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ARE THE ACTIVITIES OF ESTONIAN LIBRARIES CO-ORDINATED SUFFICIENTLY?

Услугами эстонских библиотек пользуются более 800.000 человек, в течение прошлого года в библиотеках было зарегистрировано более 11,7 миллионов посещений. В общем, мы можем с удовлетворением констатировать: библиотеки необходимы, они содействуют развитию эстонского общества и отдельно взятой личности.

Начало XXI века отмечено высокими технологическими достижениями, однако, несмотря на достигнутый прогресс, условия, созданные для развития библиотек, следует признать недостаточными:

- средняя стоимость книги с годами растет, однако денег на закупку изданий не увеличивается*
- нет ясной политики комплектования научных и специализированных библиотек*
- средняя заработная плата библиотекаря отстает от средней республиканской зарплаты*
- в настоящее время отсутствует центр, координирующий работу библиотек на государственном уровне*

Вместе с тем, современное общество предъявляет очень высокие требования к библиотекарю: необходимы, прежде всего, высокий уровень профессиональных знаний и, кроме того, навыки социального работника, педагога, психолога, руководителя и, наконец, умение общаться с людьми.

Мы утверждаем, что библиотеки являются крупнейшими информационными учреждениями общественной сферы и общественных услуг. Однако главным вопросом, по-прежнему, остается вопрос о том, хорошо ли эти услуги организованы и не следует ли повысить требования к их качеству.

Проблемами являются также финансовое руководство библиотеками, их ведомственная разобщенность и осуществление контроля за их деятельностью. Встает вопрос и о том, насколько соответствуют имеющиеся сейчас правовые акты процессам, происходящим в библиотечной сфере.

Все сказанное выше приобретает особое значение, если принять во внимание, тот факт, что в Эстонии в настоящее время насчитывается 1 176 библиотек (80 научных и специализированных, 573 массовых, 523 школьных), в которых в общей сложности работает 3031 библиотекарей.

Today we have 1,176 libraries in Estonia:

Research and special libraries	80
Public libraries	573
School libraies	523

The libraries have become the most visited institution offering public service.

In 2003 libraries had users, visits, loans in total:

	Users	Visits	Loans
Research and special libraries	170,142	1,795,275	2,248,319
Public libraries	449,354	6,779,909	12,963,104
School libraries	200,211	3,144,791	3,153,941
In total:	819,707	11,719,975	18,365,364

Over 800,000 individuals use the service of Estonian libraries. During the previous year, the libraries registered 11,7 million visits. We can be generally satisfied with the results – we are needed, we contribute to the development of Estonian society and persons.

Libraries are the major information agencies in the public sector, providing public service. Nevertheless, they are undeservedly remained unmentioned in strategic documents of information society, for instance, in “The Principles of Estonian Information Policy”.

A separate chapter in “The Principles of Estonian Cultural Policy”. “The Principles of Estonian Cultural Policy” provides the following as regards the libraries: “Libraries operate as an intergrated national information system, aiming to ensure the whole population with comprehensive, accurate and easily accessible information and with access to information resources of the whole world. Central research libraries are entirely state-funded. Public libraries receive allocations from the state budget for the collection acquisition in the same amount of sums allocated by the local authority for that purpose.”

The beginning of the 21st century is notable for technological achievement. However, in spite of the developmnet of the state, sufficient preconditions for the development of libraries have not been created:

- The average price of books is increasing every year but the libraries are in short of financing, necessary for acquisition
- There are no clear collection development policies of research and special libraries collections (acquisition areas have not been clearly defined)
- Librarians salaries are below the average monthly wages in the country
- Fragmentation and uncoordination is felt on Estonian library field

It is unclear who decides library matters. Is it a ministry or are they ministries : the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Social

Affairs), are they local authorities on the regional level, or are these decisions made on the institutional level?

Today there are 1,176 libraries in Estonia and most of them belongs to public property, very few to the private property or other:

Public property:

144 libraries in state property

1016 libraries in municipal property

Private property:

7 libraries (Estonian)

0 library (foreign)

9 libraries (other)

The National Library of Estonia Act and Public Libraries Act are the most important legal acts that have been regulating library field for almost 12-14 years. Of the legal acts that concern library work, the above mentioned legal acts have been amended, and motions to amend the Copyright Act and the Legal Deposit Copy Act have been made. Library standards harmonise and regulate libraries activities.

An issue of the necessity to draft a Research Libraries Act was raised. However, the discussion provided no tangible solution.

Research libraries activities have been tried to regulate with the Organisation of Research and Development Act from 1997, but this is not a solution. Unfortunately, in the course of the effort, the so-far functioned system of research libraries and the distribution acquisition areas between them were destroyed.

Currently, the procedure of designating research libraries has been provided and four research libraries designated. Nevertheless, the distributon of their acquisition areas has not been specified. The spheres of responsibility of other libraries of higher educational establishments and special libraries, carring important functions in the provision of user services have not yet been specified, too.

In 1993 Estonian Parliament passed the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act. A year after the enactment, its amendment provided for a library at every school. In 1995 the School Library Statutes were passed. In 1998 the School Libraries Section was established at the Estonian Librarians Association. Till this time they work as coordinating institution for school libraries. In 2000 "The Basic Principles of School Libraies Work Organisation" and in 2001 "The Manual for School Librarians".were published by the section.

"Libraries Development Plan from 2000 up to 2002", drawn up under contract with theMinistry of Culture in 2000, had to be a document that sets goals for library business, but even the public disclosure of this project provoked storm of indignation among library circles and library users, and showed the lack of unanimity and shared interests between research libraries. In the course of that, library users were as if forgotten.

To get out of the stalemate, the Ministry of Culture ordered libraries development plan from 2001 up to 2010 from a management consulting company PW Partners. This time, libraries had an opportunity to express their opinions. Nevertheless, the development plan has remained a Ding-an-Sich.

The Ministry of Culture's Plan for the years 2003 up to 2006 should influence libraries activities more up a future for libraries, too.

The most important tasks are as following:

- Complete acquisition, registration, mediation and preservation of national printed heritage as a part of national culture
- Developing library and information services
- Devising and developing an integral information system of research, special, public, school and other libraries
- Developing public libraries into local information and cultural centres
- Introducing continuous and systematic further training of several levels for librarians

Today there are 3,031 librarians in different Estonian libraries:

In research and special libraries	1,023
In public libraries	1,350
In school libraries	658

Society sets very high demands to the library profession. First and foremost, a librarian has to be a good professional in his/her field, to acquire new knowledge and skills that the quickly developing library business, shift to information society and the use of new information and communication technologies in the name of improved service provision place before him/her.

The provision of innovative library services has imposed new requirements for librarians qualifications and professional skills.

At the same time, a librarian has to fulfil the role of a social worker, an educator, a psychologist, and be simply a person with good communications skills and managerial qualifications.

Estonian libraries need a single coordinating centre of their activities. Some libraries activities are totally uncoordinated and information exchange is casual.

Relationship of subordination are also unclear. As nobody analytically and methodically addresses this issue, no clear solutions are provided.

Unclear financing schemes also result from this. Financing is, however, extremely important for existence and the provision of public service.