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National and University Library of Iceland: Annual Report 1998/99

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This year, 1999, is the fifth from the establishment of the National and University Library of Iceland, and the working procedures of this young institution are developing rapidly in the modern environment of its new building of 13,000 m². However, due to financial restraints, the Library is still not fully operational in all respects. The total budget for 1999 is approximately 400,000,000 ISK (about 5,400,000 USD), about 15% of which come from the University Budget and about 7% are revenues. A major new development last year was the extension of the opening hours of the Library.

Management of the Library

Created by the amalgamation of the National Library of Iceland and the Library of the University of Iceland, the National and University Library of Iceland opened in a new building on December 1, 1994. The legal framework of its operations is provided by the National and University Library Act, passed in 1994, and further stipulations as to the implementation of the Act are set out in Regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1998.

A Library Board of five people (two of which are nominated by the University Council) decides Library policy and supervises the Library's financial planning and work schedule as well as its operation.

A Management Unit consists of the National Librarian, the Deputy National Librarian, the Finance Manager, and the Personnel Manager.

There are six main departments: National Department, Manuscript Department, Acquisition Department, Cataloguing Department, Information Department, and Circulation Department.

A standing committee provides the means for joint consultation between the National Librarian, the Deputy National Librarian, the Finance Manager, the Personnel Manager, and the Heads of Departments.

The dual role of the Library, being a national library and the library of the University of Iceland, makes its management more complicated. Under the National and University Library Act, funding is partly to be provided by the University of Iceland. A service contract between the Library and the University, which was signed in 1997, covers among other things the establishment of the University Acquisitions Fund, as it is known, within the University

Budget: Each year available funds are allocated to the different faculties by the University authorities, but the Library is responsible for all acquisitions and all purchases become part of its collections. Furthermore, the University recently provided funds for extending the opening hours of the Library from 60 to 80 hours per week with effect from February 1, 1999, a decision taken in response to pressure exerted by students at the University. The University Council also decided in November 1998 that all faculties should nominate either library committees or library representatives, depending on the size of the faculties, in order to strengthen the ties with the Library.

Work on drafting an extensive policy-making document, which has been going on for a year or so, will be completed in June 1999. An overview, which describes the principles and main functions of the Library and presents a vision for the next ten years and a strategic plan for the next three years, will be issued as a separate publication.

It has been a policy of the Government ending its four-year term in the spring of 1999 to increase the independence of state institutions in so far as their internal affairs are concerned. As a part of this policy, responsibility for pay negotiations was in 1997 transferred from the Ministry of Finance to the institutions themselves. This new development has increased the workload on the managerial staff of the Library as well as their responsibility.

In March 1999, preparations were initiated for working out a three-year performance-related contract between the Library and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Role of the Library in the National Library Network

The government department responsible for the National and University Library, like other research libraries (with the exception of a few special libraries in institutions that come under other ministries), is the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Under the Public Libraries Act 1997, local authorities are responsible for funding the buildings and the running of public libraries, whereas the Ministry of Education and Culture is answerable on broad policy questions.

No administrative authority rests with the National and University Library in so far as other Icelandic libraries are concerned. However, the National and University Library Act makes it clear that as the national library of Iceland and the country's largest library it is expected to be *primus inter pares*. The Library does offer professional advice to other libraries and cooperates with them as much as possible. It actively fosters the coordination of working methods in Icelandic libraries, for example by publishing, in Icelandic, handbooks on cataloguing, classification and subject headings. The Library maintains the Union Catalogue of Books and Periodicals, runs the National ISBN and ISSN Offices, and is the national centre for interlibrary loans.

During the last decade there have been two main library systems in use in Iceland, *Libertas* in the National and University Library and a few other libraries, and *Dobis/Libis* in the Reykjavík Public Library and a number of other libraries. There have also been several small library systems. A committee was appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1998 with the task of making recommendations as to the selection of a library system that could be adopted by all Icelandic libraries.

Legal Deposit of Materials

A committee appointed in 1997 with the task of revising the Legal Deposit Act 1977 is expected to make recommendations on a new legislation to the Ministry of Education and Culture in June, 1999. The committee will recommend that a new legislation include electronic materials in all formats, films and radio and television broadcasts as well as materials covered at present, i.e. printed material and sound recordings.

Technological Developments

Work continued on the *SagaNet*, a cooperative project of the Library and Cornell University, which consists in the conversion of approximately 500,000 pages of manuscripts and printed material into digital form. Information on the project is to be found at: <http://tso13146.bok.hi.is/Saganet> (still under development). The Library also participates with other Nordic countries in a pilot project supported by NORDINFO (The Nordic Council for Scientific Information), which consists in the conversion of old newspapers into digital form and making them at the same time searchable by indexing.

Conservation/Preservation of Collections

The Library engaged an American expert on bookbinding for a few days in February 1999. The recommendations put forward in his report are being considered and hopefully some of them will be implemented shortly.

One of the copies received by the Library in accordance with the Legal Deposit Act 1977 is set aside as a reserve copy. The collection of reserve copies will in future be housed in an old schoolhouse about 100 km outside Reykjavík that is now being renovated for this purpose. It is expected that the renovation work will be completed by the end of 1999. All copies of the reserve collection, approximately 5000 shelf metres, will be examined before being moved; they will be cleaned and, if necessary, be subject to conservation treatment, and some of them will be placed in folders designed and produced in Iceland for this purpose.

Exhibitions and Other Events

During the past twelve months or so a systematic search for musical notes in Icelandic manuscripts has been going on with considerable success. The Library's Summer Exhibition, the biggest of last year's ten exhibitions, was based on musical material discovered in the manuscripts. At a grand opening ceremony some of the old music recently discovered was played by musicians.

Another notable exhibition was held in connection with diaries: The Library, together with the National Museum of Iceland, made an effort to persuade as many Icelanders as possible to keep a diary for one particular day, October 15, 1998. The project proved very successful as about 6,000 people sent in their diaries, more than 2% of the population. A selection of the material received was published as a book by Mál og menning, the largest publishing house in Iceland, on April 23, 1999, the international Day of the Book. The Library has taken advantage of the publicity generated by this effort and successfully persuaded people to deposit old diaries in the Library.

Reykjavík will be one of nine European Cities of Culture in the year 2000, and preparations for exhibitions to be held that year are already under way in the Library, including a travelling exhibition to be set up in Reykjavík, the Library of Congress, Cornell University, and Winnipeg to commemorate Leifur Eiríksson's Voyage to America in the year 1000. Another important exhibition in the year 2000 will be opened in connection with a conference held in Iceland in September that year by the International Map Collectors' Society.

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