

IMPACT OF EAST EUROPEAN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES ON LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN LITHUANIA

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During the Soviet period in Lithuania, as in other former republics of the USSR and so-called socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe one of the principal of inborn human rights – the right to versatile information underwent drastic restrictions. A man had access only to information, considered as harmless to structures of totalitarian authorities.

These measures deeply affected the very essence of the library and lead to its deformities. Spheres of science and human knowledge, regarded by the regime as harmful, were eliminated from public reading and consequently from library collections, catalogues and bibliographic sources. The repertory of dangerous publications covered practically the whole pre-1940 periodical press of the Republic of Lithuania (even “Bibliografijos žinios”), the entire historical, economic, so-called “anti-communist” or “bourgeois” literature.

It is worth a notice that some world famous authors, though not forbidden officially, works of which ceased to be published in Soviet Lithuania and after their old editions were worn out, became obscure. Publishing of novels by Eric Maria Remarque, Karl May, Edgar R. Burroughs were renewed only in 1958, 1986 and 1990 respectively.

The register of “harmful” publications was not stable. From time to time works in genetics, cybernetics, Freudism were being included. Names of politicians and public figures who “betrayed” or spoke out against the socialism appeared on “black lists”.

During 1946–1947 libraries of the Lithuanian Academy of Science, Vilnius University, the Central State (now the National) library as well as the Book Chamber and the Institute of Party History were granted the right to establish secret special storage departments of “harmful” literature, containing 2–3 copies of each publication at the most. Library users had access to these collections only by obtaining applications from institutions they were employed “for the purpose of science and work”. In 1958 a collection of special storage was set up in the Kaunas Public Library. In 1987 these collections numbered as follows: Lithuanian Academy of Science Library – 206 926 vols, Vilnius University Library – 89 028 vols, the National Library – 46 304 vols, Kaunas Public Library – 22 530 vols.

Political censorship has deformed the theoretical basis of the librarianship. The library was regarded not as means of meeting the requirements of users but as division of party propaganda and media system. For this reason, such fundamental documents determining the basis of modern library in the world as UNESCO Edgard Faure Report on education systems, IFLA standards of public services, the universal bibliographic control, the universal availability to publications and other documents in the former USSR were not translated, and moreover, they were simply passed over in silence or deliberately misinterpreted. For instance, the term “universal bibliographic control” translating into Russian was changed into the term “universal bibliographic record” thus emphasizing that all publications should be recorded implying the meaning registered, while omitting the possibility for a library user to follow (to “control”) the printed output or its part, as means to select (to find) the required material.

Various factors generated the emergence of winds of rebirth in Soviet Lithuania like in other socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Rich and long standing history of Lithuanian state and maintained prestige of the Church, geographic proximity of the Western World and, last but not least, rather significant knowledge of foreign languages, especially English, German, Polish were among the causes that influenced the

occurrence of such momentous events. It must be noted that in former socialist countries criteria for determining the harmfulness of publications were diverse, thus a book forbidden in Lithuania was allowed, say, in Poland, Yugoslavia and even in the GDR, while a title banned in Russia, Byelorussia or Ukraine might not be prohibited in Lithuania.

Libraries were among the leading institutions where the national heritage had been defended. Motivated by preservation of local ethnography and heritage the acquisition of pre-occupation publications in research libraries was broadened to public libraries. Customs and Glavlit barriers tried to prevent with difficulties the flood of books pouring into Lithuanian libraries by various ways. Efforts to publish forgotten and long out-of-print authors and works by Lithuanian writers in exile had also some success. In late 1980s the transferring of "imprisoned" books and periodicals from collections of special storage to those accessible to general public began. This process was concluded in 1988 with the complete abolition of "Special Collections" in libraries. 80 thousand volumes were returned to the basic book stock of the National Library.

The act of March 11, 1990, proclaiming the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Lithuania, followed by international recognition of the state had cardinal impact on Lithuanian libraries.

The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and other acts of the State consolidated the human right to information. The abolishment of political censorship allowed to amass a collection of publications displaying both historical and present outlook of the world. With the assistance of foreign state institutions and public organizations, especially Lithuanian emigrant organizations, the National Library as well as other Lithuanian libraries have acquired virtually a full set of Lithuanian exile publications from the end of the 19th century. Many valuable foreign reference and other publications, inconceivable on library shelves during the totalitarian rule, were obtained from various sources including donation.

The restoration of Lithuania's independence had a considerable impact on the development of public libraries. Difficult economic situation, imperfect laws, permanent shortage of funds and incapability of some librarians to get involved in going reforms, pushed many libraries, especially self-governmental, into embarrassing situation.

When the law on the fundamentals of local government was passed in 1990, libraries found themselves under subordination and care of local authorities, sometimes incompetent and hostile towards cultural establishments. Acting in accordance with this law, local administration of some regions considerably reorganized library networks, reduced the staff, altered functions and management of libraries. Heads of central libraries had to defend region's public libraries development programs and even the problem of survival of certain libraries were often at stake.

During 1991–1993 a total of 185 local public libraries were closed and 321 librarians were sacked. This process was halted only at the end of 1992 after a law on procedures of the reorganization and the abolition of cultural establishments was passed. As a result of this, a number of closed libraries dropped to 9, and in each case the closures were initiated by administrators of central regional libraries with the approval of the Ministry of Culture.

The merger of local public and school libraries began chaotically. At the beginning of 1992 there were already 193 amalgamated libraries in Lithuania. In 1994 this figure rose to 248 libraries, 243 of them were in rural districts. They were local governmental libraries of local self-government, simultaneously acting as school libraries. Besides, there were 42 libraries (28 of them in the country) under the supervision of school administration, which at the same time serve local inhabitants. Observations both on international and national scale shows that public and school libraries have quite different functions and such fusion might be justified only as an inevitable step enforced by unsatisfactory economic situation.

Other laws had impact on library network alterations too – such as the restoration of citizens rights to survived immovable

property, the initial privatization of state property, the privatization of property of agricultural enterprises, the act on restitution of the Catholic Church status in Lithuania. When the privatization and property restoring process began, it was hard to find a district or town in Lithuania where a library was not involved in moving from one building into another. At times libraries were transferred to worse buildings or even were closed altogether.

On the other hand, it must be taken into account that during this period a good deal of libraries moved into more spacious and better premises, previously containing kindergartens or administrative agencies.

Shortage of funds lead to severe curtailment of expenditures. This, together with unfavorable attitude towards some country libraries by local authorities lead to catastrophic consequences at times: cut off telephone connections, no heating, even the electricity supply was stopped. Though lately the situation somewhat improved, it must be acknowledged that during the winter of 1994 a total of 295 local public libraries were without heating, (19,5%) and 536 had no telephone links (35,4%). In some districts up to 76–85% of the libraries were without heating.

Only few libraries were able to accomplish routine repairs and to acquire necessary equipment. 66 municipal libraries needed major repair, 10 of them were in virtual wreckages.

Financial difficulties also complicated library acquisitions. 1514 local government public libraries have been granted 300 000 Lt (75 000 USD) for acquisition purposes in 1994, what ment 8 ct per inhabitant and in 1995 total grant was 1 235 000 Lt (308 750 USD) or 33 ct per inhabitant. For school library acquisition about 60 ct were allotted per pupil. The average price of acquired books was 4,70 Lt (1,18 USD) in 1994. Regional libraries received 1–5 copies of most of publications which where directed mainly to central and town libraries. Village libraries, especially small branches, almost did not add new books to their collections. There were cases of total yearly receipt ranging from 10 to 20 copies. The similar situation was among school libraries.

A gigantic jump in prices of periodical publications resulted in some village libraries receiving 2–3 newspapers and journals lately. Situation slightly improved in 1994 when central regional libraries' subscriptions averaged 110 titles, with 18 titles for town libraries and 2–10 titles for village libraries accordingly. Remembering that 445 newspapers, 178 journals and 90 bulletins are being published presently in Lithuania, the above mentioned increase was a small consolation.

Another urgent problem as regards the collection development was inadequate information on new releases. During the independence years a tremendous rise in number of publishers occurred. In 1994 there were 487 publishing houses which issued 2 885 titles of books. With virtually no pre-publishing information, it was almost impossible to select orders and to plan available funds. Therefore, the acquisition went rather chaotically as libraries had no knowledge in advance of what, when, who was going to publish a book, the price of a publication, as well as whether it would be supplied by the Library Distribution Centre or libraries would have to search for it by themselves.

There was a slim improvement in this area last year, when libraries began to order their selections on a weekly bulletin "Ekspres informacija", published by the Bibliography and Book Science Center at the National Library of Lithuania, where recent issues are recorded.

There were a considerable increase in additional grants by local government. Donations by publishers, the Open Society – Lithuania and Lithuanian organizations abroad were significant help in current circumstances. Soros and Sabre foundations greatly contributed by supporting Lithuania libraries too. At the same time grants by the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture could cover only 50% of financial requirements of libraries.

A sudden flood of low standard literature, such as melodramatic romances, violent crime stories, books on astrology, dream interpretations and sex, rose a new problem. Ideological publications which polluted collections in yesteryears were succeeded by trash literature. Fortunately this over fascination se-

ems gradually diminishing. It is disturbing, however, that libraries for many years acting as ideological establishments, cannot abandon this habit. The acquisition policy is often biased and selecting publications libraries often run to extremes. Works by Soviet period authors are relinquished and discarded mercilessly. Publications of the inter-war period as well as by participants of resistance, emigrants and books on religion are acquired without any selection. Although great efforts are being made to convert libraries into non-political and non-ideological establishments, librarians occasionally cannot dissociate themselves from their attitudes and try to force their ideas upon readers by acquiring and popularizing certain publications. The solution of this issue is not confined to staff education, the problem reflects unsatisfactory work by the library guiding centre, the National Library of Lithuania.

Because of publisher's fascination to commercially profitable editions, fewer classical works appear. The shortage of this literature is already felt in school libraries. However, this problem so far has not greatly aggravated thanks to substantial amount of reserve book stock in local governmental libraries being transferred to school libraries.

Since 1989 all figures representing library activities were constantly diminishing: the percentage of readers dropped to 22,8%, the book delivery to 15,4%. The decrease of figures was caused not as much by changes in library network, as by the conditions in the field of acquisition. Collections were diminishing too but rates of decrease are slowing down, e. g. in 1992 stocks were reduced by 4%, to compare with 2,76% in 1994. A decrease of readers almost came to a halt. The figures for 1994 shows the loss of only 6 656 readers in comparison with 35 thousands in 1993, 123 thousands in 1992 and 26 thousands in 1991. For the first time in five years book delivery have risen (126 thousands). To compare: in 1991 the decrease was 1 million, in 1992 – 156 thousands, in 1993 – 508 thousands. The efficiency of library work depends mainly on personnel's qualification level. At present, because of inadequate wages, best specialists quit libraries. Salaries of librarians are below the national average.

This causes instability in staff membership. However, the future may bring more acute problems. It is already possible to forecast that in some dozen years libraries will face substantial shortage of specialists as a result of the closure of four specialized secondary schools which were educating middle-grade specialists for libraries. Furthermore, Vilnius University reduced the enrolment of librarians to 30 (previously 150) as well as dissolved evening and correspondence departments.

At the moment it could be said that the state of library affairs in Lithuania is gradually stabilizing. In 1994 the situation was as follows: the holdings of local government libraries totalled 19,6 million volumes, while the aggregate of registered readers was 620,1 thousands (16,6% of population); this means 5,2 books per inhabitant and 31,7 books per registered reader. Last year there was 3,9 visits and 13,1 million items were delivered.

Although the ultimate five years were exceptionally hard for Lithuanian libraries, there were enjoyable features also. Library holdings were furnished with exile literature and publications unknowns or little known to Lithuanian readers. Libraries became markedly more independent. They are obliged to work creatively and efficiently thus proving the government and the public of their important role in the information era. Democratization and depolitization processes are going on. New automated technologies are being implemented.

Having carried out directives from Moscow for so many years, with the obtaining of knowledge and experience restricted by Soviet boundaries, we are returning to the family of world libraries. The creation of theoretical, legal and normative bases of Lithuanian librarianship goes on in preparing the legal documents, the experience of other countries and documents of international library organizations are taken into account. The Lithuanians Library Law is ready for approval. It sets the system of Lithuanian libraries, defines Lithuanian library holdings and their preservation, determines relations between libraries, grants state regulating of libraries. The purpose of the law is to ensure the right of the society to information and legal regula-

tion of the Lithuanian library activities. It is worth mentioning that this Library Law is not the first one as such. As far back as in 1936 the State Public Library Law and the Regulations of State Public Library Law Accomplishment were issued. It determined public library functions, rules of serving library users, library subordination and other legal matters. At the same time several instructions on library management were approved by the Ministry of Education: regulations for the librarians of state public libraries on books and landing processing, regulations of the accounting of state public library movable property and regulations for keeping and presenting the accountancy of state public library income and accessible funds.

The new Library Law was passed in 1995. Currently the by-laws on it are being worked out. The national standard system is in its creation stage for several years. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania as a parliamentary library and the library science centre in Lithuania took the initiative in preparing library, bibliographic and publishing standards. In 1992 the State Standard Agency representing Lithuania became a member of ISO. Later that year a standard "SD 1.5:92 Acceptation of International Standards" was endorsed. Up to now the following Standards were endorsed: "LST 1219:94 Publishing Registration of Books", "LST 1304:93 System of Interlibrary Loan", "LST 7.1:94 System of Standards on Libraries. General Requirements", "LST 1337:94 Publishing Data and Their Placement in Newspapers", "LST ISO 2108:94 Information and Documentation: International Standard Book Numbering (ISBN)", "LST 1350:94 Bibliographic Entry: Terms and Definitions", "LST 1357:94 Publications: Principal Terms and Definitions".

At present the following standards are in preparation: official registration of fine arts publications, official registration of printed music, library statistics, library collection and work accounting units, international standard serial numbering (ISSN), etc. It is planned also to prepare several terminology standards as well as subsequent standards: official registration of cartographic publications, inner official registration of publication communicati-

ve format UNIMARC, bibliographical description of publications and other documents, document indexing, etc. In 1995 alone the National Library plans to make ready 28 normative documents.

Substantially expenditures of labour were the work on the Universal Decimal Classification. After taking the decision to apply the UDC in Lithuanian libraries, publications "UDC: An abridged edition of classification" for middle-grade public libraries, and "UDC: A short edition of classification" for small public libraries were edited and issued. Currently the work on full edition of UDC is in progress.

The main further objectives of Lithuanian librarians – correlating library services with requirements of open society – were as follows: the assimilation of availability of publication principle designed in accordance with principles announced by IFLA, the creation and development of integrated library information system, the design of preservation of publications (i. e. microfilming, conservation, etc.) projects, the development of international library integration, the reorientation of professional training and qualifying of librarians, the broadening of personal contacts between librarians of various countries.

In this way, winds of rebirth in Central and Eastern Europe, which brought the collapse of one of the world superpowers – the Soviet Union – and the emergency of newly independent countries, made enormous impact on library development in these countries, including Lithuania.

Library science in Lithuania, in spite of sometimes unfavorable political and economic conditions, develops and advances integrating into a world library network.

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RYTŲ EUROPOS SOCIALINIŲ IR POLITINIŲ POKYČIŲ ĮTAKA BIBLIOTEKININKYSTĖS PLĖTRAI LIETUVOJE

Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariama šiuolaikinė bibliotekų situacija Lietuvoje bei jai įtaką darantys veiksniai.

Atkūrus Lietuvoje nepriklausomybę didelę įtaką bibliotekoms bei jų ekonominei situacijai daro naujieji Lietuvos įstatymai (savivaldos, restitucijos, kt.). Šiuos pokyčius iliustruoja straipsnyje pateikti pagrindinių bibliotekų veiklos rodiklių statistiniai duomenys: skaitytojų skaičius, literatūros išdavimo, fondų dydžio ir kt. Analizuojama bibliotekų darbuotojų kvalifikacija, aptariami finansiniai bibliotekų sunkumai komplektuojant fondus, knygų repertuaro pasiūla ir leidinių atrankos problemos.

Nagrinėjamas naujas Lietuvos bibliotekų įstatymas, pateikiamas esamų ir rengiamų lietuviškų bibliotekinių standartų sąrašas, aptarti Universaliosios dešimtainės klasifikacijos rengimo darbai. Prognozuojamos Lietuvos bibliotekų raidos gairės.