

# National and University Library of Iceland

## Annual Report 1996/97

### Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn

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### Collections

On 1 December 1996 there were two years since the opening of the National and University Library of Iceland (Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn) in a new building, but the new institution was created by the amalgamation of the old National Library of Iceland and the library of the University of Iceland.

The total holdings of the new library are now approximately 800,000 volumes – in the main library, in departmental libraries and in remote storage. About 550,000 volumes are available for loan outside the library. In 1994, a total of 46,493 items were loaned in the two old libraries and the new library (opened in December). The figures for 1995 and 1996 are 70,379 (an increase of 51%) and 81,685 (an increase of 16%), respectively. However, a very substantial part of the use is not accounted for in these figures and takes place in the main building, which has about 700 reading seats as compared with a total of approximately 100 seats in the old libraries.

The Library of the History of Icelandic Women was opened as a special entity within the National and University Library of Iceland on 5 December 1996, the birthday of Dr Anna Sigurðardóttir (1908-95), who founded the Library about twenty years ago.

### Finances

An agreement has been made with the University of Iceland in accordance with the law on the Library which stipulates that in addition to Government funding some of the Library's expenditure will be funded by the University. The agreement defines the Library's services to the University and which of them are to be paid for by the University. One of the most important provisions of this agreement is the creation of the University of Iceland Acquisitions and Collection Development Fund (*Ritakaupasjóður Háskóla Íslands*). The Fund

is created by the transfer of 70% of the Library's acquisitions budget to the budget of the University and will be spent solely on acquisitions for the benefit of the Faculties. The University is responsible for dividing the money available between the Faculties and will seek to increase the grant from the state budget, or individual Faculties will try to supplement their share by other means. The Library is, on the other hand, responsible for the acquisitions process, and all material will be accessioned and catalogued as the property of the Library.

Shrinking funds and rising prices of books and subscriptions led to cuts in acquisitions in 1996 by at least 25%. It is to be hoped that the establishment of the University Acquisitions Fund and an increased involvement by the University will help reverse this trend. It is also to be hoped that efforts made during the last four years to automate the catalogues and facilitate access to foreign databases, as well as a better access to the collections in a new building, will to some extent alleviate the blow of the cuts in acquisitions.

The Library's budget is ISK 245,000,000 (GBP 2,130,000) in 1997, including ISK 25,000,000 (GBP 217,000) allocated to the running of the building, but excluding ISK 31,500,000 (GBP 244,000) that appear in the University's budget in accordance with the agreement referred to above. This is an increase of 20% from 1996, but the Library is also expected to have income from other sources to the amount of ISK 20,000,000 (GBP 174,000).

### **The anniversary of the Manuscript Department**

The 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Manuscript Department was commemorated on 5 June 1996. At a ceremonial gathering on this occasion, the manuscripts of one of the greatest Icelandic composers, *Jón Leifs*, were donated to the Library. The same day Supplement IV to the Catalogue of Manuscripts in the National Library (*Handritasafn Landsbókasafns*, IV. aukabindi, 416 pp.) was published.

Icelanders are proud of the purity of their native tongue, and the Government has decided that one day each year, 16 November, the birthday of the greatest romantic poet of Iceland in the 19th century (Jónas Hallgrímsson), will be dedicated to the Icelandic language. This day was celebrated for the first time in 1996. At a gathering in the Library on this occasion, the manuscripts of *Halldór Laxness*, the 1955 Nobel Prize laureate, were formally donated to the Library. An exhibition of the manuscripts was opened at the same time, the third exhibition of the year to commemorate the anniversary of the Manuscript Department. Earlier in the year, there were seventeen 30-minutes long programmes on Icelandic State Radio to commemorate the anniversary.

### **Publications**

The publication of Supplement IV to the Catalogue of Manuscripts in the National Library has already been mentioned.

The Icelandic National Bibliography (*Íslensk bókaskrá*) 1995 was published in July 1996. Books (49 pages or more) published that year were 994, but pamphlets (5-48 pages) were 528, a total of 1522 volumes, as compared with 1550 volumes in 1994, and 1525 volumes in 1993, which shows a remarkable stability between years. The Bibliography of Icelandic Sound Recordings (*Íslensk hljóðritaskrá*) is published as a supplement to the Icelandic National Bibliography. The number of Icelandic sound recordings published in 1995 was 158, as compared with 147 in 1994 and 107 in 1993, so there has been a considerable increase.

New serial titles were 138 in 1995, but a total of 1083 serial titles were received through legal deposit in 1995.

A new annual, *Ritmennt*, was launched in 1996. It will contain articles in bibliography, philology and related fields, as well as brief accounts of new acquisitions and news-related items of relevance to the National and University Library and its functions.

*Hallgrímur Pétursson* (1614-74) is Iceland's most famous religious poet. His poetic work reached its peak with the Hymns of the Passion (*Passíusálmar*), of which Hallgrímur himself made several copies. Only one of these has survived, now in the possession of the National and University Library of Iceland and one of its greatest treasures. 1996 marked the 300th anniversary of the first separate publication of the Hymns. They have been printed more often than any other Icelandic work, a new commemorative edition made by the National and University Library being the eighty-third. It is carried out in such a way that facsimile images of the manuscript and the text in both original and modernised spelling are placed side by side on every spread of the book, followed by an extensive historical bibliography of all former editions.

### **Technological developments**

Most of the Library's holdings have already been catalogued in the *Libertas* library system (known as *Gegnir* in Icelandic), or a total of 435,000 records. A lot of bibliographic records for foreign publications is downloaded from OCLC, or about 70%. A part of the Library's automated system is a database containing an index of articles in Icelandic journals and magazines. Known as *Greinir*, this database now contains about 44,000 records.

*Gegnir* is the automated library system for the National and University Library as well as seven other Icelandic libraries. A union catalogue of books and foreign serials in more than 60 Icelandic libraries and research institutions is also part of *Gegnir*.

The digitization of about 220 historical maps of Iceland from 1500-1900 was completed in March 1997 and made accessible on the Internet with cataloguing records and a description of each map (URL: <http://egla.bok.hi.is/kort>). The project is funded by a special grant from NORDINFO on the opening of the Library, which has been supplemented by Icelandic grants, and with technical assistance from the Nordic Digital Library Centre (NDLC) in the Norwegian National Library Department in Mo i Rana.

In March 1997 the Trustees of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation approved an appropriation of USD 600,000 to the National and University Library for use, in collaboration with Cornell University, over a period of approximately three years, toward costs of creating the Icelandic National Digital Library (INDL). The project consists of the digitization of approximately 500,000 pages of manuscripts and printed material – old Icelandic literature, the Icelandic sagas in particular – and making them accessible through the Internet. As The Fiske Icelandic Collection at Cornell is the second largest collection of Icelandic printed material outside Iceland, this cooperation is of great importance. The Arnarnagæan Institute in Iceland also participates in the project with about 40,000 manuscript pages as compared with 340,000 pages in the National and University Library. The Fiske Icelandic Collection contributes mostly printed material. The grant is conditional on matching funds of USD 700,000. This has been secured by contributions from the Icelandic Government, the Icelandic Research Council, Cornell University, the National Library and private enterprises.