 5.5. manages multilingual data using the UNICODE character set. Current implementation provides two user interfaces: one in English and one in Greek. User Interfaces in other languages will become available depending on customer demand and translation availability.

ABEKT consists of a set of modules in order to facilitate the following library services:

#### Cataloguing

The ABEKT bibliographic database fully supports the ISO 2709 UNIMARC and the UNIMARC Authorities format. Thus, the system accepts multilingual inscriptions concerning diverse kinds of data such as monographs, serial (journals, newspapers etc), images, video, music etc. Provisions have been made so that electronically available material can be stored and later retrieved and viewed online using ABEKT. Data can, also, be stored and later retrieved from a CD-ROM or similar storage devices, thus libraries are able to exchange bibliographic data without requiring any network connection.

#### Online Public Access Catalogue - OPAC

ABEKT's bibliographic data can easily be accessed and locally searched online. ABEKT's four searching levels are targeted to satisfy the needs of its users according to their level of expertise. Document retrieval information remains the same for all levels of searching, giving partial or full information on a document entry as well as the ability to view in MARC format. The OPAC module also supports the command language CCL Z39.58, the storage on disk of a query session and its reload and reexecution.

### Data Interchange

The Data Interchange module gives the ability to the ABEKT library system to import bibliographic records formatted in the standard ISO 2709 UNIMARC or USMARC format, to export records in UNIMARC format and to import and export Authority records.

#### Circulation Control

The Circulation Control module manages the library members (patrons) information system. Information such as *who has what* and *what is charged to whom* is readily available to the librarian along with the patron's rights, obligations etc. The information kept concerns only the active transactions, thus avoiding the intrusion into a patron's privacy and freedom. The module's functionality includes check in, check out; item reservation; renewals; and corresponding sophisticated reports.

#### Acquisitions

The Acquisition module manages the item order information system. It holds essential information about the collaborating vendors (suppliers) and the item order details.

#### Periodical Issue Management

The Periodical Issue Management module enables the library to manage and monitor the subscriptions of every serial copy.

#### Statistics

The Statistics module generates statistics based on statistical patron and item categories as well as category (member of item) circulation statistics. A library defines these categories so that its services will improve in areas of high demand etc.

#### Selective Dissemination of Information - SDI

The SDI module allows the dissemination of information to the library users based on the user's profile characteristics and requirements. The notification notices are sent automatically via e-mail to its library members.

#### Web gateway

The Z39.50 Server, including the Extended Service (ES) service *Order an Item*, allows Interlibrary Loan and interoperability with other libraries. The Web gateway allows searching, retrieval and online viewing of electronically stored documents, over the Internet using any Z39.50 client (such a client is at the URL: <http://jasmin.ndc.gr>).

### Installation, Usage, Support

ABEKT 5.5 is designed to be used by librarians with little or no experience in library automation systems and with little or no technical support. As such, the installation of the stand-alone ABEKT 5.5 is similar to a typical windows program. For a complete network installation (without RDBMS) basic networking and computer knowledge is required along with the ABEKT 5.5 system installation document.

The available system documentation describes the user interface in detail. Thus with basic knowledge of the (UNI)MARC philosophy, the system usage is possible without additional training.

NDC's experienced support team offers seminars on system usage as well as the UNIMARC formatting and provides online telephone/e-mail support to its customers.

### ABEKT 5.5 Price

The software product's price list is available upon request. It depends on number of modules purchased and on quantity.

The price for tutorial seminars on the ABEKT system and/or the UNIMARC characteristics depends on the number of presentation hours.

