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DIGITISATION ACTIVITIES IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LATVIA

In my report I would like to elaborate on how changes in society, activity of readers, fortunate match of conditions and a number of other objective and subjective reasons create possibility to transform a weak and nequipped library to a national front leader in modern methods of stock preservation. Digitization as a method of stock preservation in Latvia is used in two libraries and the archive. The subject of my paper will be our experience in this field.

В своём реферате хочу рассказать, как перемены в обществе, активность читателей, несоответствующие условия хранения и другие субъективные и объективные причины, дали возможность превратить технически слабо обеспеченную библиотеку в ведущую в сфере сохранения фондов. Дигитализацию, как метод хранения фондов, используют в Латвии в двух библиотеках и архиве. Цель моего выступления - ознакомить вас с нашим опытом работы в этой сфере.

For the first time digitalization process in librarian system in Latvia was used in Latvian Academic Library. The number of information users, which were interested in Academic Library's handwriting documents on regions of Baltic, increased with each year. Quite often these documents are the only witnesses of Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian historical events and objects that have perished during war. In many cases library materials supplement other historical sources. Pictures of Baltic cities and settlements are particularly on demand. This was reflected both by the kind of documents that were handed out and the growing number of copies. Specially great interest in pictures comes from museums, libraries, archives, publishing houses, scientists, restorers and other interests which use illustrative materials in their academic and school work or for preparation of exhibitions, publications, also for renovation of architectural objects and other purposes.

In 1994 with a financial support from Latvian Science Council the Academic Library commenced a scientific work on development of a complex database for historic prints and handwritings, which would include both bibliographic data and electronic pictures. As a part of this work there was performed adaptation of a bibliographic database as well as theoretical and practical researches related to formation of electronic duplicates of handwritings. At the same time Library commenced entering of bibliographic information in the electronic catalogue.

From 1997 to 1998 a collection of drawings of Johann Christoph Brotze was recorded in compact discs. J.C.Brotze (1742-1823) collected historical materials and depicted in his drawings everything that he deemed to be important – people, buildings,

coins, city plans, technical innovations and other objects. Furthermore, everything was fixed with great precision and drawings always were complemented with written explanations. This massive work that included digitalisation of more than 3 100 pictures was financially supported by Open Society Institute. Since 1999 with support of Soros Foundation Latvia J.C.Brotze's collection is available in the Internet.

From 2000 to 2001 with support of Latvia Culture Foundation there have been created digital copies of Baltic landscape pictures, 2 800 electronic pictures in total.

In year 2001 there was created an Internet exhibition *Riga 700*. The 300 pictures characterize celebration of Riga 700-year anniversary in 1901.

In 2001 in cooperation with Mannheim University, Germany, 400 files from collection of German poet J.M.R. Lenz were scanned.

The necessity of digitisation in Latvian Academic Library is determined by the contemporary reality and the main goal, similarly as in the whole world, is ensuring preservation and availability of documents.

Currently National Library of Latvia (NLL) works on some projects where the most up to date stock preservation technology - digitisation - is used. Already for the fifth year we carry out newspaper scanning. There are project connected with Latvian posters. The department of Cartography has received electronic version of Latvian topographical maps. Music department digitises vinyl records in CD-R format. In addition, the Baltic Central library is developing the visual data basis containing postcards on Riga that were issued starting from the end of 19th century to the end of the 2nd world war.

Preservation of stock is one of the crucial issues that each library faces in its every day's work. The main reasons for librarians concern include the low quality of paper, improper conditions of stock and attitude of readers, which sometimes is not very friendly towards a document in the library. In Latvia a significant role also was played by the factor that during Soviet times a large part of documents was prohibited from usage. The weakest vanishes rapidly. The condition of stock and the most dangerous processes in it determine the priorities of the preservation work. Newspapers and posters became unusable and this problem required an immediate solution.

Digitisation of newspapers

After Latvia regained its independence, National Library of Latvia opened its closed stock (*specfonds*) to the readers and the demand for first republic newspapers increased tremendously. After several years of use the newspapers of this period visibly deteriorated, and in some more years the condition of printed materials was already critical. Starting from 1994 newspapers of 88 names became unavailable to the public. Now this number has increased to 105. The collection of fragile newspapers, which is visibly ceasing to exist, is a part of our national treasure and it is our responsibility to preserve it. We considered transformation of the information to other data carried to be the most acceptable solution of the problem. Open Society Institute in Budapest, Soros Foundation Latvia and Culture Capital Foundation was also recognised this problem.

These institutions ensured financial support for the project. The total amount of the project expenses was USD 100 000 and it was commenced in the end of 1999.

Selection of digitisation camera and the respective equipment was a responsible, though challenging task. Taking into account the experience of Czech colleague we selected a US produced scanning camera BetterLight. The table for fixing the object was proper for scanning newspapers, maps, posters, graphics, photos and books. The sequence of the work was determined by the dramatic condition of newspapers and the huge demand for these. The first scanning object was a very popular newspaper read in one fourth part of the state – *Kurzemes Vārds*.

We produce CD in two types - archive and user. Archive CD is possible to transfer in new newspaper, user CD are for readers. Till now day (02.07.2004) we produce 87 user CD.

Digitisation of posters

The problem of preservation of posters during the last years has also become a critical. Low quality paper, extensive demand, inappropriate exhibiting and improper storing were the determinants that created necessity to scan the most valuable posters in order to preserve them for future.

In NLL stocks is accumulated and stored the largest and most inclusive poster collection in Latvia. It includes approximately 4 500 units and some of them are really rare. The demand for Latvian posters is huge. Posters are requested for scientific researches, publishing in art books and other kind of publications, also for movies, TV videos and TV spots and for exhibitions.

We were carrying out an extensive project “Poster in Latvia”. The project is divided in two stages. The first includes the period from the origination of poster art in Latvia to 1945. The second includes post-war period up to the year 2000. The aim of this project was to ensure preservation of poster stocks and wide availability both in Latvia and outside.

Department of Cartography

In the year 2000 the department of Cartography in co-operation with SIA GIS *Projekts* commenced digitalisation of **Latvian topographical maps**. This action course was determined by the fact that the topographical maps or large scale maps are documents that contain large amount of cartographic information that is fixed at a certain period of time and reflects a certain fragment of space. Reconciliation of cartographic information is frequently necessary, that is why the topographic cards do not age and can serve as an information source in all times. These maps also are the most used materials. A significant part of these materials are only in one copy in the stock, nevertheless their use is unrestricted.

Digitised maps have the following advantages:

- there will be an additional copy of the particular map in the stock that will ensure proper preservation;
- the users will have a choice to view the maps either in the traditional format or electronically;
- digitised maps require significantly less space in the stock.

At this moment the following maps are available in CD format:

- Latvia topographical map, scale 1:75 000. This is virtually the only map of this scale that includes the entire Latvia and is published in the 1920ies and 1930ies.
- Latvia topographical map, scale 1:10 000. This map was prepared in 1960-1962 and 1988-1991 by the General staff of the Soviet army. There are 3574 pages scanned in 123 discs. This is the most detailed map of Latvia territory and it is very likely that a new map in such detail will not be developed very soon.

The Phonetic Department

Going further, the Phonetic Department carries out digitisation of vinyl records in CD-R format. A part of the national sound tracks collection is selected for preservation. Within the framework of this project the necessary equipment has been purchased, options provided by software have been learned and some records have been made. Due to lack of financial support, further development of this project has halted.

Baltic Central library

NLL department Baltic Central library is working on development of a visual data basis **Riga form the end of 19th century until the end of the Second World War**. From the department archive which amounts to approximately 54 000 units (including photos, postcards, negatives) 3000 most interesting and rarest pieces on Riga were selected. The necessity to digitise these materials is determined both by need for faster and multicriteria search options and by the wish to preserve the unique materials. After the first stage of the project digitised pictures will be available for the users who will be able to see these on the screen and also to receive printouts. There have been scanned approximately 1000 pictures. Currently the Automation department works on development of search system and also performs researches for attachment of digitised sources in the electronic catalogue. As this will be a joint system for all Latvian National Library, its adaptation is performed gradually.

At the end I would like to say that I have provided an update on digitisation in Latvia librarian system.