

THE "INTERREGIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS LIBRARIES" (IABL): EXPERIENCE AND PERSPECTIVES OF CO-OPERATION IN RUSSIA AND CIS

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The Interregional Regional Association of Business Libraries (IABL) was created according to the decision of the founding conference that was held in the framework of the International Seminar on "Libraries and business information" (April-May, 96, Moscow-Vladimir). IABL was established by Educational and Innovation Centre "Marketing of non-profit sphere", Library Charity fund, centralised Library System "Kievsakaya" of Moscow Western Administrative Region, Municipal enterprise-centralised Library System of Chita-city and by Cherepovets municipal System of Libraries.

The Association is a result of partnership connections between Russia's business libraries that actively work in Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Murmansk, Severodvinsk, Cherepovets, Chernyakhovsk, Naberezhnye Chelny, Rostov-on-the-done, Sarov, Perm, Chelyabinsk, Kurgan, Magnitogorsk, Novokuznetsk, Novosibirsk, Ekaterinburg, Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Tiumen, Niznevartovsk, Aldan, Kemerovo, Chita, Yuzno-Sakhalinsk etc.

IABL helps business libraries of Russia and CIS countries to enter mutual information space, particularly to establish direct contacts with customers, to determine enterprises' demands in special information, and to get operational data on the situation of the book and information markets. Information for libraries on home and foreign vocational experience is an other important field of action of IABL.

For this purpose IABL recruits various library systems and organisation libraries that chose as there speciality information and bibliographic services to representatives of businesses. Among them are: public business libraries, state of the market information departments of scientific technical libraries, information departments and business literature sectors of regional scientific and academic libraries (Universities as well as of other educational institutions of economic, law and technical profiles), centres of scientific and technical information and business libraries inside various companies.

In its activities IABL takes into consideration the fact, that by force of their specific functions business libraries act as customers, users, owners and suppliers of information resources. Therefore alongside with libraries among the members of IABL you can also find publishing houses and book trade firms dealing with business literature, companies producing information products and rendering information services, consulting firms, specialised mass media, trade and professional associations and foundations.

IABL is developing its activities in the following directions

Vocational education of library specialists: schools, seminars, conferences, professional workshops, consulting, exchange of experience in Russia and abroad/ It became traditional for libraries of Russia to educate their specialists at the Moscow school "Library and Business" in methods of marketing analysis and work under the market conditions, interlibrary management, advertising and pricing. Leading home and foreign specialists are invited to teach the librarians. Vital need of library workers to master modern informational technologies made us to expand themes of vocational education in the frameworks of the IABL.

The following themes were offered to potential students: "How can a library find its market niche?", "How can a library enter information environment?", "A public library as an information centre for the community", "Advertising and computer technologies", "Marketing research and computer" and "Information search and computer".

The last of the above mentioned courses embraced, for example, the following problems: development of information resources and services in a library; analysis of information products and services in Russia (according to directions, themes and types of media) and their adequacy to libraries' needs; specific principles of work with printed or electronic information under library conditions.

The association headquarters constantly receive colleagues questions on law, financial, marketing, management and technical sides of business libraries' activities. On-line consultations via various communication channels (post, telephone, fax, E-mail) is an integral part of IABL activities.

An all-Russia Contest "A business library: ideas, concepts and developments" (March-September 1997) is also organised with the aim to improve professional level of business libraries personnel in Russia. The founders of this open contest hope that it will allow to reveal interesting innovations, to support and encourage the authors of the most prominent developments and to attract the attention of

wide circles of specialists from various fields of knowledge to the problems of business libraries.

The founders are planning to award prizes in three nominations: "The best conceptual project development", "The best business library of Russia" and "The best product and service of a business library". The system of motivation of the winners includes money and other stimulating prizes: aid finding investors to realise the proposed ideas and concepts, to organise professional and vocational visits to libraries of Russia and abroad.

A collection of scientific and practical articles will be published as a result of the Contest, some articles will be published in the professional periodicals.

In 1998 at the International seminar "A public Library as a centre of social and business information for the community" the winners of the Contest will get their awards.

One more direction of the association's work is to provide business libraries with information and bibliographic materials and help them to form their information resources: special purpose distribution of constantly up-dated specialised catalogues of books, printed reference books, data-bases and CD's distribution of topical information for publication in WWW-pages or news-papers and business journals, library collection acquirement with documents on printed and computer-readable media on a contractual basis.

In the framework of a library marketing concept, the demand for libraries or their customers, IABL organises comparative researches on information needs of population and various organisations in social and everyday information creation of a united telecommunication net is being planned for constant exchange of information between the IABL members. This net will allow to carry out home and foreign orders for regional commercial information. A project to create an IABL WWW-page is under work. It will contain reference pages of certain business libraries. Nowadays IABL renders libraries its help to choose and link up to telecommunication nets.

The association supports creation of positive images of business libraries creation of Russia, advertising their authorities. The founders established contacts with professional and business press, radio and TV, prepared information and image materials for publication. Thanks to these efforts information about business libraries appeared in a large reference book "Information and telecommunication Encyclopaedia of Russia" (IBIT).

IABL member organisations deal with publishing problems. The collection of translated foreign material "A public library as a centre of information for the community: US experience" was added this year to the well-known "Library and business series". The materials for this publication were kindly placed at our disposal by public libraries of some American states (Ohio, Vermont, Oklahoma, New-York) during a business visit of Russia's specialists that was organised by US Information Agency.

The publication contains original materials which describe:

- how to find financial sources;
- how to form a library budget;
- how to distribute the money inside a public library;
- how to price library services;
- how to work with the staff members (qualification demands to library specialists, contract conditions, professional tests and function guides for employer).

The issue includes also library regulations and rules for library customers. The managers of some large US public libraries give advice "How to plan the work to avoid tiredness". The publication tells how to establish "Friends of the Library" Council, how to organise a library centre on unemployment, how to implement service to supply information via telephone, fax, modem. The book also contains a program of summer reading for children and program of studies in a Librarianship and Information School.

Creation of its own periodical will become an important publishing project of the association. This periodical will be a kind of information bulletin, addressed to business libraries, that fulfil a specific role of information brokers. It will also be addressed to manufactures, suppliers and consumers of information products and services.

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