

Summary

Main editor *Anna Mauliņa* in her Editor's Column **"The number of libraries decreases, but their prestige, reputation and availability increases"** shares her observations about the impact of the economic recession on libraries in Latvia. Budgets were slashed, resulting in a reduction of 70,494 copies of books and periodicals for libraries and of Ls 118,041 for computers and other IT facilities. The State Culture Capital Foundation's grant for book purchases was decreased from Ls 130,000 in 2008 to Ls 3000 in 2010. Nevertheless, library attendance has not been negatively affected by either the consequences of diminished finances or the dramatic decrease of the population (due to emigration). Quite the opposite — attendance has increased. The most popular service in libraries has been free access to the internet. Unfortunately, this is very expensive for the state (Ls 165 per month for regional main libraries and Ls 70 per month for city and rural libraries), so there is little hope that the queues at library computers will get shorter. However, thanks to the recession, overall most people in Latvia and the majority of local authorities have more clearly realised the meaning of libraries and their contribution to society and the economy. Regrettably, the same can not be said for the government, which cut the budget of the National Library of Latvia by 60%.

"World of Libraries" no.50 is introduced under the heading of "Librarians in Latvia and the World" by **"Strong libraries are the basis of a strong society"**. *Jana Dreimane* summarises an interview with Barbara Ford (Director of the Mortenson Center at the University of Illinois) and Susan Schnuer (Associate Director), who visited Latvia 2-11 June 2010. The purpose of their visit was to familiarise themselves with Latvian libraries with a view to creating a professional training programme for their librarians (financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). They noted their impressions of what they had seen and shared information about the Mortenson Center and experience in US libraries: library advocacy, large-scale investment in library construction, research on the effectiveness of library contribution to the economy, library patronage, the US model of financing libraries and cultural activities.

The section "People, events, problems" starts with *Zandas Groziņa's* article **"Bibliotherapy: a medical and personality development method"**, which defines the concept and gives an insight into the history of its development. It characterises various directions and schools of bibliotherapy, describing some of them in detail. One of the newest developments is webotherapy or online-based bibliotherapy. Researching the use of this method in Latvia, the author found that the possibilities and effectiveness of bibliotherapy have been underrated. It has rarely been used and is little researched. There is trivial knowledge about the method and an oversimplified view about the method itself and its use in libraries. The article suggests further research directions in Latvia and stresses their necessity. Even though many problems are common to different times and countries, its specific features (differences in mentality, world viewpoint, etc.) do not allow the situation in Latvia to be based only on experience abroad.

In the article **"Nonconformist graphics in memory institutions of Latvia"** *Marta Dzijuma* provides information on the progress of the project "Full preservation and technical maintenance of nonconformist graphics collections from the Soviet period of Latvia", which has the support of financial instruments of the European Economic Area. The project is unique in that, under the management of the National Library of Latvia (NLL), it also involves the cooperation of other memory institutions, e.g., the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia 1940-1991, the Riga History and Navigation Museum, the Latvian National Museum of Art. More than 3000 nonconformist graphics (drawings, posters, estampes and bookmarks) will be preserved (restored, conserved and digitised). A database of these graphics will be created and it is planned that this will be available for viewing via the "Network of Light" in April 2011.

Under the heading "Computerization, digitization, internetization" the article **"Libraries hit the streets"** recaps a conversation between *Silva Suhanenkova* and *Signe Valtiņa*, NLL Public Relations Officer. Its main topic is the use of Web 2.0 in the library environment or Library 2.0. *S.Valtiņa* tells about the development of the new NLL website and blog, as well as sharing her experience of creating the NLL profile and retaining it in the social media: microblogging on Twitter and *Sekom.lv*; social networks Facebook and *Draugiem.lv*; image hosting sites Flickr.com and *Picasaweb.com*; online slide hosting service *Slideshare*; and video sharing website *YouTube*. The question is posed whether the NLL's activities in the social media justify the time, effort and resources that have been invested. *S.Valtiņa* emphasises that the time when a library stands like a castle on a hill and waits for readers to find their own way to

it has long passed. To change this perception, libraries should reach out to their clients by going 'out on the streets', so to speak. She is convinced that social networks will play an ever increasing role in libraries reaching the public.

The creation of the electronic book started a new era in publishing, but there is still no agreed view on what an e-book actually is. In **"E-books — the continuation or end of printed books?"**, *Aiga Grēniņa* explains why there is a problem with precisely defining this concept. She also immerses herself in the typology of e-books and the relatively short history of e-publishing and e-reading. There is an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of e-books. The author concludes that the e-book revolution has also touched libraries. Their ever wider availability will make libraries reconsider and change their collection development and maintenance practices.

The section on "Conferences, seminars, meetings", starts with an article by *Anna Mauliņa* called **"I want to live in Pārventa"**, which summarizes the proceedings of the spring meeting (Ventspils, 11–12.05.10) of the directors of the research, special and public libraries in Latvia. There was considerable discussion of the document on library development strategy for 2010–2015, which takes into account the effect of the economic recession on the library sector and its development. Among other discussion points was the problem of high maintenance costs for the public library information system (LIS) ALISE, which local authorities have not been able to cover due to the recession; therefore, its libraries plan to give it up. Implementation of the LIS is delayed in school libraries as well, blocking their inclusion in the state unified library system. However, notwithstanding all the problems revealed by participants, they agreed the economic crisis was not only a time of decline, but also a time of possibilities and challenges. This was confirmed by the presentation of the Linguistic Intelligence Technology Centre on their multilingual translation project "Language Shore", the professional development plans proposed for 2010–2015, as well as the use of Web 2.0 and social networks by libraries. Participants were also inspired by their venue, the modernised Pārventa, which confirmed Ventspils as a modern city of culture.

There is also an overview of the **"68th University of Latvia (UL) Research Conference, Library and Information Science Section (12.02.10) in Riga"** by *Māra Jēkabsons*. Every year this UL conference encourages young and experienced researchers alike to share the results of their research. This year there was a wide range of topics, from historical aspects of publishing and the book trade to innovative use of the electronic environment in libraries.

Under the heading "Children and young people in libraries", *Marlēna Krasovska* provides a review of the **"Conference on Children's Literature and Libraries: "Think about the future — but do it now!" (Riga, 21.05.10)."** Sandra Okuņeva (Lecturer, University of Liepāja Literature Dept.) analysed the contribution of local authors to literature for children and young people. Despite the variety in levels of VAT, the situation of new Latvian literature for this group has remained stable; in 2009 there was a rich, exciting and varied selection of reading materials. Trends in translations were described by Dr. Rudīte Rinkēviča (Assoc. Prof., University of Daugavpils), who noted a tendency by authors to pick subjects that were commercially viable in attracting buyers. On the other hand, publishers have also tried to issue classical works that have withstood the test of time. It is considered a positive sign that young readers now finally have the opportunity to appreciate translations of foreign authors (Estonian, Dutch, Belgian, Scottish, Spanish, etc.). Conference participants also tried to find an answer to the question: what is the electronic generation — the vanguard of a revolution or its casualty? — thus noting both positive and negative features of the cultural phenomenon of the new social media. There was also information about children's libraries in the Netherlands and the most successful activities on encouraging reading in children's libraries in Latvia.

The section "Abroad" invites readers to take a closer look at libraries in Egypt, the Netherlands and Catalonia. It starts with *Anna Mauliņa's* article **"Alexandrina — the ornament of Egypt"**, which describes impressions of the Library of Alexandria during a visit in March 2009. Reborn 2000 years after its destruction, this pearl of an ancient civilisation seems formed as a bridge between the past and the future. It is a multifunctional hybrid institution of the 21st century, which is focused not only on the past, but also on preservation of the quickly dwindling heritage of today's civilisation, thus securing its status as a world class digital library.

In October 2009, Marian Koren, Head of Research and International Cooperation of the Netherlands Public Library Association, visited Latvia, stimulating interest about public libraries in her country. Her lecture and interview at the University of Latvia are summarised by *Jana Dreimane* in **"An insight into the public library system of the Netherlands"**. The dynamic and continually developing libraries are the most frequently visited culture institutions in the Netherlands, which are used by about one quarter of the population. The article discusses the public library system, characterises its management model, gives information about the activities of the library non-government organisations, and countrywide efforts to encourage reading. Also outlined

are the new directions for 2009–2012, proposed in the Netherlands library development strategy document “Agenda for the future”, which was published in 2008.

Zane Ramiņa’s article “**Catalonia’s libraries: unity of content and architecture**” introduces the public libraries of Barcelona, which have undergone radical changes and rapid development in the last 20 years. The influence of the environment on library service quality was already emphasised in the “Plan for Barcelona’s libraries 1998–2010: proposal for the future”. Since then, considerable resources have been invested in library construction and renovation and particular attention has been paid to high quality library projects. It is planned that the number of Barcelona’s colourful libraries will reach 47 by 2020. Z.Ramiņa’s lively description invites readers to convince themselves of how Barcelona’s libraries reach their unity of content and architecture.

This section ends with *Jana Dreimane’s* “**Overview of overseas library events (January–March 2010)**” and includes information on: how the economic recession has affected US public libraries; the contradictory views on the UK’s Digital Economy Act 2010; the re-opening of the Johannes a Lasco Library in Emden (Lower Saxony, Germany), which was closed in 2008 due to insufficient funds; ownership struggles surrounding the literary heritage of the outstanding Jewish Czech writer Franz Kafka; why 75% of Tunisians don’t visit libraries and why lack of reading in general is widespread in northern Africa. There is also an interesting piece about *Histoire de ma vie* (The story of my life), the memoirs of Giacomo Casanova, the famous Italian lover and writer. About two and a half centuries after he was forced to leave Paris, the famous Venetian’s manuscript has been bought by the Bibliothèque nationale de France for six million pounds, the highest price ever paid for a memoir manuscript.

Under the heading “Past times and reflections”, *Lilija Limane* writes about “**Alexandra Marinina and Latvian readers**”, introducing the popular Russian author of detective bestsellers and commenting on her personality, lifestyle and literary activities, as well as revealing the opinions of Latvian readers on her works. Despite the majority of readers thinking that A.Marinina’s works do not have a particularly high literary standard, she is one of the most popular authors in Latvia. Unfortunately, the quality of the Latvian translations of her works is low, so many Latvians choose to read her books in the original Russian.

In the section “Miscellaneous”, “**An insight into publishing statistics for 2009 in Latvia**” provides excerpts from “Latvijas Prese” [The Latvian Press], a longstanding annual publication issued by the Na-

tional Library of Latvia. As previously, this number ends with *Marlēna Krasovska’s* “**A review of library events in Latvia (January–March 2010)**”.

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