

UNION CATALOGUE QUALITY CONTROL AND EVALUATION IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

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Information society requires provision of access to information and opportunities to transform information into knowledge. Task of the libraries is to offer new qualitative information services in order to create prerequisites of implementing the economic and social tasks of the society. It is the public libraries, who have *“strategic role in the formation of information society, as they promote the strengthening of the society identity, economic development, life-long learning and cultural diversity”* (3).

UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) emphasizes: *“The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. The public library is a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women”* (2).

Delivery of information services to the inhabitants of the region is based on the collections of the public libraries of the region. Therefore it is essential to create regional union catalogues, in order to gather information about all information resources of the region and to create common points of access. It enables the patrons to locate the necessary information faster and to choose the most appropriate mode and place of acquisition. Library law of Latvia determines that the main library of the region *“creates the union catalogue of the relevant administrative territory collections and provides its availability to each of the involved libraries”* (1).

Library is a social institution and the quality of its services affects the society development opportunities. In order to determine the potential of socio-economic development, one must first assess the level of the resources and services offered by the libraries. Former library operation assessment did not take into account the economic concepts and methods. In the current economic conditions library operation assessment more and more emphasizes economic aspects, like marketing, quality measurement, audit and implementation of quality systems. It is explained by the main mission of the library - to offer qualitative services and to improve constantly the library service system. Only the public library preserves its significance in the social system, providing the opportunities of self-improvement to every member of the society.

According to the definition of library quality provided by the international standard, the usability and quality of the catalogue as a part of the library service system, *“is the feature expressing the library ability to provide the patrons’ needs”* (5, p.13). Library catalogue quality and value size depends on whether the analysis of the patrons’ needs

performed and the cataloguing method is elaborated, how valuable is the cataloguing process, what is the knowledge of the cataloguing professionals and opportunities of the library management system.

Quality of the electronic catalogues must be assessed in a common system, analyzing the factors determining the quality and value of the *catalogue-product* (records which describe every item and in total reflect the library collection) and *catalogue-service* (searching and other opportunities).

Quality - totality of features and qualities, characterizing validity, correspondence (4, p.421). In order to determine the quality, one must assess the correspondence of catalogues to the standards and other regulations.

Value - validity, significance (4, p.850). Assessment of the catalogue usage value is based on the analysis of usage opportunities and patron satisfaction.

Quality determining properties are those significant to the catalogue users. Therefore the quality is not determined by its creators and its tasks, but by its users and his/her benefits. Quality measure is not an absolute value, it depends on the particular situation - purpose, type of the search request and other determining factors.

In order the public libraries provided free and equal access to qualitative information and the necessary informational services to the local inhabitants, union catalogues must be comfortably and comprehensively used. It determines corresponding tasks to information processing - in the process of cataloguing the information is supplemented by added value.

Situation in Latvia

Creation of public library electronic catalogues began at the end of 1990ies. During the last years the number of catalogues and the amount of information they contain, has dynamically increased. Library cooperation tendencies are more and more visible. One of the most significant cooperation models is creation of public library regional union catalogues. Majority of the regional libraries are creating electronic union catalogues and providing their availability in the Internet environment.

At present the state significance library and regional public library union catalogue audit is taking place, in order to assess their quality and usage value. Audit methodology is based on Charles Cutter's statements about the functions of the catalogue and IFLA work-group conceptual model of functional requirements for the bibliographic records. Audit result analysis' report is expected in autumn 2005, and it will provide a detailed survey of usability of catalogues in Latvia and their correspondence of the quality criteria.

From 28 regional libraries majority is already creating or will begin in the near future regional union catalogues. Unfortunately their accessibility, usability and quality differ.

In order to characterize the current situation, the author selected 22 regional catalogues available on the Internet. The analysis did not incorporate the 6 library catalogues, which at present are available only locally in the library. The analysis covers comparison of machine-readable records of the books popular in Latvia, which are in the collections of all public libraries and also the usability of the catalogues in general.

The main indicators analyzed for determination of the catalogue quality and usability value are:

- Accessibility;
- Information access points;
- The scope of bibliographic information;
- Holdings information;
- Usability opportunities.

Accessibility

From the 22 selected catalogues 4 are not available to patrons due to technical problems. Operation speed of the available catalogues also differs. Two of the catalogues are nearly impossible to use because of the slow operation. The rest of the catalogues comfortably offer searching in several databases - union catalogues, local history database and other bibliographic databases. It provides the patrons with enhanced opportunities in information retrieval.

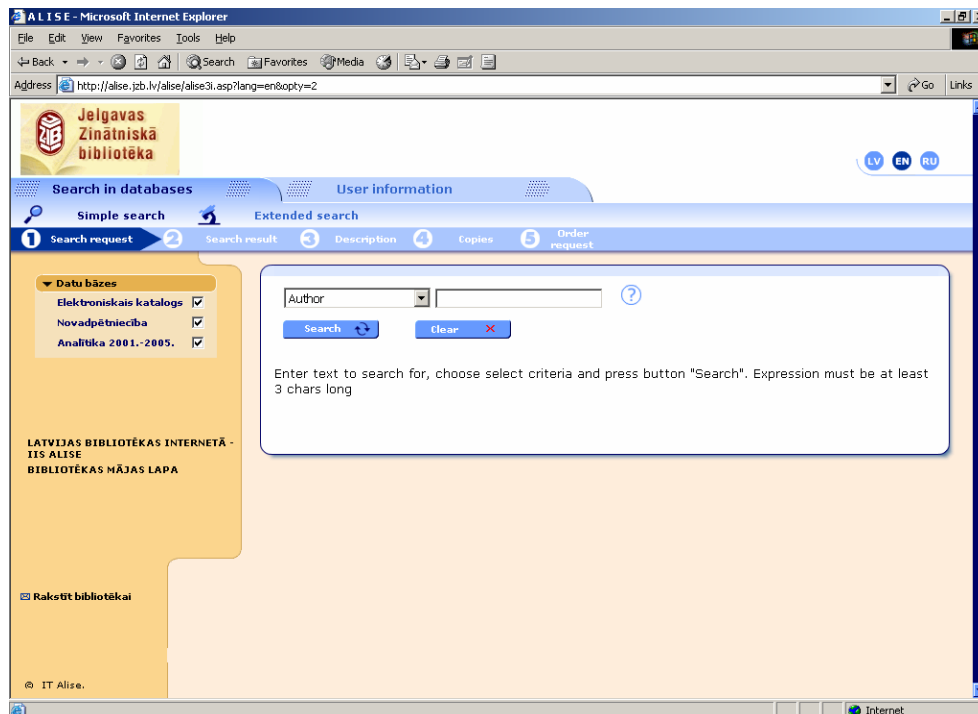


Figure 1 *Possibility to choose the database (on the left side)*

Information access points

Machine-readable catalogue records create the main access points in order to retrieve the information. One must note that all catalogues include *main entry* and *added entries*. All public library catalogues, in distinction from the state significance library union catalogue and national bibliography database, create the main entry for the individual author in the language of the published text. Majority of the catalogues indicate the author's name in the original language in added entry.

All records contain compulsory record elements, which provide access to the information. However one must note the differences and drawbacks in indicating the access points (different UDC indices, subjects, lack of added entries etc.).

The scope of bibliographic information

The records contain the necessary scope of the bibliographic information, in order to characterize the publication. All records contain the compulsory elements, but optional elements are present only in a small part of records. Notes supplementing the included information are in very few records. From the selected records only in a few cases MARC records contain additional information with a picture (cover of the book), links or other information. Therefore the information included in the records does not correspond to the Cutter's statement about the function of the catalogue - to assist in choosing the publication.

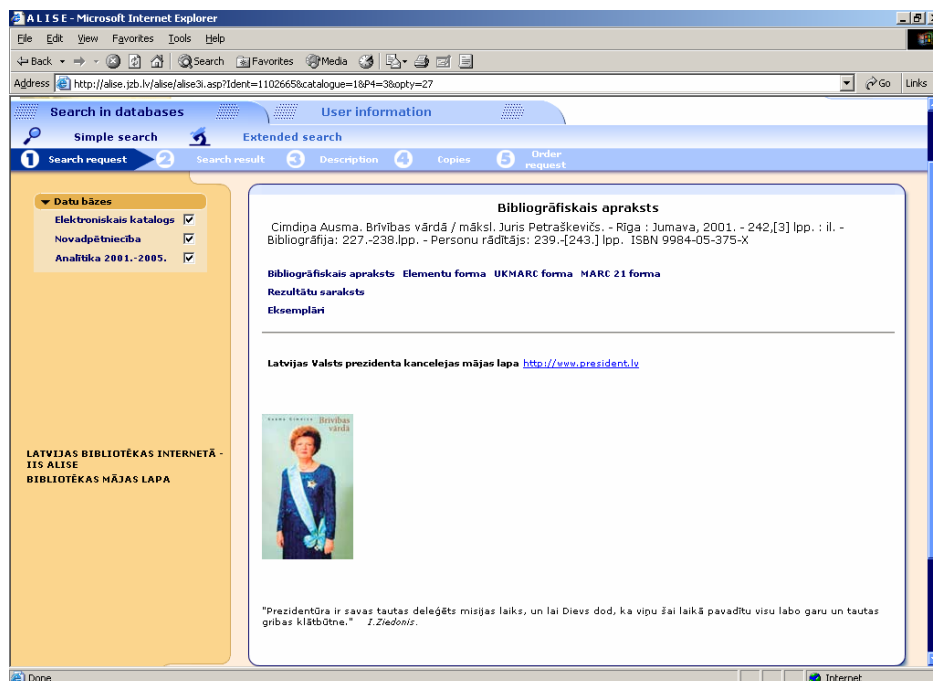


Figure 2 Additional information with a cover of the book

Bibliographic elements are treated differently. Several differences are insignificant and do not affect further usage (e.g. physical description, usage of square brackets, abbreviations etc.)

Holdings information

All union catalogue records contain holdings information about the libraries or branches that own the particular item. Several union catalogues also indicate the shelving index.

Union catalogues indicate information about all libraries where the particular item is available - address, telephone numbers etc. It helps the patron to choose the library where to acquire the material.

Atrašanās vieta	Skaits	Pieejamība	Adrese
Siguldas novada Siguldas pilsētas bērnu bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Šveices 6, Sigulda, tālr. 7972425
Allažu pagasta bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Birzes 4, Allaži, tālr.79193782, dainuvite@allazi.lv
Siguldas novada Siguldas pagasta bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Zinātnes 7b, Siguldas pag., tālr.7976308
Carnikavas pagasta bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Jūras 1, Carnikava, tālr.7993688, f.7993372
Babītes pagasta Piņķu bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Piņķi, Babītes pag., tālr.7914494
Salaspils novada bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Līvzemes 8, Salaspils, LV-2169, spb@salaspils.lv
Garkalnes pag. Berģu tautas bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Upesciems, Garkalnes pag., tālr.7990388
Olaines pagasta bibliotēka	2	Plauktā	Jaunolaine, Olaines pag.,7962442 (pag.), f.7963254
Daugmales pagasta bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Daugmale, tālr.7957444
Inčukalna pagasta bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Atmodas 6/2, Inčukalns, tālr.7977473, f.7977310
Krimuldas pagasta bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Ragana, Krimuldas pag., tālr.7978306, f.7902457
Siguldas novada Siguldas pilsētas bibliotēka	2	Plauktā	Strēlnieku 15, Sigulda, tālr.7973258, f.7245089
Krimuldas pagasta Turaidas bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	"Ābeļkalni", Turaida, Krimuldas pag.,7972376- muzejs
Ķekavas pagasta bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Gāismas 19/9, Ķekavas pag., 7935803, f.7935819
Mālpils pagasta bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Nākotnes 1, Mālpils pag., tālr.7925390, f.7901642
Mālpils pagasta Sidgundas bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Sidgunda, Mālpils pag., tālr.7927803
Ķekavas pagasta Katlakalna bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Katlakalns, Ķekavas pag., tālr.7938631
Mārupes pagasta Mazcenu bibliotēka	1	Plauktā	Mazcenu aleja 4, Jaunmārupe, Mārupes pag., LV-2166

Figure 3 *Holdings information in the union catalog of Riga region*

Unfortunately only several regional libraries at present have purchased the circulation module and have automated the circulation process. Union catalogues of these libraries reflect also the availability and status of the items. None of the libraries currently use the opportunity to order, book or prolong the loan term remotely.

Usability opportunities

Machine-readable records can be viewed in several forms, form which the patrons usually prefer the standard element form or bibliographic record. Significant features are possibility to create lists of sources and print them in the form of bibliographic records.

One can conclude that union catalogues provide an opportunity to use a uniform information access point, in order to employ all resources of the region. They are a significant basis for providing the information services in the region. Unfortunately only a part of public library union catalogues in Latvia are available to remote users and they cannot fully employ all opportunities offered by the automated system.

Union catalogues contain the main characterizing information about each publication and provide access points. Holdings information is convenient to use.

Libraries themselves create the catalogue records, they do not employ the centralized cataloguing advantages, as at present only several regional public libraries have acquired Z39.50 client. Employment of National bibliographic database is inhibited by the delayed deliveries of the obligatory copy, which in turn does not provide timely processing of acquisitions and centralized download of data in other libraries. It explains the differences in the records, which may affect the retrieval opportunities.

State integrated library information system implementation in Latvia will provide an opportunity to improve the automation opportunities in each public library, creating union catalogues as the main information access point, promoting the development of services and opportunity for each public library to become a part of the united service system.

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