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Annual Report 1995

ESKO HÄKLI

University Library / The National Library of Finland, Helsinki

The Library in Politics

The financing of the functions of the National Library and the national resource libraries in a number of different subject fields, has been debated during the winter. The Ministry of Education decided to treat the national resource libraries as a part of the regular library service of the universities and not to make any special grant available for them. Libraries are maintaining that the Government has to assume a responsibility for the research library network as a whole, because the new budgeting practice is not paying enough attention to it. According to libraries, a national strategy for scientific information is needed.

A temporary agreement on the financing of the National Library has been reached. It divides the sources of the Library's budget into two parts, the major part being an ear`marked National Library grant and the smaller part coming from the budget of the University. According to the Library a better distinction of its functions into these two categories is still needed. Internally, the Library has taken major steps to better adapt its management to the requirements of the accountability. The

Library has been divided into two main cost centres and internal budgeting and costing is being developed further.

To strengthen the university library network the Ministry of Education gave to Helsinki University Library the task to develop the cooperation between the university libraries. A coordinating board has been set up for that purpose. On their own initiative, university libraries agreed on financing one fulltime job of a coordinator and development officer. The post is located in Helsinki University Library.

The Government has adopted a new strategy for the information society on the basis of which the Ministry of Education has launched an action programme. The programme, focusing on information technology, also covers libraries, archives and museums. With its help the National Library has started two major projects, one dealing with digitization of existing collections, one with electronic publishing. A number of other institutions are participating in the projects.

In order to create a basis for the development strategies, the Library took the initiative to prepare a scenario of the future of the networked library environment.

Legislation

A revision of the existing legal deposit law shall start during 1996. A preliminary agreement has been achieved on the principle that the law should cover networked documents with the exception of dynamic databases.

A new university law, common for all universities, is being debated. The National Library is mentioned in the most recent draft. About several other points there is still disagreement and it is uncertain, when the draft can be submitted to the Parliament.

Buildings

At the beginning of 1998 the Library will take over the adjacent large building which at the moment is being renovated and adapted to its needs. The Library will reorganize and develop its local services, which will be gathered in one and the same place.

A decision on large new underground stacks is awaited from the Government in connection with the state budget for 1998. The stacks will be shared with the National Archives. Thus, the Library will be able to gather also its collections in one place.

Automation

Two major decisions have been made on converting the rest of the catalogues to make them available in electronic form when the new premises are opened. The conversion of the National Bibliography will be completed by the end of 1997 by the Library's own retroconversion unit. With the help of a special grant the conversion of the catalogues of the Library's internationally well-known Russian collections has been started and the work will be completed in 1998. A large part of the work has been contracted out to the National Library of Estonia which will record the data directly into Helsinki University Library's online database. At the same time a new database of the oldest part of the National Bibliography will be completed.

The major public libraries' union catalogue database MANDA has now been opened for public use. It is an important step towards a common computerized network for all types of libraries.

In cooperation with INION (Moscow) a new bibliographic database of the Finno-Ugrian research (Bibliographia Studiorum Uralicorum) has been produced on CD-ROM.

Public Relations

During the autumn 1995 the Library had functioned 150 years in its main building. This event was celebrated by a number of arrangements for the great public. The Library received plenty of positive publicity. Also a concert for specially invited guests was given.

Publicity has also been received on the occasion of various publications and projects. The large catalogue of the A.E.Nordenskiöld's map collection was completed in 1995. The first part of the national bibliography of the early Finnish literature (up to 1700) was published in the summer 1996 and publicised by the Minister of Education. The literary magazine Books from Finland has been published for 20 years by the Library and it was celebrated in June 1996. A major project, the critical edition of the collected works of Jean Sibelius, was launched in May 1996 and it received much attention.

At present the Library is working on a new policy for public relations, because publicity has become an important part in the efforts to secure the necessary financing.

International Cooperation

The Library has participated in the work of LIBER and the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Bibliotheca Baltica. The Director has been President of these two organizations. He also represents the Nordic national libraries in the CoBRA.

The Library is one of the national libraries behind the development of GABRIEL. It has participated in the EU Project ONE and in the Working Group on Authority Files of IFLA. The Library is the National Focal Point of the Library Programme of the EU.

Special emphasis has been laid on cooperation with libraries in the Baltic countries and the St Petersburg area.