

PROJECTS OF LOCAL RESEARCH IN RIGA CENTRAL LIBRARY: 2000-2005

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Local research is an important part of the work done at Riga Central library. This part of work has been especially developed after Latvia regained its independence when big variety of documents became available.

Local research at Riga Central library can be divided into the following periods:

1. The years 1991– 1996 when our employees paid attention to previously forbidden themes:

- History of churches;
- History of cultural heritage;
- History of books and their authors;
- Repressions of period of stalinism;
- Cultural and economic life in the years 1920 – 1930.

2. The years 1996 – 2000 when the competition “The best research of the local history” was organized at Riga Central library and its branch libraries. When libraries received the proper equipment, making video films on library events and interesting nature and culture heritage in the neighborhood became very urgent. As this work was put in order the promotion of the results of this work became important. The first thematic bibliography of Riga Central library - Riga in Latvian fiction - called „I Ring in Your Bells, I Sound in Your Stones” was published at that time.

3. The year 2001 – till now is the time when Riga Central library is preparing to celebrate its 100th anniversary. Research of library history is the main work of local studies.

Thematic bibliography of Riga Central library - Riga in Latvian Fiction was published at the end of the year 2000 when getting ready to celebrate 800 years anniversary of Riga. It also contains fiction translated into German, English and Russian. The main purpose is to help Riga Central library and its 45 branch libraries in their study of local history. This edition is also widely used by students, teachers, cultural workers and others interested in history of Riga. Bibliography consists of 26 chapters, such as : Riga City Council, Cultural institutions, Industries, Parks, Gardens, Riga at the turn of an epoch , Architectural monuments, Monuments and sculptures, parts of Riga, Cemeteries, Green areas, Memorial sites, Countryman and Riga, Dedications to Riga and etc. There are also alphabetic indexes of persons and subjects.

Bibliography contains fiction from the very beginning of Latvian literature until 1998. There are 2247 descriptions, the oldest dates back to 1868. Janishevsky Karlis has written story „Adventures of an honest young man in Riga when looking for a job. – Jelgava: [Stefenhagen and son].

It is more complicated to create a thematic bibliography of fiction as index of non fiction, because the opinion of bibliographer about the value of each literary work could be different. Bibliographers got information about fiction from the collections of Riga Central library and its branch libraries, National library of Latvia, J. Misinsh library as well as Library of University of Latvia.

In 2005 Riga Central library received additional financing from Riga City Council to be able to perfect the mentioned editions with recent publications as well as to create modern data basis with digital photographs and full texts in the chapter „Dedications to Riga”, considering the law on copyright.

Data basis will be available on the web site of Riga Central library www.rcb.lv, web site of Riga city www.riga.lv and on a CD in January 2006 as a part of Riga Central library 100 years anniversary.

The second edition of bibliography will be also published in a book format in April 2006.

Many branch libraries of Riga Central library are situated in architectural monuments. As history of the premises makes up one part of library history, in 2004 Riga Central library realized two projects on remarkable architectural monuments sheltering libraries.

Project „Riga from the Point of View of Architectural Monument -1” contains digitalized information on architectural monument situated at 206 Brivibas street where the branch library „Vidzeme” is located since 1928.

This building is designed by architect Florian fon Viganovsky finished in 1895. It is not only a remarkable piece of wooden architecture, it also has experienced busy cultural life at the beginning of 20th century:

- Readings organized by aloofness society, „Morning Star” used to attract men of letters of the epoch.
- It used to be community house.
- Zeltmatis (E.Karklins) Theatre Studio was open for theatre admirers.
- Riga public library No. 9 was opened in 1928.

I.Krumins, Zeltmatis, V.Lacis, Rainis, Aspazija, A. Brigadere have taken part at cultural events organized there.

Building has rich history which is not published and available for the public. We did extended research, compiled and digitalized materials creating contemporary data basis available on a CD.

Project was carried out in co-operation with National History Archive of Latvia. Work group explored documents at collections of branch library „Vidzeme”, National library of Latvia and documents found at National History Archive of Latvia dating back to the period from 1895 till 1940:

- On history of construction;
- On architectural style;
- On history of the place;
- On history of the property;
- On cultural activities;
- On aloofness society „Morning Star”;
- On history of the library etc.

Project was supported by Culture Department of Riga City Council.

As the first project proved to be successful, we worked out the second project „Riga from the Point of View of Architectural Monument – 2”.

Within our second project, the same kind of work was done on architectural ensemble „Ziemeļblazma” which shelters Riga Central library branch library Ziemeļblazma.

It took us six months to create data basis on architectural ensemble „Ziemeļblazma” in co-operation with National History Archive of Latvia as well as Museum of Riga History and Navigation.

Architectural ensemble consists of:

- Green school – kindergarten (1900, M. Rinkas street 13);
- Burtnieku house (1907, Ziemeļblazmas street 38);
- Progymnasium (1907, Baltas baznīcas street 14);
- Culture palace „Ziemeļblazma” (1913, Ziemeļblazmas street 36);
- Ziemeļblazma park (1905).

It is a remarkable architectural ensemble as well as a place with busy cultural life during the 20th century:

- Vecmilgravis singing society (founded in 1902);
- Aloofness society „Ziemeļblazma” (1903);
- Vecmilgravis social society;
- Vecmilgravis aloofness society;
- Choir of aloofness society „Ziemeļblazma” (1904);
- Ladies’ committee;
- Ziemeļblazma amateur theatre;
- Symphonic orchestra „Ziemeļblazma”;
- Neapolitan orchestra „Lyre”;
- Public library (publicly available from 1911).

As all the buildings are rich in history, we found and digitalized documents on the period of time from 1900 till 1940 when the Green School was established.

When working at this Project we made investigations in all available documents on architectural ensemble „Ziemeļblazma”. Most important information was digitalized. Data basis are available on the web site of Riga Central library where one can find not available previously facts on:

- Ensemble of buildings (articles, photographs, maps, postcards, reconstruction layouts);
- Manufacturer– patron of literature and arts August Dombrovsky (biographic facts, articles about him, photographs, memories of contemporaries etc.);
- On social organizations and institutions located in these premises until 1940.
- On outstanding personalities - writers, poets, cultural workers, artists, library employees and other people who have lived or worked in these premises or have taken part in events organized there.

Less important documents are available in bibliography.

Riga Central library branch library Ziemeļblazma has worked systematically with documents on the architectural ensemble. After Latvia regained independence library employees received lots of old photographs of Vecmīlgrāvis made when A. Dombrovskis lived there. They have also established contacts with relatives of A. Dombrovskis who live in other countries.

“Yearbook of Riga Central library” is a new result of our research work.

We have published Yearbook 2003 and Yearbook 2004. It can be called a diary of Riga Central library with a lot of attention paid to theory and practice of local studies.

Popular is the chapter called “Talks all year round” with interviews with employees of our libraries who have long work and life experience.

We found very important the chapter called „Our experience” where one can get acquainted with most important events and our priorities all year long.

Chapter “Life Long Learning” tells about one of our priorities – continuing education for employees of RCL. Important information can be found also in chapters „Riga Librarians in Foreign Countries” - gives insight into their study tours, seminars and visits to libraries in different countries; “Chronicle of Most Important Events” and “Publications on Riga Central library”.