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THE LITHUANIAN RESEARCH LIBRARY CONSORTIUM UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE ELECTRONIC INFORMATION FOR LIBRARIES NETWORK (EIFL.NET)

Потребность в использовании лицензированных электронных ресурсов в Литве возрастает гораздо быстрее, чем бюджет библиотек для комплектования источников информации. По примеру других стран, в 2001 г. был создан консорциум научных библиотек Литвы (ЛМБА), главные задачи которого являются пренумерата электронных ресурсов для членов консорциума и других библиотек, развитие профессиональных навыков специалистов библиотек в области использования и рекламы новых форм информации, сотрудничество с консорциумами других стран в области работы с электронными ресурсами в библиотеках. Деятельность ЛМБА тесно связана с международным консорциумом eIFL.net. В статье обсуждаются проблемы пренумераты электронных ресурсов, обучения специалистов библиотек, реклама новых услуг и международное сотрудничество.

Introduction

Year by year, the use of licensed electronic information resources has been expanding in Lithuanian libraries, and it will continue to expand in the future. The demand for research information has been growing and libraries are facing the challenge to satisfy the user needs with shrinking library budgets.

The eIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) started in October 1999, as an initiative of the Open Society Institute. In 2002, the eIFL became an independent foundation called the eIFL.net. It opened up access to the EBSCO Publishing's range of full-text scholarly and general interest journals [1]. Lithuania, like other countries from Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Africa and Asia, joined the Consortium. At present the eIFL.net offers a wide spectrum of services, related with libraries' co-operation, subscription to e-content, and education.

After 5 years of experience we can state that the eIFL.net opened the door to a new world of e-information, enabled to examine achievements of new technologies and use of high quality e-resources at the discounted prices. These years have taught Lithuanian libraries to work in close co-operation in seeking their common goals.

Lithuanian Research Library Consortium in a nutshell

The First Lithuanian Research Library Consortium was established in 1993. Its main goal was to combine the libraries' activities in implementation of the Lithuanian Integrated Library Information System and in creation of the Union Catalogue. The Consortium was not a legal body; libraries participated in its activities on the volunteer basis. On December 4, 2001 the Meeting of the Consortium decided that the goals of the organization were achieved - the decision to release the old Consortium and to establish the new one was made. Lithuanian libraries needed a legal body to organize subscription to e-resources and to collect relevant funds. This step was made under the influence of the eIFL.net and Open Society Fund-Lithuania, which was closing its Library program.

The libraries decided that the new Lithuanian Research Library Consortium (LMBA) should be a legal body; its Statutes should describe wider goals with special attention to common subscription to electronic databases. 23 Lithuanian research libraries and institutions holding such libraries founded the LMBA.

After the legal registration on April 2, 2002 the LMBA Consortium became a legal body with bank account for collecting funds, statutes [2] and functioning structures. The LMBA headquarters are located at the Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania.

The main objectives of the Consortium are:

- promoting of the creation of virtual libraries, preparation and implementation of advanced technology and innovative projects in the libraries;
- subscription to electronic databases for Consortium members and other libraries;
- co-ordination of the acquisition of foreign periodicals among research libraries;
- encouragement of the professional development of librarians;
- co-operation with foreign and international library associations and other organizations with a relevant profile.

The bodies of governance of the Consortium are the General Meeting of the Members, a collegial management body – the Board, and the Administration. The President of the LMBA Consortium is responsible for the overall activities of the Consortium, the Board members help him to make decisions, while the Head of the Administration is responsible for the day-to-day duties.

According to the Statutes of the LMBA Consortium all its members pay enrolment and annual fees. These fees should cover the administration expenses. In the case of special needs the members are to pay special fees. Who is going to pay for the subscriptions? The Governmental and charity organizations, special foundations are approached for financial support for the database subscription. In the case when no

additional funding is available or when it is too small, the libraries have to pay the subscription fee from their budget on mutual agreement among the member libraries.

Membership in the Lithuanian Research Library Consortium is open to all research libraries of the country. At present there are 30 members. Non- member libraries also have a possibility to participate in specific Consortium activities.

From the date of its establishment in December 2001, the LMBA was responsible for running the eIFL.net projects in Lithuania. Ausra Vaskeviciene, the LMBA Head of Administration, the Head of Electronic Information Department at the Information Centre, Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania, also works in the capacity of eIFL.net coordinator for Lithuania. The main activities of the LMBA are closely linked with subscription to databases and other eIFL.net activities.

Database subscription

At the end of 1999, the Open Society Institute opened up access to the EBSCO Publishing's databases through the eIFL.net consortium. This service was the first one widely used in our country. A total of 11 institutions and 22 libraries (15 - research and 6 - public) decided to participate in this project.

The survey of the EBSCO Publishing usage was done after two years of subscription [3]. Libraries enjoyed a possibility to propose valuable content to the end-users, however, we found out that the users were not sufficiently trained to use e-resources, besides, there were not enough databases promotion activities from librarians' side.

The EBSCO Publishing was the first step for most libraries in using e-content on the subscription basis. Before this, only few libraries had been using e-resources on CD-ROMs (mostly donated) or on-line resources available via various projects. The EBSCO Publishing still remains the most popular database, although at present libraries subscribe to 6 full-text databases through the LMBA consortium.

Through the eIFL.net activities Lithuanian libraries were given a possibility to test the largest and most known databases of the world. Under the project eIFL.net Science & Technology we tested *Cambridge University Press* journals and *ProQuest* databases. During these trials, libraries had a possibility not only to improve in-service training but also to receive more experience in interacting with publishers.

Publishers detected new market in the Baltic countries and in 2001- 2002 we started receiving various proposals from publishers to test a variety of other databases. It was the time when publishers started coming into our market and promoting their products. Publishers sought for new customers, so after the trials they offered us attractive prices. For example, we got low price quotas from Springer (for 2 years) and from Elsevier (for 1 year).

Publishers' approach has changed after Lithuania joined the EU. At present the publishers are quoting the real prices, but these prices are too high for Lithuanian library

budgets. Thus we had to reject the OCLC proposal – it was too expensive. Especially we are uncertain about signing the contracts with longer than 1 year validity period because the growth of prices is very high and we are not sure about our budgets. We have noticed that the prices we get via the eIFL.net, as compared with individual publishers, differ a lot. We look forward to the eIFL.net activities and hope that the agreement conditions will be more favourable under the international umbrella of the eIFL.net.

One of the most important points in subscription to databases is the available budget. During the first years of subscription to the EBSCO it was difficult to receive funds from our Government as well as to collect money from libraries. Lithuanian libraries did not have experience to allocate budget for e-recourses, neither did the Government, so payments to the EBSCO were delayed. However, we have improved since that time. Our libraries have learned to plan acquisition budget for e-resources and our Government supports us via the Ministry of Culture and via the Ministry of Education and Science. In autumn we usually know about the funds to be available from the ministries, so we can plan signing the contracts.

The prices for e-resources are still too high for library budgets. We do not expect them to be much lower, so we need much more money. Without special support from the Government, libraries will not be able to subscribe to databases. The Government has been allocating more funds each year, but they are not sufficient to satisfy the growing needs.

Another problem – the utilisation of Governmental funds. The Ministry of Culture is simply transferring allocated funds to the LMBA account, while the Ministry of Education and Science cannot use this form of financing, as this ministry can fund universities only. This means the LMBA has to find a Donor University to utilise funds given by the respective ministry for databases subscription.

We are grateful for the support from the British Council Lithuania, which has covered a part of the subscription to Cambridge Journals Online.

To find funding for database subscription is the most time and energy consuming activity of the LMBA.

We use different payment models for different databases. Some databases are subscribed only from the libraries' budgets (e.g. *Oxford Reference Online*, *Springer LINK*) the other use combined funding. We are glad the government has started understanding (with our permanent pressure) the need for research information and has started allocating money for it.

The requirements for scientists are growing and the users increasingly need information. New information environment stimulates librarians to seek for new methods in presenting e-resources for users, promoting new forms of information and to work hand in hand with international consortiums and libraries in other countries.

Other eIFL.net related activities

At the end of 2001, the eIFL.net announced grant tender for building countries' library consortiums. It was right on time for our newly established LMBA consortium. We applied for support for equipping the LMBA headquarters, for training, promotion and publishing activities, as well as for international cooperation.

Training activities

During 2 years the series of workshops "Searching the Databases: Train the Trainer" (40 hours programme), "Metadata" (6 hours programme), and "Copyright and Libraries" (6 hours programme) were conducted in 5 largest cities in Lithuania where our consortium's libraries are located (see <http://www.lmba.lt/reng/angl/eindex.htm>). The team of experienced local lecturers conducted the workshops.

At the end of the workshop "Searching the Databases: Train the Trainer" all the participants were asked to prepare two Power Point presentations and to present them either to their colleagues in their home libraries or to the end-users. By the end of April, 2004 35 participants made 64 presentations that were attended by 1007 participants.

The librarians who have already attended the trainings (508 altogether) are very much looking forward to the future trainings, as they value the knowledge they have got during the trainings.

Promotion and publishing activities

Promotion of the LMBA activities is of vital importance for us. Everyone interested in information retrieval should know how to reach needed information – this is a goal we are constantly working on.

Using the eIFL grant the corporate style of the LMBA consortium was created. The LMBA logo is used in all our publications and promotion materials. Envelopes, bookmarks, folders, writing utensils, business cards have been produced and are actively used. Colours of the LMBA logo are used for the Consortium web site.

Information brochures on available databases in Lithuanian libraries were published in Lithuanian and English. Brochures also include detailed statistics on the usage of the *EBSCO Publishing* by Lithuanian libraries in 2002-mid2003. They are widely disseminated in the country and abroad (at eIFL.net meetings, IFLA 2003, etc.). All the key politicians received the brochures – they are very helpful for fundraising.

An information brochure with basic instructions how to search in the *EBSCO Publishing* (in Lithuanian) has been published. It was disseminated to all major Lithuanian libraries – subscribers and potential users of the *EBSCO Publishing*.

The libraries need to get instructions in Lithuanian, as English is still a problem to vast majority of librarians and end-users. Therefore the book "EBSCO Publishing and Springer LINK User Guide" in Lithuanian [4] was published. It provides detailed

instructions with lots of illustrations on information retrieval tools in two databases: *EBSCO Publishing* and *Springer LINK*. It also contains a chapter on database retrieval on the internet, provides lists of libraries – subscribers to *EBSCO Publishing* and *Springer LINK*. The book was distributed to all subscribers of the databases, as well as to other interested libraries. Information contained in this book is partially available at the LMBA web site (<http://www.lmba.lt/apie/liet/knyga.htm>). We have noticed that the use of *EBSCO Publishing* has increased (especially in public libraries) after the publication of the user guide.

We use all the possibilities to market our activities: wrote an article in our professional journal “Tarp knygų” [5], presented a report on the activities of the Consortium on January 31, 2003 during the celebration of Vytautas Magnus University 80th anniversary in Kaunas and at the conference “The Role of the Library in the Information Society” on May 12, 2003 in the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, Vilnius. Information about the Consortium’s activities is disseminated via e-mail, the electronic conference and LMBA web site.

The LMBA web site (<http://www.lmba.lt/>) is maintained both in Lithuanian and in English. The Lithuanian version provides a bit more information although the structure of the site absolutely the same in both languages. The web site helps us to promote our activities, to inform libraries and users about our databases and to present other information for end-users. The web site is updated on a daily basis, if needed. It provides full information about the LMBA activities for the Lithuanian members and international colleagues. After the launch of the LMBA web site in 2002, the information about it was circulated not only to the LMBA members, but all the libraries in Lithuania with a request to evaluate it and to give remarks, suggestions. No critical remarks were received.

Members of the LMBA consortium use closed (only for the LMBA members) electronic conference for exchange of information, views on different electronic resources. We are sure that the web site and the electronic conference is the most effective way to disseminate information and to communicate with colleagues and the community.

We market our Consortium via eIFL.net members and various library or research related events in Lithuania and abroad. On all our promotion materials we put LMBA logo and address of the web site.

International Cooperation

The grant gave the LMBA wonderful possibilities to participate at several international activities.

Participation at the IVth e-ICOLC conference in Khalkidiki, Greece and Vth e-ICOLC conference in Elsinore, Denmark was very beneficial: we had possibilities to listen to most experienced lecturers, to get to know databases that so far were unfamiliar for us, had a chance to meet our colleagues from other countries and to learn from their experience, to establish personal contacts, to ask for the advice for database subscription.

At the Vth e-ICOLC the eIFL.net activities were presented together with new EU countries (Lithuania including).

Ausra Vaskeviciene, the eIFL.net coordinator in Lithuania, has participated at all eIFL.net coordinators' meetings and trainings. These yearly meetings help us to work together, to share experience with other eIFL.net network countries. After such meetings and trainings, in order to disseminate information, the coordinator usually makes presentations at the LMBA meetings, publishes articles in our professional journal "Tarp knygu" ["In the World of Books"] [6, 7].

In the summer 2002, Emilija Banionyte, the President of the LMBA, participated at the workshop of eIFL.net coordinators in London, UK and was actively involved in developing the course "Library Consortium Building" (authors of the course Lyn Robinson and David Bowden). Later E.Banionyte adapted the course material for former soviet countries, translated into Russian and used it for training workshops in Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Russia and Uzbekistan. She shared experience of building the Lithuanian Research Library Consortium with Cameroonian librarians in May 2004.

In 2003 Emilija Banionyte was elected to the eIFL.net board for one year. She plays an active role in the policy development process for the future of eIFL.net.

Future perspectives

The eIFL.net project is a good start in using electronic information in Lithuanian libraries. In five years libraries have gained experience in choosing, evaluating, testing, promoting e-resources, examining and signing licences, negotiating with publishers, analyzing usage statistics, working on fundraising, allocating part of the acquisition budget for electronic information.

However, we feel great pressure from the end-users to know more, to have access to more and more resources. This is an endless process, as these few databases Lithuanian libraries are subscribing to today, are just a minor portion of the growing user needs.

The LMBA Consortium sees its future in common subscription to electronic resources for research and other Lithuanian libraries and is ready to work as a consolidator of these activities, trying to unite funds from different sources (governmental, business, various funds and foundations, etc.), to learn the needs of all Lithuanian libraries (through established subject groups) and to make the best choices and to negotiate the best prices for them.

Information, promotion, consulting and training will always be needed – with new databases coming into the market and new librarians coming to libraries. Hence we see our strong role in training and consulting.

With growing variety of databases, one portal for access to information is already needed. Hopefully, Metalib and SFX, software products purchased by the academic libraries will solve the problem in these libraries. The others will need to purchase or develop similar products.

We do understand that the reduced prices for Central and Easter European libraries will not be forever. The Government started allocating funds for e-resources, however these funds are too small. If Lithuania wants to achieve significant scientific results in various fields, respectively, the funds for information must be considerably increased.

We see our future in globalization (Baltic and multi-country library consortiums), therefore international relations are very important for us. Most of our projected activities have already been implemented in most Western countries. Our aim is to learn from our colleagues and not to re-invent the wheel; to work together with international library community.

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