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A network of educational libraries in the Nordic-Baltic countries

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While talking about libraries supporting education we usually think about the end-users point of view. That is absolutely correct. In my paper I would like to talk from the libraries point of view.

Nordic and Baltic libraries had developed a network the main aim of which is to support education. In my presentation I will tell you why we started co-operation and what we have already achieved.

The co-operation between Nordic libraries is well known and perhaps need not to be discussed in detail.

What about Baltic libraries? In order to talk about the libraries in the Baltic countries let's find out what does the Baltic mean. I am sure most of you had never heard about the Baltic countries some 10 - 15 years ago. We are three small countries - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia - that broke the Soviet Union down. All three of us have a long, interesting and different history but this is not a topic of my report. I just wanted to mention that for 50 years (1940-1990) we were not on the map - to be more precise we were named USSR. The world had heard about us in nineties after we have separated from

the Soviet Union and declared independence. We have got different colours on the map with our names on it. We are on the Baltic Sea: Nordic countries form one side, Baltic form the other.

The co-operation between Nordic and Baltic libraries started right after we declared independence at the beginning of nineties. It took some 5 years to establish the network of educational libraries in Nordic and Baltic countries. The initiative came from the Nordic countries.

Nordic national resource libraries in education:

National Library of Education, Denmark,
<http://www.dlh.dk/dpb/>

Jyväskylä University Library, Finland,
<http://www.jyu.fi/~library>

The Library of the University College of Education, Iceland,
<http://www.khi.is/bok/>

The Library of the National Center of Educational Resources,
Norway,
<http://www.nls.no/bibliotek/bibliotek.html>

The National Library for Psychology and Education, Sweden,
<http://www.sppb.se/>

have been running the network called NEP for years. The idea to start co-operation with Baltic national resource libraries in education came from the NEP.

Thanks to the initiative of Oili Kokkonen, Finland, it was possible to obtain financing for a conference concerning research libraries within the field of education in both Nordic and Baltic countries. The

first meeting took place at the National Library for Psychology and Education, Stockholm, Sweden in December, 1995.

Three Baltic Libraries were invited to the conference:

The Library of Tallinn University of Educational Studies,
Estonia,
<http://www.tpu.ee/>

The Library of Liepaja Academy of Pedagogy, Latvia,
<http://www.cs.lpu.lv/library.html>

Vilnius Pedagogical University Library, Lithuania.
<http://193.219.54.34/biblioteka>

Each library was represented by one or two representatives.

The main aims of the meeting were:

- to get to know each other personally;
- to give an overview of the library and information services in education in each Nordic and Baltic country;
- to discuss and identify needs and possibilities for future co-operation.

Our interest was to deal with practical common issues. After each country presented overview of the library and information services in their country, we found out that we have lots in common, but also lots of differences.

We found out that all resource libraries in education, except Sweden, are affiliated to the university, academy, school or centre. That means that they have double duties: to serve their home institution

and serve the whole country in the field of education. On the other hand it is not really true, as not all of us have formal responsibilities of being the national resource library. Legally the responsibility of being the resource library in education are given to:

National Library of Education, Denmark

Jyväskylä University Library, Finland

The National Library for Psychology and Education, Sweden

Tallinn University of Educational Studies, Estonia.

While the other main educational libraries do not have this formal responsibility prescribed by the law of their countries:

The Library of the University College of Education, Iceland

The Library of the National Center of Educational Resources,
Norway

Library of Liepaja Academy of Pedagogy, Latvia

Vilnius Pedagogical University Library, Lithuania.

The other difference we found out - the use and compilation of educational databases. All Nordic libraries, except Iceland, compile and use PEPSY - the Nordic database for education. Baltic countries, as well as Iceland, do not participate in PEPSY developments. The question whether we should join PEPSY was discussed at the meeting. We came up with the decision that it is no use to join it as the languages of all Baltic countries are so different - nobody else will be able to understand our articles (the majority of the articles in education are written in national languages and only few include summaries in English or German).

Some libraries participate or are responsible for compilation of national educational databases: KOTU in Finland, FOU-basen in Norway, FRIDTJUV and ARTIKELSÖK in Sweden (though these are not only educational databases: FRIDTJUV is the on-line catalogue of SPPB, while the ARTIKELSÖK is the database of articles in Swedish periodicals).

Most libraries are compiling databases of the publications of their professors and faculty - Universities consider such databases as high priority.

All Nordic resource libraries in education and the Library of Tallinn University of Educational Sciences, Estonia are responsible for EUDISED database in their countries. EUDISED is the database which register all the research projects carried out in education in Europe. Lithuania and Latvia also participate in EUDICED but there are other agencies, not libraries, responsible for this work. EUDICED uses European Education Thesaurus for data classification. National resource libraries in education in Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Finland and Estonia have translated Thesaurus into their native languages. National agencies in Lithuania and Latvia have not. The National Library for Psychology and Education in Sweden had developed their own thesaurus which has links to the European Education Thesaurus.

Both Nordic and Baltic resource libraries in education have found out some common obstacles:

- lack of legal documents;

- lack of understanding of library information services in research and studies;
- lack of information;
- lack of money;
- poor or no knowledge of English and other foreign languages, (especially in Baltic libraries);
- poor or no knowledge of computers;
- lack of qualified staff;
- lack of time.

I wish I could find a library somewhere in the world which does not meet at least one of the listed obstacles.

After having discussed these and some other problems of work of the national resource libraries in education, we have come up with the conclusion that we want to continue our co-operation and we have set up goals for it:

- library promotion;
- in-service training for librarians; library and information education;
- keep up possibility to communicate;
- establish network.

We have also foreseen means to reach the goals:

- To hold annual NEP Meeting (together with Baltic colleagues) combined with Thesaurus Meeting in Lithuania;
- To invite Rectors and Library Directors to a study tour to Nordic Educational Libraries;

- To establish Nordic-Baltic virtual library.

All the reports presented at the first Nordic-Baltic Meeting of the Directors of the National Resource Libraries in Education on 7-10 December, 1995 in Stockholm were published in NORDINFO-rapport 1996:1.

As the means to reach our goals were foreseen, we started working on further co-operation.

NEP Meetings were held annually in one of the Nordic national resource libraries in education. Emilija Banionyte proposed to hold the next meeting at Vilnius Pedagogical University Library, Lithuania. The idea was to show Nordic colleagues how Baltic librarians work and live. This is extremely important in establishing the network between different countries.

The Meeting was held at Vilnius Pedagogical University Library in May, 1997. Taking as the example this library and the National Library, the participants of the Meeting had a possibility to get acquainted with library work in Lithuania. For most of the participants from Nordic countries this was the first visit to the Baltic country.

The previously foreseen goal to organise the study tour to Nordic educational libraries was discussed. The Rector of Vilnius Pedagogical University had met the participants of the Meeting and supported the idea of further co-operation.

In order to arrange the study tour to Nordic educational libraries big funds were needed. Naturally, nobody had so much money. Leif Lørring, the director of the National Library in Education, Denmark took the responsibility to apply for money from the Council of Nordic Ministers. Liisa Hughes, Jyväskylä University Library, Finland applied for money from the NORDINFO. Eva Trotzig, the director of the National Library for Psychology and Education, Sweden had been in contact with the National Library and the Swedish institute for the same purpose. We planned a study tour to all Nordic educational libraries.

We got 40% of what was applied for. Therefore it was decided to change study tour to the seminar in Jyväskylä University Library. All three Rectors and Library Directors from Baltic educational universities together with all representatives from Nordic national resource libraries in education were invited to the seminar.

The Nordic-Baltic Seminar on the Role of Educational Resource Libraries was held at Jyväskylä University Library on 16-18 October, 1997. The hosts of the seminar organised a very interesting program vividly describing their day-to-day work as well as work on different projects. The main goal of the seminar was to get the Rectors of Baltic universities to know the modern library, its role in education and research processes, present developments and future trends.

The Rector of the Jyväskylä University Aino Sallinen made great impression on the Baltic Rectors. First of all she is a woman and it is very unusual for Baltic Rectors to see a woman in the role of the Rector. In her speech she pointed out that there is no need to examine curriculum or the procedure of appointing honourable

names in order to get to know any University - one should simply spend few hours in the library and everything will be evident. She thinks that the library is the face of the University. Her speech impressed her Baltic colleagues greatly. The Rector of the Vilnius Pedagogical University keeps quoting Aino Sallinen very often.

The participants of the seminar were guided through the Jyväskylä University Library (which is really impressive), visited Finnish telecom and electronic publishing house of the University.

To my understanding those three days keeping Rectors attention on the library matters made great change on their understanding of the library role in general. The possibility for the Library Directors to have the company and attention of their Rectors was also a great luxury. Just one example which shows that the seminar was a great success: on the way back to Vilnius my Rector told me I think we need a new library - the one we have got is out of date . There is a long way before we will build it but the first step is made - I will not need to persuade him *why* we need a new library.

I do not know the other happy stories from our co-operation, but I am sure we are all changing, learning from each other and becoming personal friends.

The future co-operation of Nordic-Baltic national resource libraries in education is very much dependant on the IT, economic situation in our countries and our will.

We look forward to creating a Nordic-Baltic Home page and start publishing an electronic Nordic-Baltic Education Year Book.