

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS IN LIBRARIES OF LATVIA

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The meeting of the European Council in Lisbon in 2000 forwarded one of the priorities of the new member states of the European Union – co-ordinated elaboration and implementation of innovations policy to raise their competitiveness and promote development.

The current situation shows that the percentage of innovative enterprises in Latvia is 19 %, but the percentage of the state's financing for research and development constitutes 0,45 % from the gross output of the country. In older states of the European Union it constitutes approximately 2 %. The contribution of the private sector is critically low – only 0,16 % of the gross output. (*IRC Latvijas ziņas, Inovāciju Rosināšanas centra izdevums Nr.55, 2005.gada janvāris*).

Dynamics of change

In 2003 the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia approved the National Innovations Programme for 2003 – 2006 to provide for favourable environment for innovations and research (*MK 08.04.2003, Rīkojums Nr. 205*). I have no information what impact it has on other fields, but the libraries of Latvia are really on an innovative stage. The year 2005 is a radical turning point in library life as the mega-project *Gaismastīkls* of the National Library of Latvia (NLL) has taken a rapid course of development. The software company *Microlink*, the winner of the competition of the Ministry of Culture, proposes to supply 1 658 computers to 738 state and municipal libraries, to provide 255 internet connections and to ensure the training for 400 members of library staff within the time of 150 days. The programme *Gaismastīkli* has been assigned 12 743 500 LVL, from those 3 741 060 LVL are planned to be expended this year. There is also a real hope to receive the support from the funds of the European Union in the amount of 1,15 million LVL. NLL on its turn has received 4 162 975 LVL for the management of the construction project, and 533 391 LV for the state-significance repository of low demand literature in Silakrogs. In other words: such an intensive stream of big money has not entered the library field ever before. **Libraries, librarians, information resources and money is in the centre of public attention and discussions. All of us are ready for constructive, effective and concordant actions, so that on November 18, 2008, the splendid *Gaismaspils* (the Palace of Light) is erected on the bank of the Daugava.**

Still it is not possible to move forward without research. In fact inquiries, evaluation of situations, the estimation of the economic efficiency of library performances and the added value of libraries for the economy of the state is taking place in all areas of the library work.

The dynamics of the changes has affected NLL most of all within the context of its new building. Seven working groups were established in February 2005 formed from the members of NLL staff and administration. They have been established according to the sectors and special services in the existing library structure. They are:

- 1 Collection management and the flow of documents – 19 members, chaired by the executive director of NLL Dzintra Mukāne;
- 2 Acquisitions, bibliographic services and databases – 8 members chaired by the deputy director of NLL, the head of Bibliography Institute Anita Goldberga;
- 3 Readers service and the flow of library users – 19 members chaired by the deputy director Ināra Mutule;
- 4 Collection and services for children – 5 members chaired by the deputy director of NLL, the head of Library Development Institute Anna Mauliņa;
- 5 IT and security systems – 8 members chaired by the head of Automation Department Antonijs Kipāns;
- 6 Staff planning and training – 5 members chaired by the head of the Personnel Department Lita Hofmane;
- 7 Facilities' management and operation – 5 members chaired by the deputy director Kazimirs Platacis.

These seven working groups examine the real situation in all of the departments, and make SWOT analyses and elaborate detail future strategy for the smallest subunits from current viewpoint and within the context of the new building. The concept of the content of the new building is being established. On many problematic questions the practice of Denmark, Sweden and Netherlands is considered as an example. Common discussions and brainstorming are arranged, the analyses of specialists listened to. The joint seminar of the administration of NLL and the Royal Library of Sweden (RLS) was particularly interesting and beneficial. Interesting conclusions can be made when comparing the activities of the RLS Library Co-operation and Development Department (BIBSAM) and the NLL Library Development Institute (LDI). BIBSAM in Sweden is performing the same functions as the state agency Culture Information Systems (KIS) and LDI in Latvia. The independent budget of BIBSAM is 27 million EU, it makes 10 % of the budget of RLS. It has 11 staff members. BIBSAM focuses its attention on the development of education, science and research, in other words, on research libraries leaving outside their attention public library sector and the questions concerned with it. The desire of Swedish specialists is to include the problematic issues of public libraries into their supervision area in a near future. The bases of LDI strategy up to now have been public library sector: consultative, methodical work and other activities basically targeted to public library audience. Research, special and school libraries have stayed beyond the attention of LDI because of the lack of financial and personnel resources. Our future challenge is to turn towards the problematic questions of research libraries and special libraries and to promote the solutions of school libraries' financing.

Following the example of BIBSAM we might establish the legal supervision of libraries and related fields all over the state. BIBSAM staff includes 5 lawyers. In Latvia the Library Department of the Ministry of Culture performs the juridical work, the juridical

security including. My opinion is that this department should be extended. The elaboration of Laws and other normative documents, and their interpretation and explanation in particular shall be extended.

Libraries in Latvia: year 2004

At present the following libraries are operational in Latvia:

- 1 national library;
- 31 libraries of higher educational institutions;
- 880 public libraries;
- 53 special libraries;
- 1 principal non-specialized library;
- 1 103 school libraries, colleges of professional education including.

In 2004 – 2005 the funding of 863 local public libraries changed for the most part. Since 1995 the increase of funding has been 8 – 10 % annually on the average. But in 2004 the financing from municipal budgets is uppermost. Municipalities have cardinally changed their attitude towards public libraries. After years-long actions of the protection of libraries, explanation of their significance, sharing foreign experiences, and mainly after the stormy discussions on building, or not building the National Library, a positive turning-point has reached the society and the politicians of Latvia concerning the support of libraries. In many villages, smaller towns and state-significance cities new *palaces of light* are erected. It is an innovative trend in library development. Unfortunately the number of libraries and library users decreases. The negative demographic balance determines it.

In 2004 there has been a turning- point, though not very radical, concerning the librarians' salaries. For a small extent but still the salaries of staff in public libraries, in NLL and in the Library for Blind have increased. Still they are far from being adequate.

Statistics – the child of sorrow in Latvia

The creators of the international library statistics database *LIBECON* have expressed their opinion that many countries do not participate in providing information for this database for a single reason: they are not able to provide information on school libraries. Unfortunately Latvia is also among those countries. On one side – schools are the property of municipalities; on the other side – the Ministry of Science and Education (MSE) acts as their governor. The Library Development Institute of NLL on its turn is responsible for official library statistics together with the Central Bureau of Statistics, of course. When the Central Bureau of Statistics delivers the forms to fill school libraries do not respond, they ignore them because the position of MSE towards library statistics is negative. The appeals of the Ministry of Culture and the Library Council of Latvia remain a voice in the Sahara wilderness. As a result about 1 100 school libraries that constitute about half of all the libraries of Latvia are not included. We can slightly imagine what our library work looks like on a world scale. But the thing still remains as it is. In future the new statistics standard **LVS EN ISO 2789 : 2005 Information and documentation.**

International library statistics will be published, and the previous version – LVS ISO 2789:1991 cancelled. According to the new standard we will have the possibility to consider all the juveniles attending schools to be library users, as it is in reality.

Standards: elaborated but not available

The Standardization Department of NLL and the Technical Committee of the Standardization of Museum, Archive and Library Work MABSTIK is performing the translation, adaptation and adjustment of the international standards collaborating with a wide circle of specialists of the related fields. Since 1997 24 international standards and other normative documents have been adopted as the standards of Latvia. The state limited responsibility company *Latvijas Standards* is the registration authority having exclusive rights for the publishing and selling standards.

The adaptation of the international standards is intense, in theory it completely meets the needs of libraries, archives and museums. But the availability of these standards in practice is under threat because:

1. The price of one copy of a Latvian standard as stated by *Latvijas Standarts* is 2 – 57 Ls. For instance, the price of a standard containing 80 pages is 22,55 LVL. Even the large libraries of Latvia are not able to purchase standards for such a high price, notwithstanding the fact that the standards are necessary practically in every department of the library. All in all there are about 2 500 libraries, archives and museums in Latvia, and a large part of the registered standards is necessary in each of those institutions.
2. *Latvijas Standards* infringes the Law ‘‘On the supply of legal deposit copies of publications to the National Library of Latvia’’, it does not supply NLL with the legal deposit copies of all the published standards. That means the standards as the documents witnessing of the development of the state will not be preserved for the coming generations, and their indexing in the national and international bibliography is under threat.
3. *Latvijas Standarts* has expressed a threat to bid the publication of the drafts of museum, archive and library standards on the website of the Ministry of Culture thus making obstacles for the discussions on the drafts among the professionals of the appropriate fields.
4. Following the decision of the meeting of chairmen of the technical committees of standardization *Latvijas Standarts* does not deliver the author’s copies to the translators and compilers of standards. The motivation is that this way the copyright laws will be better respected, as the standard translators and compilers might make and distribute illegal copies. Furthermore, the translators, compilers and those performing adaptation lose their right of intellectual property at the moment the standard is certified and registered by *Latvijas Standarts*.

For the Library Council of Latvia and for the whole of librarians' domain, as well as for MABSTIK, such a limitation of the availability and use of the normative documents is unacceptable. Our opinion is that *Latvijas Standarts* has become a hindrance to the standardization instead of being its promoter.

The negotiations with the Ministry of Economics and with *Latvijas Standarts* continue. Gradually we observe that the policy of the hearts-of-stone officials of both institutions becomes milder.

Censorship still wants to live

It is the greatest real achievement of the Eastern Europe that we have no official censorship any more. Though its recurrences still appear here and there. Thus recently a Parliament member of Latvia after reading the book by **Miriam Stoppard "Questions children ask: How to answer them"** Riga, ZvaigzneABC, 1998 (translated from the edition: London, Dorling Kindersley, 1997) raised a large noise. As a result the Security and Order Committee of the Riga City Council, Riga Centre for Drug Addiction Preventive Treatment, and the Education, Science and Culture Commission of the Parliament demanded to withdraw this book from public libraries.

M.Stoppard (1937) is a worldwide known writer of popular science books and encyclopaedias devoted to children and juvenile problems. She often participates in the broadcasts of the British radio and television. Presently the world wide web (www.amazon.com.uk) offers her bestsellers "Having a baby", "The new pregnancy and birth", "Contraception, pregnancy and birth" and other.

The book "Questions children ask: how to answer them" gives answers to complicated questions of children (sex, AIDS, gays and lesbians, outrage, dependence, etc. The answers are arranged on 4 levels according to the age of the child – from 2 to 11 years of age. Two pages of this book (90-91) give an untrue information "Marijuana does not cause dependence. In this respect it probably does less harm than cigarettes [...] Light drugs like "Ecstasy", marihuana, LSD and "magic mushroom" does not cause dependency". Though the opinions of specialists worldwide are contradictory on these issues.

The statements of the author are ambiguous, even unhealthy and dangerous, still, **let us remember that the book addresses parents and not children, and the parents are vital and quite knowing and able to judge for themselves.**

The librarians' viewpoint is that there is no necessity to withdraw this book from public libraries because as a whole it is considered a positive publication. It is acknowledged and demanded (in 2001 the second edition of it was published in England). Besides censorship does not exist in our country, and the confiscation of the work after a relatively long time would make an unnecessary noise in Latvia and abroad. Libraries of Latvia have never performed the function of censors, even in

tsarist Russia and under the soviet regime. Only court might decide the fate of the book.

Everything came to good end, still the question remains: what is to be done. Is any supervision needed over the publishing of children and juvenile books? How shall we name such a supervisor? Will it be the forgotten censor again?

The financial censorship in Latvia grows and flourishes, of course. On the average one hour of the internet access costs 0,50 LVL. There are the discussions whether it is much or not so much, but nobody speaks of the internet access free of charge. The world's practice and the comparison of the innovative potential of the European Union, USA and Japan witnesses of the fact that more free (also free of charge) access to information causes more rapid and more firm development. The internet access for payment in the Eastern Europe is an obstacle for the development of science, art and everyday life. This is the axiom for everybody to remember, - librarians, self-government leaders and state officials.

Registration, accreditation and regionalization of libraries

Since 2000 the Library Department is operational at the Ministry of Culture. It performs the registration of all the libraries. Now there is no doubt about the number of libraries at least.

The accreditation of all libraries is going on. That is also the competence of the Library Department of the Ministry of Culture. In fact it is putting in order library documentation, defining functions, strategy, aims, tasks and forwarding visions. Still there also exist certain problems. The main of them is so called regionalization, in other words, the selection of the main library of the region that should form the regional joint catalogue, perform methodical and supervision work, care for continuous professional education, arrange seminars, conferences and discussions. It is obvious that none of the village libraries, though very good, large, with excellent technical equipment can perform the function of the main library of the region in spite of the agiotage of its local self-government. There are 4 problematic region centres in Latvia in connection with so-called region-significance cities – Daugavpils, Rēzekne, Liepāja and Jelgava. Till 1990s central district libraries were operational in these cities, and they were oriented to supervise their rural libraries. At the beginning of 1990s these libraries were disbanded, their collections divided among other libraries. As the result the main city libraries had to take over the responsibility to supervise also the situation of the other libraries of their region. Resources were necessary to perform this work – appropriate financing and staff, and somebody had to pay. There are still cases of disagreement in self-governments, as the district councils are not willing to pay the city libraries for their service concerning rural libraries. The result is that city libraries act only in the interests of the city ignoring the needs of the rural libraries. There are no joint regional catalogues, and no professional methodical assistance available. Still my opinion is that in the near future the real everyday life will lead to reasonable solutions, and the main city libraries will become regional institutions and do the job.

Legal deposit – is the new Law expected to clear things up?

NLL like other national libraries worldwide is responsible for the national intellectual potential, – the preservation of the published culture heritage, the compiling of the national bibliography, and providing for the availability of these resources. Legal deposit copies form the bases of the national collection. They are delivered to NLL according to the Law free of charge. Presently the Law “On the supply of legal deposit copies of publications to the National library of Latvia” passed on October 16, 1997, is in force. It states the publishers are to supply 14 mandatory copies. The number of copies is too large, it serves also as the source of acquisitions, and that contradicts the international practice. Regional scientific libraries are also receiving legal deposit copies, all in all those copies make 35 % of annual acquisitions. The patience of publishers is exhausted and new solution is necessary. In 2003 publishers and librarians agreed on drafting a new Law. The draft of the new Law stipulates 7 legal deposit copies. It refers also to electronic online publications, thus providing the possibility of their archiving as one of the tasks of NLL. For the time being the new Law is still got stacked in the labyrinths of the Cabinet. It is difficult to judge whether the new Law will provide for timely supply of the legal deposit copies. The system of penalties is not so tough that the publishers might care to respect it. (In 1920s-1930s the print-runs of new publications were totally confiscated in case of not supplying the legal deposit copies).

At present a large amount of double actions in preparing bibliographic descriptions of the new national publications is typical. NLL is responsible for the supply of timely bibliographic information to the regional and village libraries. The legal deposit copies lay on the bases for preparing the bibliographic information. If the legal deposit copies are not supplied, or supplied very late, no bibliographic information is available, or it is outdated.

Thus a magic circle appears: the main district libraries reproach NLL for not including the records of recent publications into the national bibliography databases timely. The regional libraries having already purchased the new publications are urged to make their own bibliographic records with all the consequences – errors and inaccuracies.

The project of the State Joint Library Information System VVBIS defines centralized information creation and supply model. According to it each library may import the information prepared by NLL to their catalogues. The improvement of the system of legal deposit shall be oriented to this direction.

Future prognosis: Voyage for discovery

On November 18, 2008 the new building of NLL will be erected on the bank of the Daugava, as the government of Latvia has festively announced. With the big agiotage that has arisen about the construction of the new building of NLL practically in all districts of Latvia the construction, renovation, designing of library buildings has been started. In 2008 more and more village and town libraries will enter new or renovated premises, and all the libraries of municipalities and schools will be computerized.

The national digital library of NLL will embrace the intellectual essence of all times, beginning with the first Lutheran mass published in Latvian in 1525 that perished in the ashes during the fire in the Lybeck Catholic Church, till the global masterpieces of the modern world. The people will be more English-language-skilled, still they won't forget their own tongue. A library without the internet connection will seem untypical and obscure.

The vision of libraries, archives and museums will be like entering three institutions through one door. This will be the digital door open all the time and for everybody. Library will always be the voyager for discovery, and it is not so essential whether it will be a virtual library without walls, a small private oasis with romantic ancient books, or all-embracing hybrid library. The personnel will change radically – more and more male persons will wander along the rows of shelves and computers. Already today the Royal Library of Sweden attests it, as 39 % of the staff are men. The nature of librarian's work will change, and the librarians will become the owners of private bureaus for information search, structuring and analyses. More and more lawyers, system administrators, harvesting specialists, artificial translation specialists, and other professions will be engaged in library work. The digital-born information will grow and spread aggressively. Still it will not be able to drive out the old good books. It might happen that the Baltic-Nordic co-operation will disappear because we'll have found out everything about each other.

The annual imposing forums of IFLA that have no equivalents concerning their geographic and membership coverage might be transformed, and possibly limited, because in the huge conference halls we often see always the same faces. Though that might be only a short transition period. Worldwide meetings will be reborn, with an irrational power they will call together librarians cyberspace librarians, information navigators, system creators, internet brokers and search engineers.

Sunny way to Oslo to the 71st General Conference of IFLA –Voyage for discovery!

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