

ICELAND

The National and University Library of Iceland
Dr Sigrún Klara Hannesdóttir - National Librarian

Annual Report to CENL 2002

On April 1 2002, Dr Sigrún Klara Hannesdóttir was appointed National Librarian and director of the National and University Library of Iceland, after the retirement of Mr. Einar Sigurdsson. A new Library Board was appointed in November of 2002 with two representatives from the University of Iceland, one from the Icelandic Research Council and one from the Icelandic Library Association, Upplýsing. The new chairman of the board, Mr. Hördur Sigurgestsson was appointed directly by the Minister of Culture, Education and Science.

New Strategy

The National and University Library of Iceland was formed in 1994 with the amalgamation of the National Library of Iceland, founded in 1818 and the Library of the University of Iceland founded in 1940. This amalgamation coincided with the opening of a new building housing both libraries. During the year 2002 a new strategy for the coming five years was formed through seminars and brain-storming meetings including staff from the Library, members of the research community and students and representatives from the University of Iceland. The strategic document was subsequently approved by the Library Board in March of 2003. The new strategy places emphasis on the development of the electronic library and improved electronic access to the collection.

The National Library subsequently launched two developmental projects in 2002. One is the Electronic National Library and the other is the Electronic Research Library. The first one will emphasise the digitisation of Icelandic historical newspapers, books and manuscripts. The aim is to make all the historical journals and newspapers available through the Internet where they are searchable by key-word search as well as by title, year, and issue from every computer in the country. Previously a related project was launched, the Saganet, where a large amount of manuscripts and documents related to the Icelandic Sagas was digitised and put on the Net. A project of digitising historical Icelandic maps has also been carried out and the images made available.

These electronic developments coincide with the opening of a new automated library system, which will serve the whole country. The Aleph-system is called Gegnir in Icelandic. The system was opened in May of 2003 and by next year it is estimated that all the libraries in Iceland will be connected to the same bibliographic database. When that is completed, the access to Icelandic material will have greatly enhanced.

The development of the Electronic Research Library is based on national licences to international research journals and databases, which have been

negotiated with the main vendors in the field. The Library signed a contract in December of 2002 with the Ministry of Culture, Education and Science to manage this project. The special thing about this service is that the whole Icelandic population has access to all the journals and databases included in the national licences. This is very important for a country with such scattered population as Iceland. The project has an advisory group from the different types of libraries and users that set priorities what is important enough for the country to sign a national agreement with the vendors. The costs are shared by the largest libraries as well as with a direct sum that comes from the government.

EXHIBITS

During the year 2002 the main library exhibit was related to the anniversary of the Icelandic author Halldór Laxness. He was born in 1902 and became one of the best known Icelandic authors after winning the Nobel Prize in 1955. The anniversary was commemorated with a seminar of his work as well as a publication of a series of articles on aspects of his life and work.

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