

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ESTONIA (NLE)

Annual report 1996-1997

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Library staff: 371

Collections: 3,465,779 items

Users: over 100,300

1. General Developments

During 1996-1997 NLE worked out strategies for the year 2000 under the title "Moving Uphill". This document, proceeding from the National Library of Estonia Act, represents our best understanding of the way NLE should move on. To implement the strategies, annual plans of action will be devised, including financial projects for raising additional funds. Giving a brief overview of what NLE has achieved, the document also states that fulfilling the duties of a national and parliamentary library, NLE will have to:

- * ensure that every individual, every social group and the society as a whole are well informed;
- * contribute to the initiatives of preservation and development of national culture and national identity;
- * support the cultural, social and educational activities of Estonian libraries.

Considering the restrictions of financial means, we are forced to confine ourselves to selecting three priorities amongst the fields of action. They are:

- * Collecting, preserving and making accessible the recorded Estonian national memory and cultural heritage.
- * Ensuring that the Parliament and Government are well informed in the interests of developing the Estonian statehood and nation.
- * Developing the library as a centre of culture, training and communication.

General vision is followed by more detailed treatment of several topics: collections, services, research and development, information technology, staff development, public relations and marketing, finance.

2. Library services

In order to continue the improvement of library services, NLE carried out a research among readers using the methodology of Measuring Academic Library Performance. By filling in questionnaires, readers expressed their opinions about different services, availability of materials, working conditions, available equipment, etc. The detailed analysis of the results as well as a corresponding publication will be presented at an international conference, to be held in NLE at the beginning of June, 1997.

3. Automation

In 1995 seven major Estonian research libraries signed an agreement on the formation of the Consortium of Estonian Libraries Network (the Consortium of ELNET), its aims being the coordination of the designing, implementing, developing and financing of the Information System of Estonian Libraries. The Consortium is not limited to its present membership; its current structure and statutory duties will form a solid basis for the all-Estonian library network in the future. One of the first tasks of the Consortium was the selection of the information system's software - in April, 1996 the selection was made in favour of ILS INNOPAC. The implementation of the INNOPAC system in Estonia will be the first attempt of its kind in the Baltic republics and in the former Soviet Union. According to the project schedule the signing of a corresponding contract between the Consortium and the supplier will be followed by the implementation of the basic part of the information system (including training) in 1997.

A significant event for the whole country took place at the end of February, 1997 - NLE opened the first public Internet Centre in the Republic. The Centre provides 8 working places, making electronic information accessible free of charge and already enjoying huge popularity.

4. Public Relations

Beside fulfilling information needs, NLE has continued to act as a significant cultural centre. The year 1996 again witnessed numerous exhibitions - 270 book displays, 30 art exhibitions, 9 photo exhibitions, etc., the highlight being doubtlessly the opening of the Wiiralt Gallery at the end of 1996. Eduard Wiiralt was and still is the best known Estonian graphic artist whose 62 works were donated to the city of Tallinn by Harry Mannil and Henry Radevall, Estonian businessmen living in Venezuela and Sweden. From among various display venues the city administration selected the 3rd floor gallery in NLE; the Wiiralt gallery was opened with a festive ceremony lead by the mayor of Tallinn.

In August, 1996 NLE was one of the venues of ESTO '96 (The World Festival of Estonians), organizing several events and introducing the library to the wide public on the Day of Open Doors with guided tours provided for all those interested.

An important milestone in making NLE known to the wide world was the publication of an overview on the Library by Dr. Ivi Eenmaa and Catherine Suard, Cultural Attache of the French Embassy, in "Les Nouvelles Alexandries. Les grands chantiers de bibliothèques dans la monde" - an impressive publication introducing 15 outstanding library buildings of the world.

In July 1996 NLE was visited by the First Lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton. The conference hall of NLE was chosen as the venue for Mrs. Clinton's speech addressed to the Baltic states, that reflecting again the increasing prestige of NLE as an outstanding cultural and information centre.

The wide public's continual interest towards NLE as a cultural institution as well as an architectural monument was satisfied with over 400 guided tours.

During its 3 years of operation in the new building, NLE has found its place in the market of conference services - over 400 events were carried out in its conference centre in 1996.

5. International Cooperation

In order to work out new strategies in this area, the development of international cooperation of NLE during 1993-1996 was profoundly analyzed. According to the results NLE has relations with various institutions of over 60 countries. The closest contacts have been established with the Scandinavian countries as well as with the other Baltic states; NLE has also managed to retain fruitful cooperation with Russia. Collaboration with the French Embassy and the French Cultural Centre resulted in the opening of the French reading room at the end of 1996. Supplied with modern equipment, this small French centre displays a wide selection of fiction, databases, CDs, etc.

In 1996 NLE was awarded two noteworthy grants: the Getty Grant Foundation supports the purchase of art literature, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation partly finances the development of the unified information system of major Estonian research libraries, including NLE.

The year 1996 was also the beginning of extensive training in marketing and financial management. In cooperation with the British Council a 3-step programme was carried out, including a corresponding seminar in the U.K. as well as 2 workshops in Estonia.

The Information and Documentation Centre on the Council of Europe, opened in NLE in 1995, has proved to be a very successfully operating unit. Integration into Europe sets new important requirements for our country; being the disseminator of the corresponding information, the Centre has efficiently contributed to the development of this process. Negotiations are presently in progress for the establishment in NLE of an Information Centre on the European Union.