



IFLA
2005
OSLO

World Library and Information Congress: 71th IFLA General Conference and Council

"Libraries - A voyage of discovery"

August 14th - 18th 2005, Oslo, Norway

Conference Programme: <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla71/Programme.htm>

June 6, 2005

Code Number:

040-E

Meeting:

147 Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning

New models of continuing professional development in libraries for transitional-economy countries: on Russia's example

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Thematic group, **Place and Context: Continuing Professional Development Practice in the Various Countries and Contexts**

Abstract

This paper offers a reform experience of continuing professional development in Russian libraries as the country is shifting to the market economy and establishing information society.

The paper aims to sum up for the world public achievements of an all-round reform of Russian librarians' workplace learning and continuing professional development—the main goal of Russian education policies for the library personnel.

*Continuing professional development of librarians is:
an instrument of regular updating knowledge of the Russian library personnel;
an effective way to compensate librarians' professional habits;
a condition for their rapid adaptation to the new professional situation;*

*an indispensable condition for a national library reform to adopt and implement trailblazing ideas, concepts and techniques; and
a way to develop professional library communications.*

The organisation structure of continuing professional development in Russian libraries has three levels—federal, regional and municipal, each with specific functions.

The most ambitious and innovative educational projects are implemented at the federal level to promote implementing fundamental aspects of government library policies, and establish a new educational mechanism to allow, through short-term training, the greatest possible increase of professional knowledge. Such training concerns leading experts in this field, who are coping with principal tasks to reform the Russian library network and technologically update it. Related projects rest on a unified conceptual and study-method basis. They aim to enhance librarians' socialisation, and promote their efficiency in a rapidly changing technological and social environment.

*The central principles of enhancing Russian librarians' proficiency come as follows:
priority of innovative knowledge vs. normative in a rapidly evolving field;
module arrangement of curricula to guarantee their urgent modification depending on learners' educational background and particular educational targets;
social openness of the educational system to envisage its interaction with the various social structures—e.g., the humanitarian education sphere, mass media, or book publishing and trade;
individualised instruction, with due consideration for learners' professional characteristics;
democratic contacts between all involved in the educational process, and their creative cooperation.*

Thus, taking shape in Russia are new methods and content of librarians' continuing professional development. They have spectacularly changed the previously available teaching practice, and come as basis for strategic guidelines of training a thoroughly new library personnel.

Russian library modernisation started in the 1990s, a decade that also brought a new socio-cultural paradigm of library development. Updating efforts and the paradigm underlying them are principal library innovation stimuli. Innovation concerns every aspect of librarianship and library work as information, cultural and educational centres.

An all-round and versatile reform of the Russian library network, and its organisational and technological updating were launched under the impact of the following principal factors:

- new political and socio-economic government development strategies;
- regionalisation of Russia's social and economic life, emergent institutionalisation of local self-government, and municipalisation of social and cultural projects;
- global emergence of information society;
- the formation of an information product and service market, and the book-publishing market as its largest segment;

- educational system reorganisation.

Of no smaller importance are domestic factors that determine the specifics of Russian library network development:

- the formation of legislative basis of librarianship and of the regional legal situation in which libraries are functioning;
- implementation in all library processes of cutting-edge information technologies which allow to establish local and corporate library information nets to provide Russian-based libraries an access to the global information environment;
- a change of the library information resource structure through enlarging those resources with electronic information carriers;
- dynamic structural progress of public information demands, and increase of technical facilities to meet those demands in libraries;
- implementing library management and marketing methods, project activities included;
- development of independent economic activities by libraries;
- consolidating the library community, and developing pioneer forms of professional communication.

Dynamic Russian library progress comes as basis of forming new professional demands, which the latter-day librarian ought to meet. Today's librarian is not only to be well versed in literary and research printed matter and readers' information demands. He comes as an expert on the latest digital technologies, Internet resource navigator, carrier of information culture, custodian of public humanist traditions and universal scientific knowledge, and, last but not least, manager and market researcher in the library information field. With all that, it has become necessary to urgently extend and thoroughly upgrade the librarian's professional knowledge and work habits.

Continuing professional development is indispensable to adapt librarians to coping with their new professional tasks. Today, this development is **principal part of personnel training policies**. It carries the greatest burden of **regularly updating the library personnel's knowledge, and compensating for professional habits and knowhow librarians lack**—that in connection with dynamic library modernisation. Continuing professional development is, just as well, **a fruitful and encouraging communication milieu, and efficient tool of the Russian library reform**. It is a testing ground for pioneer ideas, concepts and technologies; a sphere which often accumulates library innovation experience to make it part and parcel of professional practice through education.

All those **target bearings** of continuing professional development, and its pronounced **compensatory function** determine the goals, content, basic methodological principles, didactic techniques, organisation structure and forms of education.

The present-day **organisation structure** of continuing professional development in Russian libraries has the following parts:

1. A federal government educational establishment—the Academy of Postgraduate Education in the Arts, Culture and Tourism, or APRIKT; Chair of Library and Information Science;

2. Educational branches of federal libraries—study centres of the Russian Government Library, the Russian National Library, the All-Russia State Library for Foreign-Language Literature, and others;
3. Interregional continuing development centres—the Siberian Regional Library Centre for Continuing Professional Development under the State Public Research and Technical Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences Siberian branch, and the Centre for Continuing Professional Librarian Development of the Far Eastern State Research Library, Khabarovsk;
4. Study and teaching methods centres, postgraduate training courses, and continuing professional development centres under regional culture boards;
5. Central libraries of Russian regions—national, territorial and regional comprehensive research, children's and youth libraries;
6. One university libraries;
7. Innovation educational establishments of varying subordination—the Regional Innovation Centre under the Omsk Region's Central Board for Culture and the Arts, the Republican Medical Library Information Centre under the Health Ministry, Republic of Tatarstan, and others;
8. Municipal library networks—city and district.

A unique place in the educational infrastructure belongs to international organisations and foundations that offer finance and intellectual support to educational programmes and projects. Notable among them was the Open Society Institute, or Soros Foundation. Reform management training centres emerged on its initiative in dozens of central regional libraries. The International Library Information Analytical Centre is famous for its international professional educational tours.

The Russian Library Association librarianship, library personnel and lifelong learning section is of great help to continuing professional librarian development. A **Concept of Continuing Professional Librarian Development in the Russian Federation** was elaborated under its aegis. The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation devoted a special Board session to it, in March 2003, which approved the concept. Programme, The Young in Librarianship, has been successfully implemented in Russia for several years now under Library Charitable Foundation patronage to promote young librarians' progress.

The Ministry of Culture and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation has been paying major attention for several years now to librarians' continuing professional development, with **target financing** of the largest and most important educational projects. Many educational programmes on topical aspects of library modernisation are part of the federal target programme, Russian Culture, 2001-05, and appear on annual composite plans for Russia's basic professional library projects. These are LIBNET Programme; the National Programme for Library Fund Preservation; Innovation Library Technologies; Public Legal Information Centre Establishment on the Library Basis; and Formation of a Rural Model Computer Library Network, to name but few.

Librarians' continuing professional development in Russia has, for the most part, the following practical forms:

Postgraduate training—problem- or function-oriented training to update theoretical and practical knowledge according to the latest demands to professional qualifications

and new professional tasks to cope with (short- and medium-term seminars and seminar schools, creative laboratories and workshops, master classes, training and practical sessions, etc.), 15 to 120 academic hours;

Professional retraining—long-term profession-oriented education in class and by correspondence for persons employed in libraries with no special education. Tuition follows 500 to 1,500 academic hour curricula, licensed by and accredited to the Ministry of Research and Education of the Russian Federation. Graduates are entitled to government certificates entitling them to engage in new professional activities within the federal-approved nomenclature of library specialities. At present, Russia is implementing the following professional retraining programmes: Librarian/Bibliographer, Library Manager, Library Fund Manager-Custodian, and Bibliographer/Analyst;

Workplace training—practical consolidation of information and knowhow acquired in theoretical learning, and acquisition of innovation library experience;

Urgent information actualising through informal educational channels—conferences, seminars, idea fairs, roundtables, business games, focus groups, competitions, overseas educational and professional tours, etc.

CPD has crucial and versatile functions in the Russian library reform. Proceeding from that, a practice of **government contracts** was introduced a few years ago, and is actively implemented to retrain and upgrade personnel on key aspects of library modernisation.

The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation made its first steps to that goal four years ago on the federal target programme, Russian Culture, 2001-05. As the result, **major projects** were implemented on a federal scale. They had for basic goal the **establishment of a new educational mechanism** that would allow short-term learning to update and extend as much as possible leading specialists' professional knowledge.

These projects differ in principle from traditional function-oriented postgraduate training. The **main difference** lies in tuition aiming to **promote implementation of government library policy guidelines**. These aspects come as basic tuition modules. The APRIKT, a federal government culture and art CDP centre with 35 years of work in the related educational infrastructure, is principal organiser and author of educational programmes.

Educational programmes drafted on government contract have a **principally new content**. The greatest attention in determining educational aspects belongs to innovative library technologies, and interbranch projects and programmes that help the learner to develop new professional mentality oriented on net work arrangements and information feedback. Thus, all proposed educational programmes proceed from a **unified conceptual study method basis**. As a rule, twenty or more programmes are implemented a year.

The following educational programmes of an all-Russia scope are presently in the greatest demand:

A regional library management system during library modernisation efforts (for library-supervising functionaries of regional culture boards);

National libraries of republics within the Russian Federation: development strategies, information potential, and new technologies (for national library medium-rank personnel);

Comprehensive research library management in the new social and economic situation (for beginner directors);

Children and youth library director's school;

Municipal library director's school;

A cycle of educational seminars for central regional library medium-rank personnel: library management and innovation technologies;

All-Russia Library Innovation School. It aims to analyse library innovations, generalise on them, appraise them from the point of end result, and promote their implementation;

Innovation process management in a public library—a permanent all-Russia seminar for municipal library medium-rank personnel and directors;

Innovation library technologies in research and public libraries—a seminar on the Siberian Region's Library Innovation School;

Library as ecological culture and information centre—a permanent educational programme established in 1999. The APRIKT is implementing it together with the All-Russia Ecological Culture Research Method-Setting Centre;

Distance course, Internet Technologies: Implementation in Library Information Work.

We should like to highlight a thoroughly new educational programme, the **International Library Philosophy School**, which opened in September 2004, jubilee year of renowned German philosopher Emmanuel Kant, in Kaliningrad, his native city. The project was implemented by the library specialists from Russia, Byelorussia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine. The School aims to promote the elaboration of philosophical foundations of library development in the Information Age, and disseminate the knowledge received in an extensive professional milieu. The project owes its profound originality to an opportunity it offers to combine the heuristic process of quest for philosophical knowledge with educational technologies. Thanks to it, principally new conditions are provided for collective idea generation and bringing new ideas down to the public mentality. The School is planned as an annual event, the project is to help library managers to elaborate library modernisation concepts, strategies, projects and long-term programmes in the context of a new socio-cultural paradigm of social development.

Russian librarians are greatly interested in the educational programme, **All-Russia Library Innovation School**. Organised on the basis of the Belgorod Region's libraries since 2000, the School spotlights library innovations, evaluates them and promotes their practical implementation. It teaches the techniques, and trains habits of, innovation creativity, and techniques of blueprinting and implementing library innovation projects. The School helps librarians to adapt themselves to innovations being implemented, and to acquire socio-psychological techniques of overcoming resistance to the new in their professional milieu. The School is using such methods of team creativity as the research laboratory, Innovation Models of the Present-day Public Library, or the open rostrum, Tradition and Innovation in Librarianship: Dialectics of Development and Reform Management. The School also arranges best innovation project contests.

Of the greatest importance among professional retraining programmes is the exclusive programme, **Library Fund Manager-Custodian**, for 1,590 academic hours. It aims

to train top-notch experts with a working command of interdisciplinary knowledge on all functional approaches offered by the National Programme of the Russian Federation for the Preservation of Library Funds. Specialists trained on programme Manager/Custodian are to be able to provide all-round implementation of the fund preservation programme in their regions.

The programme Manager/Custodian curricula include the following disciplines and problem-oriented courses:

theory and techniques of library fund replenishment;
the regimen, conditions and material and technical basis of fund preservation;
library fund safety and preservation in use;
library fund conservation and fundamentals of document restoration;
the formation, preservation and use of book monument funds;
techniques and organisation of document micro-copying, and insurance fund establishment;
the legal foundations and management of library information resource preservation;
the use of computer technologies in fund preservation;
organisation of document preservation research.

General professional education disciplines include applied biology and chemistry, microbiology, mycology, and economics of librarianship. General humanitarian education envisages lecture and seminar cycles on history of material culture, history of libraries and bookmanship, and fundamentals of archive and museum research. There is a wide range of special courses and optional studies, e.g., palaeography, archaeography, book monument attribution and expertise, national and international library fund preservation programmes, and organisation of library manuscript fund work.

The few preceding years thus formed a **new ideology** of upgrading and retraining library personnel at a federal level. To put it in a nutshell, this ideology is **oriented on training library managers and head experts** to form a professional library elite and leaders of librarianship. Alumni are carriers of innovative ideas. They disseminate those ideas in a broad range of professional community members thus to influence regional library and socio-cultural policies, and promote corporate partnership. Another **goal orientation** of the proposed educational programmes, irrespective of content, is to **promote professional socialisation of the librarian, and encourage his professional and creative activities in a thoroughly new technological and social environment**. The programmes are posing the task of forming a new style of professional conduct, finding a new meaning and purport of the librarian's lifetime cause, and becoming aware of its social importance and excellent prospects in the Information Age.

Thorough changes have thus taken place in the **content and methods of arranging educational programmes**. Those programmes have found **quite a new content** to become oriented on the upbringing of professional communities of the like mind, who can cope with modernising their field of activity.

The contemporary Russian library CPD system rests on the **following principles**:

- the innovation component of education having priority vs. the normative due to a high extent of professional library knowledge innovation, and to the goal of

prompt library innovation implementation in an extensive sphere of professional activities, which is prerogative of CPD as a system;

- functional integration of education and librarianship proper—an integration that helps to construe systems relations between those structural components of education to improve its didactic, method and applied bases;
- a universal scope of education with consideration for the branch universe of librarianship, and to enhance the role of humanities and natural and exact sciences in forming professional library knowledge;
- module arrangement of curricula to guarantee their modification depending on the learners, their professional background, and practical didactic goals;
- succession and continuity of educational stages (adaptation—specialisation—innovation—poly-functionalism—professionalisation), and multisided updating, extending and deepening the content of knowledge at each of its developmental stages;
- social openness of the educational network, which envisages its interaction with government and local self-government bodies, and other functional levels of professional activities (research, management, etc.), with related branches (book publishing and trade, research information, etc.) and with other social partners.

• **Andragogics**, a science on adult education, which is progressing apace, comes as a **research and methodological basis** of continuing professional development. Proceeding from andragogical principles, proposed CPD programmes envisage: individualised tuition with due consideration for learners' social-role and professional characteristics;

dynamic tuition, with the greatest possible amount of knowledge acquired as soon as possible;

democratic teacher-pupil contacts and creative partnership;

the learner's greatest possible activity, and encouragement of his professional reflection.

The **teaching staff** has undergone a major change within the few preceding years. Today, CEOs of the respective branch, library directors and practical experts are notable on that staff. All this promotes the professional community progress, constructive thinking of all involved in the educational process, and productive creativity. An approximate total 200 major researchers, library managers and top-notch experts are presently involved in implementing educational projects.

The learners' contingent is fairly extensive. In a matter of the preceding four years alone, more than 1,500 library managers and top experts from 75 Russian regions came through the Academy on joint APRIKT-Culture Ministry projects. That became possible due to regional library staff training generously funded on the federal target programme, Russian Culture, 2001-05. What we thus have, de facto, in present-day Russia is a **government contract system** to retrain and upgrade library personnel on key aspects of library modernisation.

We ought to point out here that target financing practice has support from regional culture boards, which are interested more than anyone else in improving professional qualities of their personnel. Today, federal-level educational programmes are financed, as a rule, with **considerable contribution from regions**. The Arkhangelsk and Belgorod regions, and the republics of Bashkortostan, Komi and Sakha/Yakutia deserve to be highlighted among these contributors.

A **close interconnection of education with library practice** is one of the conditions for effective educational policies. Libraries who launch particular innovations come up as bases of many educational programmes. Thus, the seminar, “Library as Ecological Culture and Information Centre” is arranged on the basis of the All-Russia Research Methodological Centre of Ecological Culture under the Russian State Youth Library, and the Vologda and Oryol regional libraries. The All-Russia Library Innovation School bases on the Belgorod Comprehensive Research Library and the region’s municipal libraries. The interregional seminar, “Innovation Process Management in Public Libraries” rests on libraries of the Krasnodar Territory. We can cite a plenty of other examples. All told, the APRIKT has approximately fifty partners to implement federal educational projects among the federal, central, regional and public libraries. Also prominent among its partners are the LIBNET National Library Information Centre, the Cultural Value Safety Centre under the Ministry of Culture and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation, the Federal Document Conservation and Restoration Centre, the Informregister, and many other information and book publishing and trade establishments.

Thus, what is now taking shape is a new system of interconnections between the academic and the practical levels of lifelong learning. Relations between theory and practice, between tradition and innovation are coming into harmony. What matters more than anything else, the sphere of professional library communications is extending and acquiring a new content.

However spectacular the achievements of library CPD might be at the federal level, this essential part of library personnel professional progress is only **in the making**. It cannot yet fully satisfy librarians’ steadily increasing demand for ever new knowledge.

There is a shortage of money and personnel. New educational knowhow is being implemented slower than it ought to. There is no chance to broadly implement distance educational forms. Notable at the regional level is crying disproportion of educational event organisation, scope and regularity. In some regions, for instance, the Kursk, no more than 10 per cent of librarians came through retraining within the preceding three years. The situation is the most alarming in federal district South. Rural librarians have no chance for regular retraining almost in every part of Russia.

To cope with the problem, it is planned to extend the practice of **educational programme target financing** at the expense of **regional budgets**. In a resolution of March 2003, the Board of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation recommended to culture boards of the Federation constituent entities to earmark for librarian retraining and upgrading no less than 5 per cent of library allocations in the consolidated budget culture grants. That would meet related IFLA recommendations.

Of no smaller importance today is government support for CPD progress in such regions as have not yet made it an integral system. It is just as crucial to promote an initiative to **set up federal district CPD centres on the basis of the strongest local library**. Providing a good example are the Centre for Continuing Professional Librarian Development of the Far Eastern State Research Library, Khabarovsk, the Library Manager Quality School of federal district Northwest on the basis of the Pskov Regional Comprehensive Research Library, and many others.

The establishment of an **APRIKT-based Federal Coordination Centre for Library CPD** came as an organisational stride forward. Among its priority tasks, the Centre offers research, teaching method and consultation services to libraries and other institutions engaged in library CPD. It coordinates the activities of educational structures at the various levels to draw educational curricula, programmes and projects. The Centre also gets down to the regional level the most popular curricula and pioneer educational techniques, while preserving, at the same time, necessary proportions between their federal and regional components.

Public professional certifying of CPD programmes implemented by alternative innovation educational structures, libraries among them, who have no relevant licenses, promises to make an efficient tool of improving education. The Centre is to elaborate certificate criteria, and a mechanism to implement the arrangement.

The Centre intends to regularly **monitor the educational milieu and the personnel situation in libraries**, and start forming an **information resource basis** for research and teaching-method accompaniment of educational programmes and events, with primary attention to those implemented at a regional level.

Much work is ahead to **integrate information technologies into the CPD system, and develop the forms of distance learning**. That is of special importance to regions distant from educational centres.

The **strategic guidelines** of CPD modernisation we have enumerated are presently in the focus of state library policy. Directly depending on them is the preservation and progress of the library personnel potential, and further success of the Russian library reform.

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