

	<p style="text-align: right;">Date : 01/06/2007</p> <p><b>Changes of Riga Central Library after Regaining Independence of Latvia (1991 – 2007)</b></p> <p><b>Doloresa Veilande</b> Riga Central Library Riga, Latvia</p>
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## Introduction

Latvia (64 586 km<sup>2</sup>) is country in Central Europe with 2.2 million inhabitants. Of the three Baltic States – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – Latvia is the middle one, it's capital Riga is the regions central and largest city.

Latvia is located along the east coast of the Baltic Sea. Our nearest neighbours are the two Baltic States, the Scandinavian countries, as well as Russia and Belarus. The nation state of Latvia exists since 1918, but the Soviet army occupied the country in 1940. Full independence was obtained on 21 August 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Since 2004 Latvia is the member state of the European Union.

## Short history of Riga Central Library

Riga Central Library was founded in 1906 and is one of the oldest public libraries of Latvia.

Until the soviet occupation RCL made the same way of development as many European public libraries. In 1940 we were forced to change our way from

free public library to “mass library” what served very much for ideological purposes.

In 1991 when Latvia Republic regained independence, it caused changes in the state legislation, property and economics. Huge changes happened in the culture and particularly in libraries.

First of all financing of libraries, network, management, premises, also professional questions – acquisition, weeding and number of copies in the stock, services for users, salaries and one of the most hard questions – to change thinking of professional librarians.

Today Riga Central Library is a centre of information, education, social communication and regional studies for inhabitants and guests of Riga. Central Library is administrative, financial, consultancy centre for 44 branch libraries.

### **Strategy of Riga Central Library**

Work of Riga Central library is based on the Library Act, Regulations of the Council of Ministers of Latvia, Statutes of Riga Central library as well as long-term and short-term strategic plans. At present we are working according to „Strategic Plan of Riga Central library 2005 - 2009” that foresees priorities for each year. Monthly plans and reports are also being prepared.

Riga Central library has been accredited in 2005 which means that accreditation commission of Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia has admitted that it meets the requirements of the Law on Libraries.

### **Library Network**

In 1991 Riga Central library had 48 branches but in 2007 – 44. There are 2 optimization plans of network:

- „Development of public libraries of Riga (2000-2020)”;
- „Concept of optimization of the network of Riga Central library and its branches 2007 - 2010”. It foresees 38 public libraries in Riga in future.

Modern lending point of RCL at the Children's Hospital was opened in 2007. Municipality is dealing with the urgent repairs of premises. In 2007 reconstruction of branch situated in a monument of wooden architecture is going to be finished.

## **Management**

During the 16 years of independence of our country administration of Riga Central library has worked hard to create a modern system of management.

Firstly, it means the right person in the right place.

Every month heads of Riga Central library branches come together for an informative meeting with administration. Once a year there is a week dedicated for meetings with all staff members. Inquiry among employees is carried out regularly. Informative bulletin "The News" is published monthly since 2001.

Priority – further education of employees. Plan of further education activities from September till May for employees of Riga Central library is being regularly worked out since 1994. Skills of our employees are checked regularly. Competition is one of the ways; its feedback is improvement of skills and strengthening of knowledge.

Riga Central library employees are receiving health insurance since 2005. Policy of salary is still being developed depending on skills and contribution to the system of each employee.

All employees gather twice a year to celebrate Christmas and Ligo (Midsummer night on June 23).

New form of management has been implemented in 2007. It foresees 1 head for several small branch libraries.

Rotation of employees was started in 2006. It means that employees of some branches come to work at the main library or any other branch (to learn automated lending). 53 employees took part in rotation in 2006.

## **Automation**

Automation process was started in 1997.

In 2005 main library started automated lending. Intensive computer classes for users were organized (program “50 +”).

In 2007 four libraries have automated lending.

In 2008 it is planned to have automated lending in all branches.

## **Collection policy**

Collection of Riga Central library is formed according to „Basic Principles of Riga Central Library Collection Development and Acquisition”. Attention is paid mainly to the quality of stock, not quantity. For comparison – there were 37 553 378 items in 1991 but at the beginning of 2007 – 10 559 79. Inter Library loan is very important. There are also regular inquiries of readers. Electronical local data base for acquisition is created as an instrument to be able to do acquisition of documents more effective.

## **Publishing, databases**

“Yearbook of Riga Central library” is being published since 2005.

“Centennial book of Riga Central library” was published in 2006.

Bibliographical index „Riga in Latvian Fiction” (also in electronic form) was published in 2007.

## **International Cooperation**

From the beginning of the 90-ies, Riga Central Library has created many foreign contacts. The main aspects of cooperation: further education, exchange of information and staff results of what are seen in the development of the library. We are grateful to the partners from Finland (Helsinki City library), Netherlands (Overijsselse Library Service), Sweden (Stockholm Public Library) and other colleagues.

Riga Central Library has also organized international conferences for library employees. The most important were:

- \* In 2000 Modernization and Reconstruction of Public Libraries;
- \* In 2001 Public Libraries in Post Soviet Countries;
- \* In 2005 Conference for IFLA section of Metropolitan Libraries.

Since 2005 Riga Central Library is a member of IFLA.

We have experience in international projects.

### **Projects**

To attract additional financing projects are worked out regularly.

Participation of Riga Central library in long - term and concrete international co-operation projects is the factor that stimulates development greatly.

Since 2003 we are regularly working at projects (as part of Leonardo da Vinci program) what give possibility to our employees to have educational training in different countries of EU. In 2006 we received support for our project „Library Services for Different Groups of People” which allowed 4 of our employees to have a study trip to Vienna public libraries.

I would like to stress the importance of the project „Cooperation on Library Management and Capacity Building of Librarians” among public libraries in Latvia and Flanders (2002 – 2005).

### **Serving different groups of people**

Library is working actively with all groups of people.

Library stresses on attractive activities that promote library, literature, reading: exhibitions (including professional art, for instance painting, tapestries, etc.), thematic events, meetings with interesting and popular people, book presentations, concerts – the most popular group in Latvia “Cosmos” took part at the opening of homepage of well known poet Maris Chaklais. Readings a loud, were playwrights of Latvia read their plays in Riga Central Library.

Already since 1996 Riga Central Library organizes annual Library week.

In 2004 during the Library week event “Meeting the unknown” (Blind date) was organized for the first time.

We focused our attention on work with people with special needs in 2006 improving availability of books and library services for them. Magnifying glasses have been purchased by all branches of RCL to help people with sight disorders.

In 2006 new service for people with special needs was introduced – special „Apple Shelves” that contain printed materials to improve quality of their life as the area is well indicated and all helpful materials are easily found in one place .

### **WOW LIBRARY**

As soon as a library has met all modern requirements concerning its work, has followed staff policy – right person in the right place, it results in reading promotion activities which can never be found in any job description.

Department for Children and Young Adults of Riga Central library is actively working at the image and design of the library, is organizing different events and carrying out attractive projects.

Creative photography project of librarians made by them has become traditional.

In 2005 in the frame of the project “Choose the right profession” the information exhibit about professions was supplemented by photo of librarians in the image in one or another profession, for instance, rock musician, worker at the poultry farm, art reviewer, electrician etc., what promote the profession of librarian too.

In 2006 it was called „Ancient Greek Myths”. Librarians dressed up as ancient Gods – Beautiful Europe, Hermes with a warder etc. Very popular was the great theatre performance „Afflated Fantasy” organized in co-operation with company „Sers”.

Still in the memory of readers is fashion show for the graduates of secondary schools – how to dress when finishing school.

And that is WOW library!