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November 20, 2008

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Part of the panel: The Fate of Book Chambers and National Bibliographies in the
Former Soviet Republics since 1991

Presentation at the AAASS National Convention, November 20, 2008

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The histories of the three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, have been intertwined for centuries. Though Latvian and Lithuanian are related linguistically, historically Estonia and Latvia have more in common. The development of the three countries has become increasingly parallel in the last one hundred years. It is not surprising that the development of the national libraries and the fate of the book chambers in the three Baltic States have also followed parallel paths that may differ from the other former republics of the Soviet Union.

Since the territories of the three Baltic States have been ruled by various other countries, and they have been at a crossroads in northern Europe, publications from these countries include materials in many languages. The first books appeared in the local languages of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian in the 16th century, but there is a rich history of publications in German, Russian, Polish, Swedish, Hebrew, Yiddish and other languages. Some bibliographic work was done by various agencies of the rulers.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania declared their independence in 1918 and are all celebrating the 90th anniversary of those declarations, Latvia's was 2 days ago. They very quickly understood the importance of knowledge, books, and libraries. In Estonia, the Provisional Government established the State Library in 1918. Latvia and Lithuania established their state libraries in 1919. These state libraries grew quickly and soon began receiving depository copies of all printed matter published in their respective countries. Foreign exchange agreements were made. All three countries began to systematically collect and record all Baltic publications – those published in the three countries, as well as material about the countries and inhabitants published elsewhere – creating collections of *Estonica*, *Lettica* and *Lituanica*.

All three countries began compiling national bibliographies. In Latvia, Jānis Misiņš had privately started collecting every publication he could find from and about Latvia. He became the first director of the Latvian State Library, and his printed catalogs were the first major bibliographies of Latvian publications.

With the Soviet occupation in 1940, the libraries became part of the Soviet system, becoming the Estonian SSR State Library, Latvian SSR State Library, and Lithuanian SSR State Library, severing ties with foreign libraries, placing large portions of their materials in restricted access collections, and accepting deposit copies from Moscow. The Soviet system included Book Chambers.

I have the most detailed information about Latvia, so I will use it as an example and explain the differences in the other countries. The State Book Chamber was established in Latvia in 1940, as part of the State Library with responsibilities as the bibliographic center of the state that prepared and published the monthly bibliographic index *Latvijas PSRS preses hronika* or the *Latvian PSR Press Chronicle*. In 1959, the State Book Chamber in Latvia started functioning as an independent institution. In 1989 it was renamed the Institute of Bibliography. "Bibliography" as that more closely described its main function of creating the national bibliography. The word "institute" was chosen, because the institution's work included research and it gave it a higher status. (I was told it also sounded more classy.)

In 1991 the new government of Latvia renamed the State Library the National Library of Latvia. Employees started working on a national bibliography in essence duplicating the work of the

Institute of Bibliography, both receiving depository copies, so in 1993 the Institute of Bibliography became a division of the National Library of Latvia. The staffing remained the same.

The National Library of Latvia is physically located in many buildings throughout Riga and its suburbs, none built as a library building. The new government passed a decree for building a new national library building in 1991 and the Latvian American architect Gunars Birkerts designed the building as a symbolic Castle of Light. The project has suffered many setbacks, as other projects took precedence, disputes over ownership of the land for the proposed building were resolved, funding was raised, and changing governments would rescind previous decisions, but I can now say that the work on the building was finally begun this year. Unfortunately many, even book loving inhabitants, no longer support the project, as they feel that a building for physical library materials is no longer needed in the age of the Internet or at least the symbolic vision of the Castle of Light is no longer appropriate and a simpler more practical building would have been enough. The Institute of Bibliography is located on Anglican Street in Old Riga, where it has always shared space with cataloging and other divisions of the state and national libraries.

The Institute of Bibliography has the following functions or responsibilities:

- Prepares the national bibliography (current and retrospective)
- Distributes the deposit copies of publications
- Compiles statistics on publication in Latvia for the government and UNESCO
- Assigns international standard numbers: ISBN, ISSN, and ISMN
- Processes, catalogs and indexes materials
- "Harvests" Latvian electronic publications
- Standardizes library work

In Lithuania, the State Book Chamber started operating in 1946. In 1992 the government of Lithuania passed these responsibilities to the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. The department responsible is the Centre of Bibliography and Book Science. It has similar responsibilities to the Institute of Bibliography in Latvia:

- Receives deposit copies, stores and preserves them
- Creates bibliographic and authority records for bibliographic control
- Maintains bibliographic and publishing standards and formats
- Compiles statistics of publications and also reports them to UNESCO
- Assigns international standard numbers (ISSN, ISBN and ISMN)
- Creates cataloguing in publication (CIP) records
- Helps maintain the Lithuanian Integrated Library Information System (LIBIS), including the [Union Catalogue](#) and the [National Bibliographic Data Bank](#)
- Compiles the annual collection of research articles in *Bibliografija (Bibliography)*
- Carries out research in the fields of bibliography and book science

Lithuania was the first of the Baltic States to get a prominent state or national library building in 1963, which I visited in 1993. In 2004 they noticed cracks in the walls and realized that there was major structural damage, probably from the transportation tunnel underneath. They are in the process of moving their whole collections out of the building into the annex and other nearby buildings while they do reconstruction work. Luckily, most of the offices are already in the annex.

In Estonia, the Kreutzwald State Library was renamed the National Library of Estonia in 1988. They began building a new library building in 1985, which was completed in 1993. The Book Chamber was merged into and moved physically from a separate building to the National Library of Estonia (NLE) in August 1991. Most of the work of the Book Chamber was taken over by the NLE, but they did not create an Institute or a Centre like they have in Latvia and Lithuania. Most of the work is being done by the Collection Development and Documentation Department. As we

discuss the different responsibilities, we will see where the Estonians do things slightly differently. The following tasks were taken over by the NLE:

- Receives legal deposit copies
- Compiles annual statistical reports on the print output of Estonian books and periodicals for the Statistical Office of Estonia
- Maintains the current national bibliography for books and periodicals (Lists of music and maps are compiled by the Fine Arts Information Centre)
- Works on the retrospective national bibliography with other institutions
- Catalogs Estonian publications for the union catalog ESTER
- Indexes periodicals for the e-catalog ESTER and ISE Index Scriptorum Estoniae
- Assigns international standard numbers (ISSN, ISBN and ISMN)

Since there is no one name I can use for all three descendents of the book chambers, I will call them bibliographic departments and I would like to take a closer look at some of their functions.

Deposit copies

A certain number of copies for each publication from each publisher have always had to be deposited with the book chambers or national libraries. This now includes books, brochures, serials, sheet music, maps, posters, audio and video recordings and may include some electronic resources, each country has slightly different rules on what constitutes a deposit copy. The number of legal deposit copies has changed over the years and varies among the countries, but each has passed a deposit law. In Estonia, eight deposit copies are required from all publications issued in Estonia or published elsewhere by Estonian publishers, to be distributed to five institutions. In Latvia and Lithuania recent changes in the legal deposit laws have reduced the number of deposit copies to two, one for archival storage, and one for circulation at the national Libraries. The number of deposit copies was reduced as book publishing has gotten more expensive and press runs are smaller.

The publishing industry was so closely regulated in Soviet times, that there was no question about getting deposit copies from publishers, plus a couple copies always went to Moscow. After 1991, so many new publishers sprang up who did not know the rules and regulations about depository copies nor many other publishing standards, that they needed to be found and told that they need to send in copies of their publications. I heard that in the early 1990's librarians walked along streets and bought up publications from street vendors that were not coming to the library. Even today, they have to closely compare publisher reports with what they have received, to insure no publication is missed.

National bibliography

In Estonia the Collection Development and Documentation Department records all publications issues in Estonia and all publications in the Estonian language, issued abroad. They produce the following publications:

- *Estonian national bibliography. Books* – monthly, includes video and non-musical sound recordings
- *Estonian national bibliography. Periodicals* – annual list of newspapers, magazines and other serials, irrespective of format
- *Estonian national bibliography. Music* – lists sheet music and sound recordings
- *Estonian national bibliography. Books. Maps. Indexes* – annual
 - Estonica
 - Annual cumulative index of *Estonian national bibliography. Books* – includes print output statistics for books and brochures
 - Cartographic materials
- *Official Estonian Publications* – government documents
- Online there is the [ERB National Bibliography](#) (Eesti RahvusBibliograafia)

In Latvia the Institute of Bibliography creates a description of each deposit copy for the national bibliography. This includes a thorough description, which used to be published in printed catalogs, *Latvian (PSR) Press Chronicle*, but is now entered in the online **Monograph and Serials database**.

This data is then utilized by the National Library catalogers, who make modifications necessary for the catalog and enter the record into the **National Library of Latvia catalog**. These records are also used by the Library of Congress.

In Lithuania they have a similar process, except that the Centre of Bibliography and Book Science starts with a cataloging in publication record, then later creates bibliographic and authority records of monographs, serials, audio-visual documents, and electronic resources, and enters them into the **National Bibliographic Data Bank**. These records are used for the online catalog and the publication: *The Bibliographical News*, which has sections on books, serials and sound recordings. They have online lists of forthcoming books and latest publications from Lithuania.

Indexes

One of the things that fascinated me when I first visited the libraries in the Baltic States in the early 1990's was the huge rooms of wooden catalogs full of "analytics" and it took me a while to translate that into what I know as printed "indexes." Where we have numerous organizations and companies indexing in their respective fields, the libraries in the Baltic countries were indexing the whole of their periodical and even monographic literature. In Latvia, Augusts Ģinters began the daunting task of indexing all Latvian publications and published 24 volumes covering 1763-1936 in his lifetime (he died in 1944), though the years 1907-1920 remained in manuscript form on index cards. Under the Soviet system the Book Chambers published these indexes as part of their work. In Latvia it was part of the *Latvian PSR Press Chronicle* and is now online as the **Analytics Database**. In Lithuania the article index has become part of the **National Bibliographic Data Bank** that is maintained by the Centre of Bibliography and Book Science. In Estonia articles are entered in both **ESTER online catalog** and the **IDE Index Scriptorum Estoniae**. The later is a database of articles from the humanities and social sciences, compiled from newspapers, magazines and collections of articles published mainly in Estonia. The database includes only selected articles from Estonian print media.

Retrospective National Bibliography

Compiling comprehensive bibliographies of all materials published in the Baltic States and about them published outside the countries, is another large task. This work was done by the state libraries both during the independence years and under Moscow.

As far back as 1978 an agreement was reached by five of the major libraries in Estonia to publish the retrospective national bibliography. The libraries with their current names:

- Academic Library of Tallinn University
- National Library of Estonia
- Archive Library of the Estonian Literature Museum
- Tartu University Library
- Tallinn Technical University Library

The NLE is responsible for certain items in the retrospective national bibliography, mostly since 1918 or 1941.

In Latvia, some retrospective bibliography work has always been done by the Latvian Academic Library, but the bulk of continuing Ģinters' work with retrospective indexing is still being done by

the National Library. In the Soviet years they worked on the acceptable years of 1907-1915. I have a friend who has been working on the index to the late 1930's.

Lithuania is creating records for Lithuanian publications from 1547-1940, irrespective of the place of publication, as well as publications in other languages published in Lithuania, so they have compiled some interesting bibliographies, such as *18th cent. Polish Books Published in Lithuania*, and *Lithuanian Judaica, 1799-1940*. The bibliographic records are entered into the Hand Press Book database.

Statistics

One of the functions of Book Chambers was to gather statistics on the publications within the country. I was told the one difference between now and then was that they absolutely had to send the statistics to Moscow on a particular day of the month. The reports no longer go to Moscow and the due date is more flexible. This information was published in annual publications Eesti (NSV) trükitoodangu statistika, Latvijas (PSR) Prese, and Lietuvos (TSR) spaudos statistika.

It is interesting to take a look at the statistics and see the changes. 1990 saw a sudden increase in publishers. It is also the first time non-governmental agencies are listed as publishers of books and brochures. In Latvia, after many years of the six state approved publishing houses, the number jumped to 46 in 1990, to 140 in 1991, and 448 in 2000. This includes individual authors as publishers, and those that have only published one book. Though the number of books published increased, the print runs have decreased substantially from 28.5 million in 1991 to 7 million in 2000. There was a huge increase in books published in the Latvian language and translations from English. There was a big decrease in the books published in foreign languages, but that number seems to be rising again. The categories for reporting publications by subject and audience changed somewhat to reflect more western bibliographic divisions.

The statistics are reported to internal government offices as well as UNESCO.

ISSN, ISBN and ISMN Agencies

All three national libraries are the agencies that distribute ISSN, ISBN and ISMN numbers in their respective areas. The Lithuanian agency has registered about 2,000 publishers.

Electronic publications

In this new age of electronic publications, the libraries have been struggling with managing some bibliographic control of these. In Latvia the Institute of Bibliography has taken on a new function of "harvesting" electronic publications. I understood this to be a digital archive. In Lithuania the gather and preserve the Archive of Electronic Resources.

Databases

Since the regaining of the independence in the Baltic States coincided with the explosion of computerized bibliographic control, and with no centralized authority to make decisions, I know that at least Latvia struggled with choices for electronic library systems. They have made great progress since I first visited them in the early 1990's, but it was still difficult to get a handle on what they do and do not have in their databases. Each nation is compiling its current national bibliography online, though those are different from the actual online catalogs of the national libraries. Indexing of articles is sometimes included in these large databases and sometimes they are separate. All three countries have union catalogs with other major libraries in the country. Most, but not all the databases have an English language interface as an option. These are some of the databases I was able to identify:

National Bibliographies:

Estonia – ERB National Bibliography (Eesti RahvusBibliograafia)

Latvia - Monograph and Serials database & Analytics Database
Lithuania – National Bibliographic Databank

National Library Catalogs:

Estonia – ESTER online catalogue
Latvia – National Library of Latvia catalog (Aleph)
Lithuania – National Library Online Catalogue (as well as an online image catalog of the old card catalog)

Union Catalogs:

Estonia – ESTER e-catalog (one for Tallinn and one for Tartu)
Latvia – Union catalog of five institutions not including the Latvian Academic Library
Lithuania – LIBIS (Lithuanian Integrated Library Information System) Union Catalogue

Article Indexes:

Estonia – ESTER includes an article index
 ISE Index Scriptorum Estoniae - humanities and social sciences
Latvia – Analytics Database
Lithuania – Bibliographic database of articles from Lithuanian periodicals 1994-2002
 National Bibliographic Data Bank

Research and standards

All of these bibliographic departments deal with bibliographic control and standardization issues. In Latvia, and especially Lithuania, this department also does research on bibliographic questions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it looks like the tasks of book chambers in the Baltic States were begun in the state libraries predating the Soviet book chambers and have mostly returned to the current national libraries. They have all diligently worked on current and retrospective bibliographies for decades and I see the biggest challenge to be worldwide access to all this data online, though there has been immense progress in the past 15 years.