

CHANGES IN LEGAL REGULATION AND STATE FUNDING OF ESTONIAN RESEARCH LIBRARIES

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In this paper the changes in legal acts and regulations concerning the operation of Estonian research libraries are examined and an overview about the state funding of these libraries is given. The cooperation activities of research libraries in the fields of coordinated collections development and joint supply of electronic resources are also described.

Legislation

The core of Estonian research libraries is owned by six universities, which are bodies governed by public law. Until 2001 the roles, tasks and funding of these libraries at the national level were not regulated on the basis of and pursuant to procedure established by law. They were funded from the study budgets of the universities which were not sufficient for guaranteeing the supply of scientific information, but they were offering public services free of charge for everybody. For the universities this funding is based on the state order of students for the corresponding academic year and besides teaching expenses it hardly covers the expenses for buying textbooks. Only the National Library of Estonia had the official regulation (National Library of Estonia Act, 1998), which specified its tasks as national, parliamentary and research library in the field of humanities and social sciences.

Thanks to the study organised together by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Research the development plan of Estonian libraries was compiled in 2000, which specified the objectives and the priorities together with strategy, actions and their specific goals. The necessary financial resources for funding the acquisition of research libraries were also calculated. This development plan and the activities of the chancellor of the Ministry of Culture initiated the cooperation between libraries and the Ministry of Education and Research in the field of legal regulation of the status of research libraries.

As a result the Ministry of Education and Research introduced a draft legislation for changing Organisation of Research and Development Act. These changes were accepted by the Parliament in 2001 and a research library was defined as an institution or part of it which goal is:

- to guarantee the availability of scientific and technological information according to its acquisition profile at the national level;
- to promote research and development activities;
- to support life-long learning for all people in Estonia.

An archival library was specified as an institution or part of it which main goal is the permanent preservation of information carriers as national cultural heritage. By the Act the Ministry of Education and Research has the commitment to coordinate the creation and updating of the common acquisition plan of research libraries and to arrange the funding of research and archival libraries from the state budget. These changes of the Organisation of Research and Development Act entered into force since 2002.

At the next step the requirements for a research and archival library and the conditions and rules for nominating them were specified by the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Research in 2002. By this regulation the requirements for a research library are as follows:

- the main task (specified in statutes) is to collect, to process, to preserve and to make available the information supporting research and development activities;
- the destination group is research workers;
- public access to free of charge basic services;
- the availability of the system for selecting adequate information and the conditions for preserving and using it;
- the collections are developed at least in two subject areas from the following: natural sciences, technological sciences, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, social sciences, humanities.

The requirements for an archival library are as follows:

- the main task (specified in statutes) is to collect, to process, to preserve permanently and to make available the information carriers about Estonia or containing information concerning Estonia, which are published in Estonian or in Estonia;
- the collections are open for research workers;
- the collections are formed according to the Legal Deposit Copy Act (1977) and by additional acquisition;
- the conditions for collections maintenance are in accordance with the Archival Rules (Governmental regulation, 1998).

The requirements for both (research and archival libraries) are as follows:

- the collections are described and classified according to the international standards which are valid in Estonia;
- the library carries out research and development activities, publishes reports of its activities, is engaged in acquainting the research and development institutions and researchers, creates bibliographical databases;
- the collections are reflected in the common electronic catalogue of Estonian libraries.

For getting nominated the owner of the library must submit an application with different appendices (the statutes, development plan, acquisition plan, annual report, financial

report, self-evaluation report etc). The applications will be evaluated and the proposals for nominating or refusing will be made by the special commission at the Ministry of Education and Research. The commission consists of the representatives of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, Council of Research and Development, Board of the Rectors of public universities, Estonian Union of Scientists, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education and Research. Officially the research and archival libraries will be nominated by the Government of Estonia at the proposal of the Minister of Education and Research for a five-year period. At present the nominated research libraries are:

- Tartu University Library (2002)
- Tallinn Technical University Library (2002)
- Academic Library of Tallinn (Pedagogical) University (2002)
- Estonian Agricultural University Library (2004)

In 2005 the commission proposed to nominate also the Library of Estonian Academy of Arts and the Library of Estonian Academy of Music, but they are not yet nominated by the Government.

The nominated archival libraries are:

- Archival Library of the Estonian Literary Museum (2002)
- Tartu University Library (2002)
- Academic Library of Tallinn (Pedagogical) University (2002)

State funding

Proceeding from the Organisation of Research and Development Act the Ministry of Education and Research has allocated for the acquisition of research and archival libraries the funding (in thousands euros) as follows:

	2003	2004	2005
Tartu University Library	320	371	633
Tallinn Technical University Library	217	288	422
Academic Library of Tallinn (Pedagogical) University	320	249	160
Estonian Agricultural University Library	-	51	70
ELNET Consortium	543	812	1042
Reserved	-	-	38
Total research libraries:	1399	1770	2364
Archival Library of the Estonian Literary Museum	32	38	38
Tartu University Library	32	38	45
Academic Library of Tallinn (Pedagogical) University	32	38	141
Total archival libraries:	96	115	224
Total state funding:	1495	1885	2588

ELNET Consortium received the funding as the operator of joint supply of electronic resources for research libraries.

The first funding was received in 2003 and the distribution principles and allocation coefficients between research libraries were principally based on the agreement between the Board of the Rectors of public universities and the Minister of Education and Research. The Council of Research Libraries, including the directors of research libraries, the director of National Library, the representatives of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Research, was formed in 2003 as an advisory institution at the Ministry of Education and Research. The regulation about common acquisition plan of the research libraries and about organisational activities concerning the state funding of research and archival libraries entered into force in 2004. By this regulation the common acquisition plan is the basic document for collecting and making available the information supporting research and development activities at national level.

For getting the state funding the owner of research library must submit the application each year. The amount of funding is decided by the special commission at the Ministry of Education and Research (mentioned above) taking into consideration the role of the library in the common acquisition plan, the content and the amount of research and development activities of the corresponding university, the consistency of collections development etc. At present there is no detailed model available for distributing the funding between libraries and the decisions have been made case by case each year. The Ministry is planning to work out more detailed principles in 2005. The owners of the libraries receiving state funding must also deliver the expenditure report each year and to indicate the other sources for covering the acquisition expenditure.

Coordinated collections development

Estonian research libraries have more than three decades of history in coordinated collections development. Two large studies of collections and their use were carried out in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s the list of central research libraries and their operation principles, the fundamentals of collection development and the acquisition plan of research and special libraries were specified by the regulations of the Minister of Culture and Education. These regulations fixed the division of tasks between 15 Estonian research and special libraries. In the acquisition plan 6 domains with 57 subjects (based on the classification of Estonian Science Foundation) were used as responsibility areas and three acquisition depth levels were specified as follows:

- A - as completely as possible;
- B - selected items;
- C - few selected items.

It is hard to assess how these regulations and the methodology used had effect on the real coordination of collections development because:

- the regulations did not guarantee additional funding for fulfilling these tasks;

- there was no online information system available for sharing operatively data about the existing collections and current orders of participating libraries;
- the acquisition levels were library-oriented and not specified in details;
- the classification scheme of Estonian Science Foundation was too general and did not cover all the topics of research and development; it was also complicated to use it in practice, because Estonian libraries are classifying their collections according to UDC.

For achieving the real effect it was necessary to get additional funding, to implement common information system and to change the structure of the common acquisition plan. Unfortunately the applications and activities for getting additional funding for collections development had no principal results until the end of the century. In 1997 research libraries started learning, testing and adapting the common information system, which was taken into use in 1999. The use of integrated online information system became an important precondition for working forward on the common acquisition plan. After discussions it was decided to use UDC for specifying detailed responsibility areas and to replace library-oriented acquisition levels with the levels which content is exactly defined. RLG Conspectus was first introduced to Estonian research libraries in 1997 and was further used as an example in this field. Conspectus gives a framework for cooperative collections development. In RLG Conspectus the content of each acquisition level is exactly specified and marked with acquisition depth indicator (level code) as follows:

- 0 - out of scope;
- 1 - minimal level;
- 2 - basic information level;
- 3 - study support level;
- 4 - research support level;
- 5 - comprehensive (maximal) level.

These levels are used cumulatively - each higher level contains the lower ones. They could also be adjusted with comments, language codes etc.

In the first phase some research libraries started the pilot project, which aim was to compile its own acquisition plan by UDC using acquisition depth indicators according to RLG Conspectus. The result of this work was presented as matrix, which rows mark subjects by UDC and which columns contain level codes. The analysis of the filled up matrix indicated that in our case it was not suitable to use the whole set of RLG levels and the cumulation principle could not always be accepted. As a result three acquisition depth levels without cumulation were used:

- basic information level;
- study support level;
- research support level.

During 2002-2003 the first version of the common acquisition plan was compiled for the Ministry of Education and Research including the acquisition profiles of three nominated research libraries and National Library. Only basic information level and research support

level were specified, because the state funding could not be spent on textbooks – the funding of the study support level is the commitment of the universities. The content of each level has been exactly defined for common use. If the coverage in different libraries coincides, they can agree, who will have the basic responsibility in this subject, and instead of duplication, the funding can be used for strengthening other subjects. The main goal of these activities is to use the limited funding more effectively at the national level. This acquisition plan was approved by the Council of Research Libraries and submitted to the Ministry of Education and Research. The common acquisition plan is updated once a year and it is one of the basic documents for the Ministry in the process of deciding the funding coefficients between research libraries.

Joint supply of electronic resources

Estonian research libraries started the trials of paid online databases in 1998. At the same time the tasks of the ELNET Consortium (which was formed for creating the common integrated information system) were broadened and the working group for coordinating the supply of electronic resources was formed. The first contracts were signed in 1999 when three libraries jointly purchased EBSCO databases. Since 2000 ELNET Consortium has successfully participated in the eIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) project initiated by the Open Society Institute. Since 2001 ELNET Consortium has been carrying out the tasks of negotiating and contracting with the suppliers of online electronic resources as an operating institution representing the common interests of Estonian research libraries. The usage statistics of e-journals has always been high, but it was impossible to fulfil the expectations of the researchers towards e-library because of the lack of funding.

In 2002 the first (on one occasion only) financial support of the Ministry of Education and Research in amount of 64 000 euros for purchasing EBSCO databases established preconditions for significantly wider access to e-library in Estonia. In 2003 the state financial support allowed to increase considerably the number of jointly subscribed e-resources. In 2004 10 e-journal packages (more than 10 000 titles), 7 abstract databases and 5 other packages (factographical, dictionaries, reference works, e-books) were subscribed through ELNET Consortium. The number of the libraries participating in consortium-wide access reached from 2 to 9 depending on packages. Thanks to the country-wide license more than 100 Estonian libraries and institutions got access to EBSCO databases. So we may say, that there is at least one case available when a “big deal” is a very good deal.

As the license fees are rising from year to year it is very important to guarantee the increase of state funding for continuing the existing subscriptions. In Estonia there was no VAT fee laid down for e-resources before joining the European Union. In 2004 the new Value Added Tax Act entered into force and the libraries must pay 18% VAT for the purchase of all e-resources and e-services. Comparing the state funding in 2003 and 2004 the growth was about 269 000 euros (49,5 %), but this growth did not allow to increase considerably the number of databases, it covers only the rise of license fees and the value added tax which was added.

The national-wide coordination of the needs for electronic resources, centralized negotiations and contracting through ELNET Consortium has many advantages. Firstly, the same financial resources enable cooperating libraries to buy more because of their bigger critical mass. Secondly, in some cases the negotiations about the price and conditions are very complicated and there is not enough professional competency in each library. There are different methodologies available for calculating the license fees and it is very important to achieve the optimum solution in price and performance. By this model majority of the trials of non-subscribed databases are organized centrally by ELNET Consortium but the evaluation of databases using end-user assessments and opinions, usage statistics, impact factors etc, is the task of member libraries. The evaluation results will be summarized and discussed by the working group and the list of necessary electronic resources with approximately calculated expenses will be compiled. Of course, the wish-list is always larger than the real financial possibilities and the final decision for the joint supply will be made by the Council of Research Libraries and the Ministry of Education and Research.

Following the example of the Finnish FinELib the goal is to establish a targeted financed e-library with additional funding from the participating institutions to ensure Estonian researchers with a critical amount of scientific information. In 2003 the additional funding from the participating libraries was about 61 000 euros, in 2004 – about 148 000 euros. The main precondition for organizing the joint supply through ELNET Consortium is that there must be at least two libraries interested in obtaining a certain electronic resource. Of course many specific e-resources which are not in the focus of more than one library are negotiated, contracted and paid by the libraries themselves.