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#### **Library and Information Science journal – new directions in Latvia from one millennium to the next**

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#### **Abstract**

This paper begins with a very brief look at how librarians' reading habits are described in the professional literature and discusses some of the reasons why it is important to keep and to develop journals in so-called minority languages. Librarians in Latvia have a tradition of professional literature in Latvian dating back to the 1930s, interrupted by World War II and the subsequent Soviet period, but restored in 1989 with the renewal of the Library Association of Latvia. The pre-war journal *Bibliotēkārs* gave its name to a new incarnation with the same title, followed by the more philosophical *Nota Bene*. That was in turn replaced by a publication called *Es Daru Tā [I Do It Like This]*, emphasised practical applications and

personal experience in public libraries. In 2002 its title was changed to *Bibliotēkas Pasaule* [*Library World*] and then again in 2003 to *Bibliotēku Pasaule* [*World of Libraries*]. Its scope was widened to include research articles and translations of articles from mainstream LIS academic and research journals. There was continuity, but also a subtle and appropriate change in direction to reflect the drive to automation and Internet based resources in Latvian libraries, while not denying the traditional values of printed materials. This paper presents an analysis of the contents and changes in *Bibliotēku Pasaule*, comparing it with sister publications in Estonia (*Raamatukogu* [*Library*]) and Lithuania (*Tarp knygu* [*In the World of Books*]). All of these, at different levels of depth and accuracy, have summaries in English. How the professional press of the Baltic States is reflected in LISA is also examined. Since LIS journals, like any other professional literature, are meant to be read, the paper concludes by briefly discussing the results of a recent survey on the professional reading habits of librarians, LIS students and LIS academics in Latvia.

## **Introduction**

There is very little in the professional literature about how librarians read or make use of LIS journals. Those articles that have reported on the use of LIS journals say that librarians do read them (e.g., Weaver, 2002; Haddow & Harvey, 2003), but question the use made of the research reported (Turner, 2002) and imply that the professional literature is not really satisfying the interests of librarians (Riggs, 1994). Others (Bell, 2000) imply that keeping up with developments is now more based on using e-resources than reading the traditional library literature, although some of these resources (Bell, 2004; *The Informed ...*, 2005) are an eclectic blend of the traditional sources presented in their e-version together with born-virtual electronic sources. All the recent research, such as there is, has been in English. But what about LIS journals and their readership in small European countries that have a language that only national expatriates understand outside the borders?

The sub-title of this paper could also be “different directions through one century to the next”, because the history of professional journals in Latvia has spanned two thirds of the 20th century and the current journal struggles to survive in the 21st century with each number that is produced. Unpredictable budgets and shortage of manpower have caused perennial problems, but the will and intention to survive are strong.

## **Why professional journals in minority languages?**

“Who needs LIS journals in Latvian?” one may well ask. “So few people read Latvian when compared to the so-called major European languages such as English or German.” For Latvian one could substitute Estonian, Lithuanian, Bulgarian, Czech, Slovak or even one of the Scandinavian languages – any language that is not widely known outside its own borders – and ask the same question. The answer is obvious to those who speak the language: it is an integral part of their identity and culture. Equally, the terminology of the LIS profession devised in the local language gives a unique identity to the profession and facilitates its research and development, as well as best practice. LIS journals in the local language provide the primary outlet for the dissemination of this investigation and application. To develop a professional vocabulary in one’s specialist field is to define and “own” that area. Responses to

an LIS reading survey carried out at the 8th Congress of the Library Association of Latvia (23 February 2005) and at the University of Latvia Department of Library Science and Information Science (28 February – 18 March 2005) overwhelmingly supported this and suggested that there should be even more professional literature available in Latvian. How this information can be made available to an international audience is a separate question that is discussed later.

### LIS journals in Latvia

Compared to LIS journals in Estonia and Lithuania, those in Latvia have had a more varied and precarious existence (Table 1). This does not imply that colleagues in our sister republics have had an easier time than those in Latvia, but one stable LIS journal in each country over a long period of time does them credit, as does the fact that both journals have a bi-lingual Internet presence (*Raamatukogu*, 2005; *Tarp knygu*, 2005).

**Table 1. Latvian LIS journals**

<b>Title of journal</b>	<b>Dates of publ.</b>	<b>Issue nos.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Issuing body</b>
<i>Bibliotēkārs</i> [Librarian]	March 1937 – March 1940		3 per year, except only 1 in 1940	Library Association of Latvia
<i>Bibliotēkārs</i> [Librarian]	May 1989 – June 1991	no. 1 – 4	irregular	Library Association of Latvia [no.4. also National Library of Latvia (NLL)]
<i>Nota Bene</i> [Note Well]	April 1992 – Sept. 1993	no. 1 – 3	irregular	NLL and Library Association of Latvia
<i>Es Daru Tā</i> [I do it like this]	1994 – 2000 + (1995 – 1999)	no. 1 – 13 (+ theme suppl. A–G)	semi-annual	Library Advisory Service of the NLL
<i>Bibliotēkas</i> <i>Pasaule</i> [Library World]	2000 – 2003	no. 14 – 24	3 issues per year	Library Advisory Service of the NLL, no.20– publ. by the Library Development Institute of the NLL
<i>Bibliotēku</i> <i>Pasaule</i> [World of Libraries]	2003 – present	no. 25 –	3 – 4 issues per year	Library Development Institute of the NLL

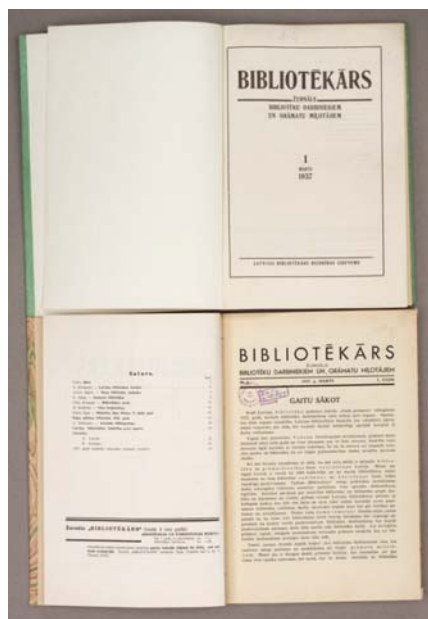


Fig. 1. *Bibliotēkārs* (no. 1, 1937)

The subtitle of the first LIS journal published in Latvia was *Bibliotēkārs : Žurnāls Bibliotēku Darbiniekiem un Grāmatu Mīļotājiem* [Librarian : Journal for Library Workers and Book Lovers] clearly shows its intended audience (Fig.1). Book lovers was meant in the broadest sense – readers, publishers and booksellers, and the introduction of the first issue reinforced this by saying:

As the title of the journal shows, it has the aim of facilitating libraries, and publishing and the book trade. We already [in 1937] have more than 1000 libraries and no fewer librarians; nevertheless, many of them lack the necessary experience in library management and organization. [...] We wish to create closer ties between librarians in the cities of Latvia and their colleagues in rural areas [...] giving them the opportunity for exchange of ideas in the pages of this journal. [...] To make acquisitions easier and to save librarians some steps, we will provide a recommended list of newly published books. However, this new journal doesn't want to serve just library workers, but it will also try to provide advice for book lovers in general. Showing what is new in libraries, we will have pointed the way for researchers and helped them get to the books [they need]. (Gaitu... 1937, p.1 [author's trans.])

The subjects covered by *Bibliotēkārs* from 1937 until March 1940, when the last number was published, emphasized practical and informative matters, because at that time there was no LIS education. As the journal was the organ of the Library Association of Latvia LAL), there was regular news of LAL activities, lobbying

for library legislation, as well as articles on distinguished librarians and other cultural workers. Library history and information about the current situation of all types and sizes of library abound, together with items on overseas libraries. At the time the LAL was a member of IFLA and there was great interest in library developments abroad, particularly in Estonia, Lithuania and the Scandinavian countries. Each issue did indeed end with a list of books recommended for acquisition, as promised in the introduction to the first issue. We think that cooperation between archives, museums and libraries is a digital age initiative, but in *Bibliotēkārs* no. 4 (Dec. 1939, pp.55-58) there is a report of the 1st Meeting of Librarians and Archivists of Latvia. They were well ahead of us!

From March 1940 until May 1989 there was a hiatus in Latvian LIS journal publication. Ene Riet (2002, pp.185-192), editor of the Estonian journal *Raamatukogu*, reports a similar situation in Estonia. When the Library Association of Latvia (LAL) was renewed in May 1989, it published a broadsheet, and so the pre-war journal *Bibliotēkārs* (Fig.2) gave its name to a new incarnation.



Fig. 2. *Bibliotēkārs* (no. 1-4, May 1989 – June 1991)

This had a rather strange, but interesting, combination of items on library history, LIS philosophy, thought-provoking articles to generate discussion and exchange of ideas, and LAL news. It is a difficult publication to describe or characterise.



Fig. 3. *Nota Bene* (no. 1-3, April 1992 – Sept. 1993)

Four issues of *Bibliotekārs* were followed by the more philosophical *Nota Bene* (NB). This journal proposed to continue the tradition of its predecessor, publishing articles related to problems and practice in Latvian libraries, libraries abroad and Latvian library cooperation with them, information about LIS conferences and events, in Latvia and overseas alike. *NB* also renewed the tradition of publishing bibliographical information and all three issues have an annotated list of articles from international LIS journals, with the annotations in Latvian. There are also some articles from overseas librarians, translated into Latvian. One should remember that in the early 1990s, very few librarians knew English, but the interest in librarianship beyond Latvia's borders was intense. Issue no.3 was first in thinking of possible international interest and provided a list of contents in English.



Fig. 4. *Es Daru Tā* (no.1-13, 1994 – 2000)

Changes in personnel at the National Library of Latvia as well as the problems and uncertainties that the early years of independence brought put an end to *Nota Bene*. Just as it had replaced *Bibliotekārs*, it in turn was superseded in 1994 by a publication called *Es Daru Tā* [*EDT – I Do It Like This*] (issued by the Library Advisory Service of the National Library of Latvia) (Fig.4). The aim of *EDT* was methodological and it emphasised the results of practical applications and personal experience in public libraries. Each issue also included a list of new acquisitions in the Z Reading Room (LIS section) of the National Library of Latvia. *EDT* was very popular, though not very exciting in appearance; some librarians also complained that the title was rather unsophisticated and sounded cumbersome when translated into English. Nevertheless, *EDT* admirably filled a niche and even published a series of seven (A – G) themed supplements: local studies librarianship (competition and methods for public libraries), information services, history of Latvian bibliography, data processing and the MARC format, library automation, library collections and catalogues.



Fig. 5. *Bibliotēkas Pasaule* (no.14-24, 2000-03); *Bibliotēku Pasaule* (no.25- , 2003- );

In 2002 *EDT* changed title to *Bibliotēkas Pasaule* [*Library World*] (Fig.5) and widened its scope to include research articles and translations of articles from mainstream LIS academic and research journals. There was continuity, but also a subtle and appropriate change in direction to reflect the drive to automation and Internet based resources in Latvian libraries, while not denying the traditional values of printed materials. Further widening of scope resulted in another title change, rather subtle to those not familiar with Latvian grammar – it became *Bibliotēku Pasaule* [*The World of Libraries*] (Fig.5). The intention was not to concentrate so much on public libraries, but to make the journal more generalist in scope. Short summaries in English were added. According to the editor (Jana Dreimane), the order of priority for inclusion of articles is: research articles, material that would be useful for LIS students (at the University of Latvia and the Latvian Cultural College), publishing and the

book trade, other submissions that seem interesting. Issues have been themed around a literary anniversary or a library “problem” (e.g., guidelines and approaches to weeding communist propaganda from collections; library management). The journal very much encourages articles relating to best practice and problem solving, but there is a perennial problem of finding librarians who can and will write such articles. *Bibliotēku Pasaule* is visually attractive, though not as glossy as its Estonian and Lithuanian counterparts – *Ramatukogu* and *Tarp knygu* (Fig.6).

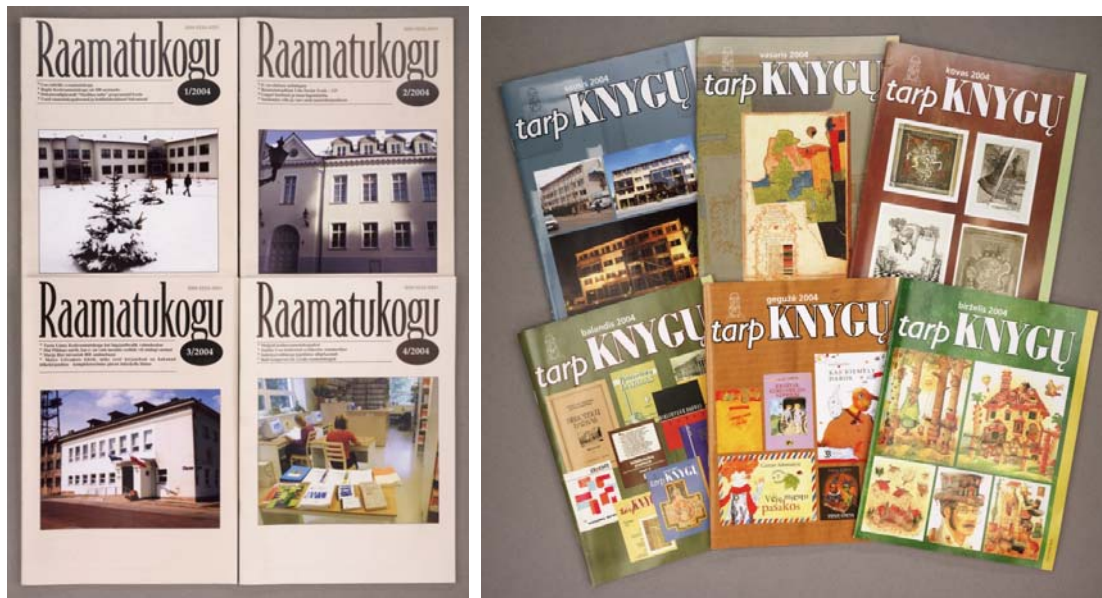


Fig. 6. *Ramatukogu* (2004) & *Tarp knygu* (2004)

Since 2002, *Bibliotēku Pasaule* (similar to *Ramatukogu* and *Tarp knygu*) has been divided into headed sections, though not as strictly carried through for each issue. Examples from 2003–2004: People, events, problems; Automation, digitization, internetisation; Conferences, seminars, meetings; Children and young people in libraries; Abroad; The old and the new in publishing and the book trade; Information; Summary.

There are hopes for a more glossy production, but this must be weighed against concern about increased costs. *Ramatukogu* and *Tarp knygu* have e-versions (Fig.7), with summaries in both Estonian or Lithuanian and English). An internet Latvian library portal has been on the cards for some time and when it becomes reality, *Bibliotēkas Pasaule* will have an e-presence there, making it far more accessible than it is at the moment to an international audience. It is also hoped that *Bibliotēkas Pasaule* might become a peer-refereed (or at least partly refereed) journal. This would encourage more research to be written up and published.



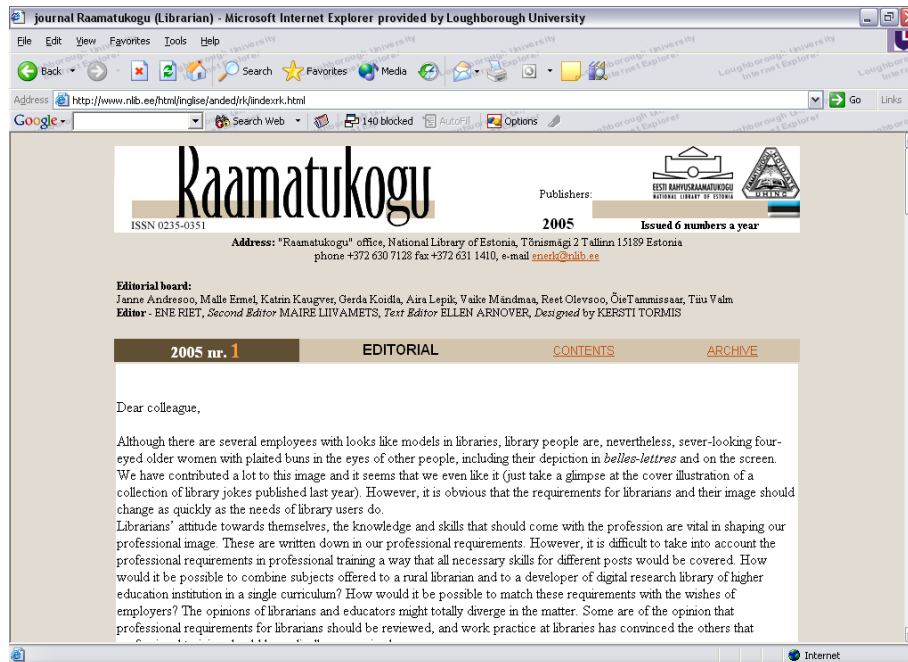
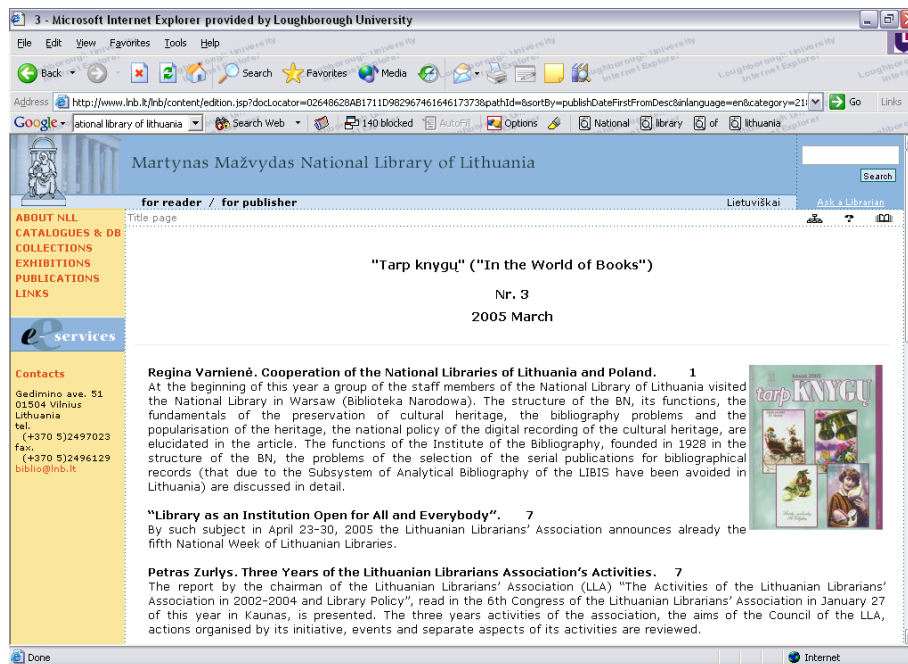


Fig. 7. E-versions of *Raamatukogu* & *Tarp knygu*



## Internal LIS newsletters

The primary function of professional literature is communication, and LIS journals are not the only ones to perform that function. Parallel to the journals runs publication of newsletters and magazines of particular libraries or library

networks. These are normally internal publications, but many of them are also available to interested parties outside the library concerned. If examples of best practice and problem solving are needed, then in Latvia an excellent example of an easily available publication of this kind is the Riga Central Library network's news bulletin *Jaunās Vēstis* (2005) (Fig.8). A number of libraries in Latvia produce regular newsletters or bulletins, but those could be the subject of a separate paper.

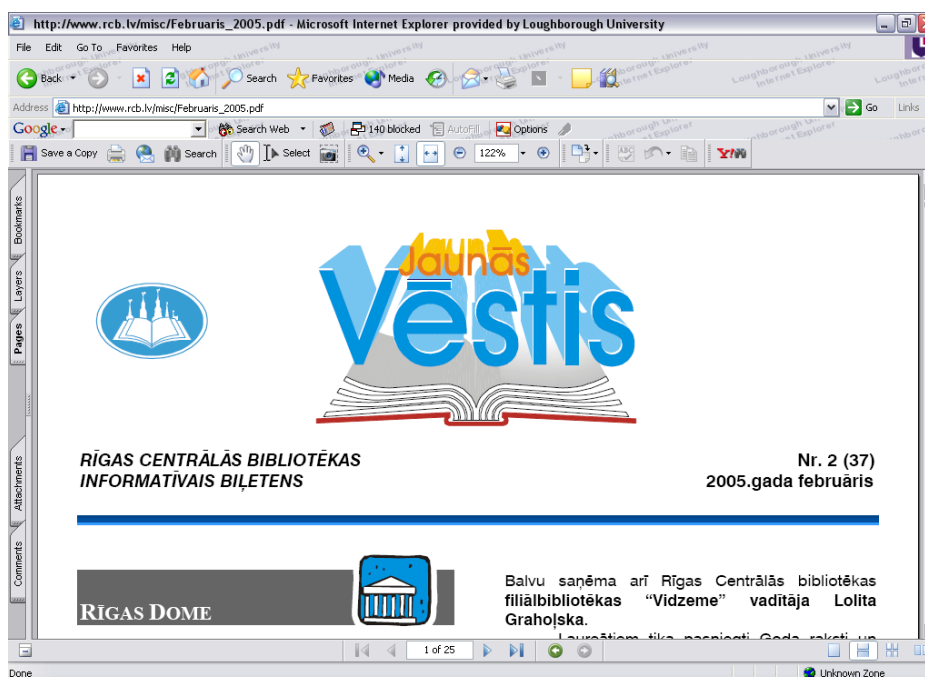


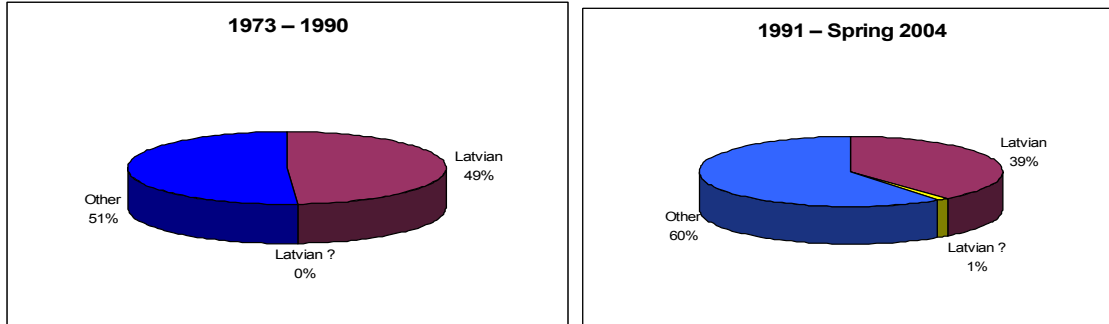
Fig. 8. Riga Central Library e-newsletter

## Baltic librarianship viewed through *LISA*

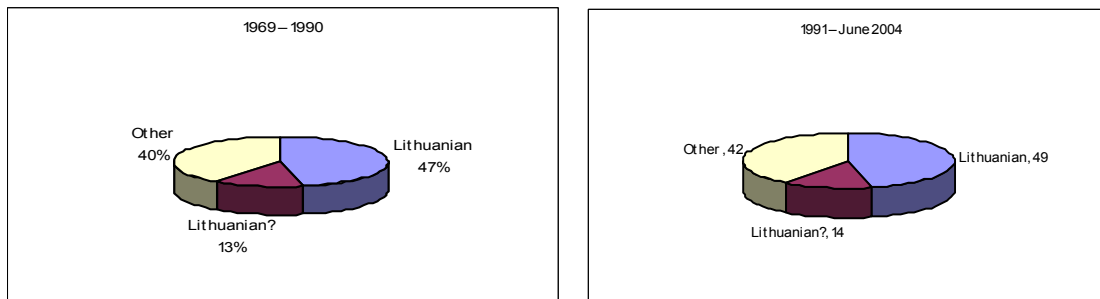
As one of the questions mentioned in the Section's call for papers was the extent to which non-English language journals are covered in the international indexing and abstracting databases, curiosity led to a quick search of *LISA* (Library and Information Science Abstracts) to see how Baltic librarianship would become evident in the most familiar LIS abstracting and indexing database. There are records, but they do not reflect either Baltic LIS journals or the three Baltic languages. None of the journal titles under discussion results in a search hit and none of the records reveals an article written in one of the Baltic languages. On 11 March 2005, a *LISA* keyword search on Latvia\*, Lithuania\* and Estonia\* as separate terms found a total of 447 records that ranged in date of publication from as early as 1969 to June 2004 (Lithuania – 147 hits, 33%), from 1971 to April 2004 (Estonia – 173 hits, 39%), and from 1973 to Spring 2004 (Latvia –

127 hits, 28%). These totals include a small number of duplicate records, in which the Baltic States were discussed as a group. Who wrote these articles? One can see (Fig. 9a-c) that, for whatever reason, the Estonians and Lithuanians have been far more active in contributing to the professional literature at international level than the Latvians.

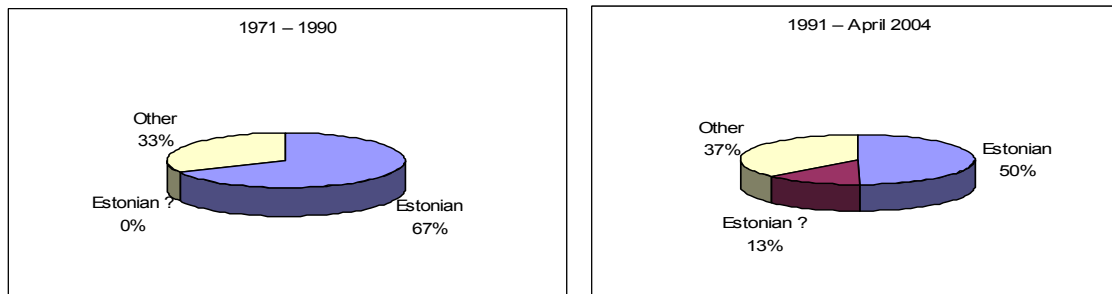
**Figure 9a. LISA records on Latvia (by author)**



**Figure 9b. LISA records on Lithuania (by author)**

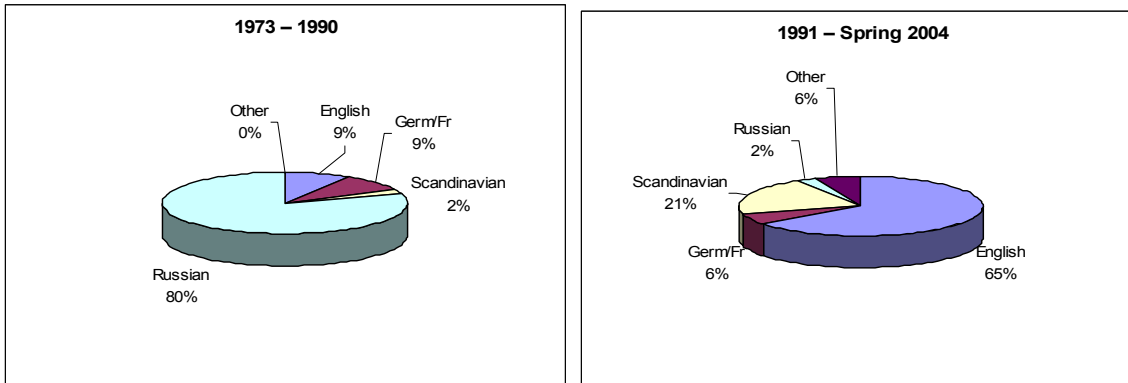


**Figure 9c. LISA records on Estonia (by author)**

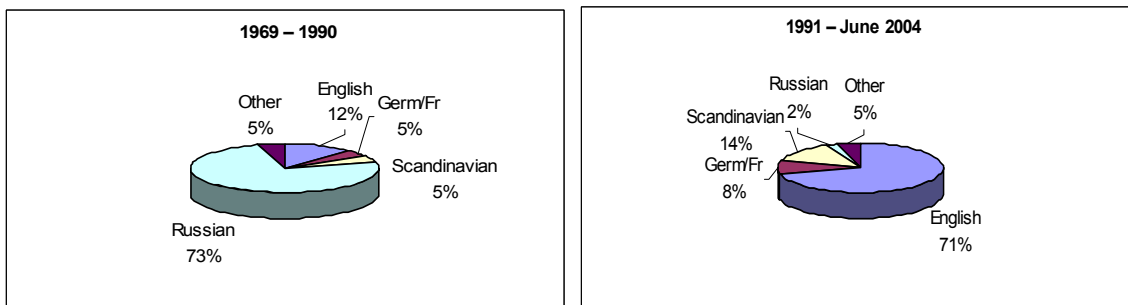


What was the origin/language of the journals in which the articles were published? In answering this question, one can notice a pattern (Fig. 10a-c) that represents the historical reality of the Baltic States, i.e., reversal of Russian to English.

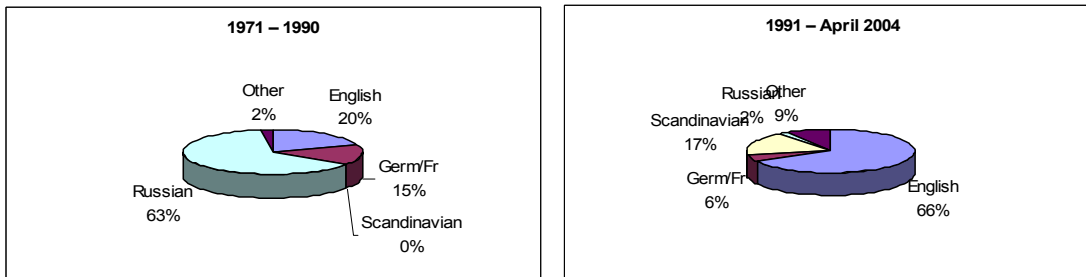
**Figure 10a. LISA records on Latvia (by origin/language of journal)**



**Figure 10b. LISA records on Lithuania (by origin/language of journal)**



**Figure 10c. LISA records on Estonia (by origin/language of journal)**



Further investigation is needed to discover why abstracts of articles in *Raamatukogu*, *Tarp knygu*, and *Bibliotēku Pasaule* are not found in LISA, because all three journals have a section called “Summary”, which includes brief abstracts in English of the main articles in each issue.

### The language of LIS journals

During the 8th Congress of the Library Association of Latvia (23 February 2005) and subsequently at the University of Latvia Department of Library Science and Information Science (28 February – 18 March 2005) a survey was administered to find out if librarians and librarians-to-be read the professional literature, what they thought of *Bibliotēku Pasaule*, how they suggest it might be improved, what would they like to see more of, what languages they could read and to what level of fluency. It was no surprise that almost all respondents considered themselves “very good” in Latvian (Appendix, Table 2), but it had been expected that more would be better at English and Russian (Appendix, Table 3 & 4). It is, therefore, no

wonder that the respondents overwhelmingly supported the idea that *Bibliotēku Pasaule* should be published more frequently, there should be more LIS journals (and especially LIS educational materials) in Latvian. Hundred of suggestions were made for improving *Bibliotēku Pasaule*, subjects that should be included, subjects that readers wanted more on. Another frequent suggestion was the *Bibliotēku Pasaule* should be available as an e-journal. All the suggestions and criticisms have been passed on to the editor of the journal, who has the unenviable task of trying to match possibilities with desires and expectations.

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## Appendix (Tables of research results to corroborate statistical data in text)

**Table 2. Latvian language ability of librarians, students & academic staff**

Survey respondents \ Ability level	Very good		Good		Medium		Poor	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Librarians (194)	183	94	11	6	-	-	-	-
Students (136)	136	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
Academic staff (9)	9	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total (339)</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

**Table 3. English language ability of librarians, students & academic staff**

Survey respondents \ Ability level	Very good		Good		Medium		Poor	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Librarians (194)	8	4	35	18	60	31	40	21

Students (136)	7	5	53	39	58	43	12	9
Academic staff (9)	1	11	8	89	-	-	-	-
<b>Total (339)</b>	16	5	96	28	118	35	52	15

**Table 4. Russian language ability of librarians, students & academic staff**

Survey respondents \ Ability level	Very good		Good		Medium		Poor	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Librarians (194)	38	28	94	48	18	9	1	0.5
Students (136)	35	26	63	46	21	15	10	7
Academic staff (9)	8	89	1	11	-	-	-	-
<b>Total (339)</b>	81	24	158	47	39	12	11	3

**Table 5. German language ability of librarians, students & academic staff**

Survey respondents \ Ability level	Very good		Good		Medium		Poor	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Librarians (194)	2	1	18	9	40	20	28	14
Students (136)	3	12	10	7	30	22	26	19
Academic staff (9)	-	-	1	4	2	22	-	-
<b>Total (339)</b>	5	2	29	9	72	21	54	16