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Bulgarian National Library

Annual Report 1995

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The economic and political situation in Bulgaria in 1995 reflected directly on the activities of the St.St. Cyril and Methodius National Library. The publication of the Decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, which gave a special status of eight national cultural institutions, the National Library included allowed a certain increase in funding in comparison with the preceding years. Unfortunately owing to the high inflation rate and the heavy economic situation of the country was not adequately felt in the activities of the library. The most important outcome was the relative raise in the salaries of librarians, with the subsequent hope that in future it will stop the drain of highly trained professionals and will create conditions to draw well trained young staff. The annual budget (about 900 000 USD) has greatly reduced the acquisition of new literature; technical innovation relies chiefly on donations and participation in international projects.

Work on new legislation in the field of librarianship for 1995 continued with discussions on a draft for a Decree of the Council of Ministers regulating the activities of the types of libraries in Bulgaria. The Decree published early in 1996 among others outlines the principal activities of the National Library. Alongside with traditional functions (The Archive of Bulgarian Literature,

the Center of the National Bibliography, the Archive of Documents from the National Revival Period, The Research Centre for Librarianship Science, Bibliography, Book Science and Archival Studies etc.) the National Library is nominated as a Center for the envisaged national automated library-information network (NALIN). This recognition of the leading part of the National Library in the process of the creation and distribution of bibliographical information is ground for hopes for greater Government funding of library automation in future. The delay in normative measures for the guaranteeing of the legal deposit under new conditions still is cause for concern. The Library has noted a lasting trend of the number of non-deposited books and other library material. For the past year the management of the library concentrated their efforts on the resolution of this issue before government bodies and the establishment of conditions for discussions of the problem with the Guild of Publishers in Bulgaria.

Construction work on the new building of the Library continued in 1995. Partial completion of building operations which is expected in 1996, will considerably change storage conditions of library stocks and improve services for the reading public. Under present conditions the solution of this problem was through the optimal variant - the adaptation of an existing industrial building as a book-storage building. The main difficulty for the realization of this project for a short period is insufficient funding from the budget.

Work on Automation of processes in libraries continued over the passed year through the opening of a local automated network of 50 work stations. This made it possible to utilize the data bases accumulated for three years for the whole library. Technological conditions for on-line use of these bases have been created, thus realizing a step ahead in the building up of the National Automated Bibliographical-information Network, centered around the National Library. Specialists from the National

Library are confident that retroconversion of library catalogues in Bulgaria should be done on the basis of pooling efforts and the use of all possibilities to achieve a multiplication effect in each library. The project for the preparation of bibliographical data bases for Bulgarian books on CD ROM, based on printed National Bibliography for the entire period of its existence (since 1878), drawn up in the Library is ample proof of the selection of this approach. The First stage (1878-1944) will be funded by a Regional Library Program RLP) of the Open Society Institute.

The serious financial difficulties before the Library recently have resulted mainly in routine activities on conservation and restoration of collections. The necessity of a national policy in this field stimulated the Union of Library and Information Officers in Bulgaria to begin work on the preparation of a National Program for Conservation and Restoration of collections, which will be subject of broad discussions among professional circles, and proposed to the Government for funding. The National Library is an active participant in this program, with the awareness that its collections will be among the principal objects of conservation and restoration in future.

The National Library has shown interest in participation in international co-operation through the provision of Data bases to users abroad. The realization of this co-operation was not possible in 1995, however the conference organized jointly with the National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID) and National Commission of Bulgaria for UNESCO on "The Development of Information and Library Networks in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe as a Part of the Global Exchange of Information", Sofia 5-9 May 1995, with the participation of experts from CEE countries, consultants from UNESCO and the Netherlands is a step in this direction.

Since January 1996 the St.St. Cyril and Methodius National Library has a new management. In my capacity as former Director and participant of CENL over the past years I avail myself of the

occasion to thank colleagues from National libraries in Europe for their co-operation and I am confident of the successful development of co-operation in future.