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Baltic National Bibliographies without the Book Chambers

Maira Bundza *

ABSTRACT: The responsibilities of the Soviet-era book chambers in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have almost all been incorporated into the national libraries of the three Baltic states since they regained independence in 1991. This article will summarize each country's current status as regards legal deposit; current and retrospective national bibliography; indexes; publishing statistics; ISSN, ISBN, and ISMN agencies; and online databases. All three Baltic states have made tremendous progress in making their materials available to researchers worldwide, though full text access is still limited.

KEYWORDS: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. Baltic States, post-Soviet, book chamber, national library, national bibliography, bibliographic control, retrospective national bibliography, legal deposit, publishing statistics, online databases.

The histories of the three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—have been intertwined for centuries. Though Latvian and Lithuanian are related linguistically, it is Estonia and Latvia that have more in common historically. The development of the three countries became increasingly parallel in the last one hundred years. It is not surprising that the development of the national libraries, bibliographies, and the fate of the book chambers in the three Baltic states have also followed parallel paths that may differ from the other former republics of the Soviet Union.

Since the territories of the three Baltic states have often been ruled by outside powers and lie at a crossroads in northern Europe, publications from these countries include materials in many languages. The first books appeared in the local languages of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian in the sixteenth century, but there is a rich history of publications in German, Russian, Polish, Swedish, Hebrew, Yiddish, and other languages.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania declared their independence in 1918, and the leaders very quickly understood the importance of knowledge, books, and libraries. In Estonia, the provisional government established the Estonian State Library in 1918.¹ Latvia and Lithuania, in turn, established their state libraries in 1919.² These state libraries grew quickly and soon began receiving depository copies of all printed matter

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¹ Tiiu Valm, "National Library of Estonia," In *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 2003), 3:1979.

² Vladas Bulavas, "National Library of Lithuania," In *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, 3:1991.

published in their respective countries. Foreign exchange agreements were made. All three countries began systematically to collect and record all Baltic publications pertinent to their individual states— those published in their respective countries, as well as material about the countries and inhabitants published elsewhere—creating collections of *Estonica*, *Lettica* and *Lituanica*. All three countries began compiling national bibliographies, though the task was not always done by the state library.

With the Soviet occupation in 1940, the state libraries became part of the Soviet system and were renamed the Estonian SSR State Library, Latvian SSR State Library, and Lithuanian SSR State Library. They were forced to sever ties with foreign libraries, place large portions of their materials in restricted access collections, and accept deposit copies from Moscow. During the earlier German occupation a different set of books had been restricted or destroyed. The systematic weeding of the collections and reorganization according to the Soviet system began in earnest after World War II. Since libraries were an integral part of instilling Soviet ideology, they received large numbers of Soviet publications in Russian and other languages, as well as more funding for staffing. The Soviet system included in each republic a book chamber, which was an institution usually independent of the state library. Each chamber was responsible for obtaining legal deposit copies of all materials printed within the republic, registering them in a national bibliography, keeping statistics, and preparing and publishing indexes to these materials.

Once the three Baltic states regained their independence in 1991, the book chambers were no longer required to report to Moscow and were free to reorganize, but they also lost the funding provided by the centralized system and had to convince their newly formed governments about the value of their work. In the Baltic states it was logical for the book chambers to combine overlapping resources with the evolving national libraries.

Fate of the Book Chambers

In Latvia, the State Book Chamber was established in 1940 as part of the Latvian SSR State Library. As the republic's bibliographic center, it was charged with preparing and publishing the monthly bibliographic index, *Latvijas PSR preses hronika = Letopis' pechati Latviiskoi SSR* [Latvian SSR Press Chronicle], which did not begin until 1949. In 1959 the State Book Chamber started functioning as an institution independent of the Latvian SSR State Library. In 1989 it was renamed the Institute of Bibliography. The word *bibliography* more closely described its main function of creating the national bibliography, and the title *institute* was chosen because the agency's work included research.³

³ Anita Goldberga, conversation with the author, Institute of Bibliography, National Library of Latvia, Riga, March 14, 2008.

In 1991 the new government of Latvia renamed the Latvian SSR State Library the National Library of Latvia. Employees also started working on a national bibliography and in essence duplicated the work of the Institute of Bibliography; both institutions received depository copies. In 1993, however, the Institute of Bibliography became a division of the National Library of Latvia.

The National Library of Latvia is dispersed in many buildings, none constructed to be a library, throughout Riga and its suburbs. The new government passed a decree in 1991 for constructing a new national library building, and the Latvian-American architect Gunārs Birkerts designed the building as a symbolic Castle of Light. The project has suffered many setbacks as other projects took precedence, disputes flared over ownership of the land for the proposed building, funding was raised, and changing governments rescinded previous decisions, but work on the building was finally begun in 2008. The Institute of Bibliography is located in Old Riga, where it has shared space with cataloging and other divisions of the state and national libraries over the years. The institute has the following functions or responsibilities:

- Prepares the national bibliography (current and retrospective);
- Distributes the deposit copies of publications;
- Compiles statistics on publication in Latvia for the government and UNESCO;
- Assigns international standard numbers: ISBN, ISSN, and ISMN;
- Processes, catalogs, and indexes materials;
- “Harvests” Latvian electronic publications;
- Standardizes library work.

In Lithuania, the State Book Chamber started operating in 1946.⁴ In 1992 the government of Lithuania transferred the book chamber’s responsibilities to the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.⁵ The responsible National Library department is the Center of Bibliography and Book Science. Its functions are similar to those of Latvia’s Institute of Bibliography.⁶

- Receives deposit copies, and stores and preserves them;
- Creates bibliographic and authority records for bibliographic control;
- Maintains bibliographic and publishing standards and formats;
- Compiles statistics on publication in Lithuania, and reports them to UNESCO;
- Assigns international standard numbers: ISSN, ISBN, and ISMN;
- Creates Cataloging in Publication (CIP) records;

⁴ Regina Varniene, “Bibliographic Control Within Lithuanian Integrated Library Information System,” International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), Bibliography Section, *Newsletter*, April 2006: 4, <http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s12/pubs/s12-newsletter-April06.pdf>

⁵ Bulavas, “National Library of Lithuania,” 1995.

⁶ “Centre of the Bibliography and Book Science,” National Library of Lithuania, <http://www.lnb.lt/>

- Helps maintain the Lithuanian Integrated Library Information System (LIBIS), including the Union Catalog of Lithuanian Libraries and the online *Nacionalines bibliografijos duomenų bankas* [National bibliographic database];⁷
- Compiles an annual bibliography of library-related research articles, entitled *Bibliografija: mokslo darbai* [Bibliography: Scientific Works];
- Carries out research in the fields of bibliography and book science.

Lithuania was the first of the Baltic states to create a library building for its state or national library. In 1963, they moved over 2 million publications from Kaunas to the new building in Vilnius.⁸ In 2004, cracks in the walls were noticed and major structural damage was discovered, probably resulting from a transportation tunnel built underneath. The collections have been relocated to an annex and other nearby buildings while they complete reconstruction.⁹

In Estonia, the State Library was renamed the National Library of Estonia in 1988, even before the country regained independence.¹⁰ The Estonians began a new library building in 1985 and completed it in 1993. The book chamber was merged with (and moved physically from a separate building to) the National Library of Estonia (NLE) in 1991. Most of the work of the book chamber was taken over by the NLE, but they did not create an institute or a center as happened in Latvia and Lithuania. Most of the work is accomplished by the NLE's Collection Development and Documentation Department. The following responsibilities were taken over by the NLE, differing slightly from Latvia and Lithuania:

- Receives legal deposit copies;
- Compiles annual statistical reports on the print output of Estonian books and periodicals for the Statistical Office of Estonia;
- Maintains the current national bibliography for books and periodicals (lists of music and maps are compiled by the NLE's Fine Arts Information Center);
- Works on the retrospective national bibliography with other institutions;
- Catalogs Estonian publications for the ESTER online catalog;¹¹

⁷ The National Library of Lithuania uses the phrase *National Bibliographic Data Bank* when referring in English to the database.

⁸ Bulavas, "National Library of Lithuania," 1994.

⁹ "Reconstruction of the Basic Building of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania (2008–2011)," National Library of Lithuania, <http://www.lnb.lt/> (accessed October 27, 2008, on English-language home page; document no longer available).

¹⁰ Valm, "National Library of Estonia," 1979.

¹¹ There are two ESTER online catalogs, one based in Tallinn (<http://tallinn.ester.ee/search>) and the other in Tartu (<http://tartu.ester.ee/search>), and they provide Estonia with two union catalogs that share cataloging records but are largely mutually exclusive as regards library coverage. That is, ESTER Tallinn covers library holdings of the National Library and of many other public, university, and research libraries located in the Tallinn area, while ESTER Tartu focuses on numerous libraries in Tartu. Although the two catalogs cover mutually exclusive libraries, both catalogs of course include records for many of the same

- Indexes periodicals for the ESTER online catalog and the *Eesti artiklite andmebaas* database, formerly known as *Index Scriptorum Estoniae*;
- Assigns international standard numbers: ISSN, ISBN, and ISMN.

Legal Deposit

Publishers, from independence in 1918 onward, have always been required to deposit a certain number of copies of each publication with the book chambers or national libraries. The deposit requirement now includes books, brochures, serials, sheet music, maps, posters, audio and video recordings, and may include some electronic resources, though each country has slightly different rules on what constitutes a “deposit copy.” The number of legal deposit copies has changed over the years and varies by country, but each has passed a deposit law. In Estonia, eight deposit copies are required for all publications issued in Estonia or published elsewhere by Estonian publishers, to be distributed to five institutions.¹² In Latvia and Lithuania,¹³ recent changes in the legal deposit laws have reduced the number of deposit copies to two—one for archival storage and one for circulation at the national libraries. The number of deposit copies was reduced as book publishing became more expensive and press runs smaller. This reduction also follows UNESCO recommendations and the practices of other European Union countries.¹⁴

The publishing industry was so closely regulated in Soviet times that publishers delivered obligatory deposit copies virtually without fail, with two copies always going to Moscow. The many new publishers that sprang up in post-Soviet countries after 1991 did not know (or chose not to follow) the rules and regulations about depository copies and other publishing standards, and they needed to be identified and notified about these regulations. One observer noted that “[f]rom a librarian’s point of view, the result of this proliferation has been utter confusion.”¹⁵ In Latvia in the early 1990s, librarians bought from street vendors publications that were missing from their collections. Even today,

materials, whether books, periodicals, articles, or other formats. As an example from the ESTER Tartu catalog, it includes, inter alia, records for holdings at the University of Tartu for the majority of Estonian-language publications past and present, and also for Estonian articles published since 1999. A good explanation of the several reasons why there are two union catalogs rather than one can be found on pages 355–56 of Nadia Caidi, “The Politics of Library Artifacts: The National Union Catalog,” *Library Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2004): 337–369.

¹² “Deposit copies,” National Library of Estonia, <http://www.nlib.ee/17580>

¹³ “Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania Annual Report 2006–2007,” National Library of Lithuania, <http://www.lnb.lt/doc/apie/report2006.pdf>

¹⁴ Varniene, “Bibliographic Control,” 5.

¹⁵ Joyce Martin Greening, “Ten Years in the Life of Russian Libraries,” *International Information and Library Review* 27, no. 2 (June 1995): 123.

they must closely compare publisher reports with what they have received, to insure no publication is missed.¹⁶

National Bibliography

Janice Pilch has published an extensive overview of Baltic national bibliographies in this journal in 2001, whereas the article at hand will focus mainly on current work and publications. Pilch points out that national bibliographies play a role not only in bibliographic control but also in the development of the “cultural identity and linguistic expression experienced by Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians for centuries.”¹⁷

During the first independence period of Estonia (1918–40), Tartu University Library was the center for the current national bibliography. The Estonian national bibliography was published in five volumes, *Eesti raamatute üldnimestik* [General list of Estonian books], covering the years 1918–39. Under the Soviets, the state library registered printed matter from the years 1946–62, while the book chamber covered the same years and up to 1991 through its serial *Raamatukroonika = Knizhnaia letopis'* [Book annals]. Currently at the National Library of Estonia, the Collection Development and Documentation Department records all publications issued in Estonia and all Estonian-language publications issued abroad. Up until 2006 they produced the print *Eesti rahvusbibliograafia* [The Estonian national bibliography], with separate subseries for: *Raamatud* [Books], a monthly that included video and non-musical sound recordings; *Perioodika* [Serials], an annual list of newspapers, magazines, and other serials, irrespective of format; *Muusika* [Music], an annual listing of sheet music and sound recordings; *Raamatud, kaardi., registrid* [Books, maps: indexes], an annual; and *Ametlikud väljaanded* [Official publications], an annual. Now it is all entered into the online *Eesti Rahvusbibliograafia Andmebaas* [Estonian national bibliography database] (<http://erb.nlib.ee/>).

In Latvia, the Riga State Library compiled a national bibliography that was published from 1927 to 1944 in its serial, *Valsts Bibliotēkas biļetens: Latvijas bibliogrāfijas žurnāls* [State Library bulletin: Latvia's bibliography journal]. The Soviet-era book chamber published *Latvijas PSR preses hronika = Letopis' pechati Latviiskoi SSR* [Latvian SSR press chronicle], beginning in 1949. Currently the National Library of Latvia's Institute of Bibliography creates a full bibliographic description of each legal deposit item for the national bibliography. Until 2006, these full bibliographic descriptions were published in *Latvijas preses hronika*¹⁸ but are now entered in the online *Monogrāfiju un turpinājumizdevumu datubāze* [Monograph and serials database]. These

¹⁶ Anita Goldberga, conversation.

¹⁷ Janice T. Pilch, “Baltic National Bibliography,” *Slavic & East European Information Resources* 2, no. 3/4 (2001): 53.

¹⁸ Goldberga, conversation with author March 14, 2008.

descriptions are then utilized by the National Library catalogers, who update and then enter the information into the National Library of Latvia catalog.

National bibliography work was begun in independent Lithuania by the notable jurist and bibliographer, Vaclovas Biržiška, at Kaunas University Library, the primary research library before 1940.¹⁹ That library published Biržiška's journals *Knygos: bibliografijos ir kritikos žurnalas* [Books: a journal of bibliography and criticism] and *Bibliografijos žinios* [Bibliographic news]. Biržiška also founded the Lithuanian Bibliographical Institute in 1924 and continued his work in exile after World War II, documenting émigré publications.²⁰ During the Soviet period, the Lithuanian book chamber maintained the national bibliography through its publication *Spaudos metraštis = Letopis' pechati* [Press chronicle] (Vilnius, 1957-). Lithuania now uses a process similar to Latvia's, except that the National Library of Lithuania's Center of Bibliography and Book Science starts with a cataloging-in-publication record, then later creates bibliographic and authority records for monographs, serials, audio-visual documents, and electronic resources, and enters them into the *Nacionalinės bibliografijos duomenų bankas* [National bibliographic database]. These records are used for the online catalog and the publication *Bibliografijos žinios = Bibliographic News*, which has separate subseries for: *Knygos* [Books]; *Serialiniai leidiniai* [Serials]; *Straipsniai* [Articles]; *Lituanika* [Lithuanica]; and *Garso dokumentai* [Audio documents], which includes audio, video, and e-resources.²¹ They also provide online lists of forthcoming books.

Retrospective National Bibliography

Compiling comprehensive retrospective bibliographies of all materials published in the Baltic states and materials about them published outside the countries is an enormous task. This work was done by individuals and various libraries before and during the Soviet years, and still continues today. One of the difficulties has been tracking the extensive publications of the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian exile communities.

Johann Heinrich Rosenplänter, known as the father of Estonian national bibliography, published the first retrospective index for the period 1553–1830.²² His work was continued by the Estonian Learned Society and various individuals. During the Soviet era, four volumes of *Nõukogude Eesti raamat* were published covering the years 1940–75. In 1968, the National Bibliography Department was established in the Estonian

¹⁹ Bulavas, "National Library of Lithuania," 1991.

²⁰ Pilch, "Baltic National Bibliography," 84.

²¹ Varniene, "Bibliographic Control," 6.

²² Pilch, "Baltic National Bibliography," 61.

State Library in order to compile the retrospective bibliography.²³ Ten years later, an agreement was reached by five of the major libraries in Estonia for publishing the retrospective national bibliography. The current names of those libraries are the National Library of Estonia (NLE), the Estonian Academic Library, the Archival Library of the Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu University Library, and Tallin Technical University Library. The NLE is responsible for certain items in the retrospective national bibliography, mostly since 1918. To date, several volumes have been published,²⁴ at least some of which are under the monographic series heading *Eesti retrospektiivne rahvusbibliograafia = Estonian Retrospective National Bibliography*.

The first extensive bibliography of Latvian books appeared in 1831 by Karl Eduard Napiersky, entitled *Chronologischer Conspect der Lettischen Litteratur von 1587 bis 1830* [Chronological summary of Latvian literature from 1587 to 1830]. Though there were other bibliographies, best known is the work of Jānis Misiņš, who compiled a retrospective, two-volume bibliography covering the years 1585–1925, *Latviešu rakstniecības radītājs* [Index to Latvian writing]. The Library of the Academy of Sciences, now the Latvian Academic Library, has focused on documenting periodicals. The State/National Library has continued Misiņš's work and has published its compilations in numerous print volumes. Benjamiņš Jēgers documented émigré publications in a five-volume work covering the years 1940–1991, *Latviešu trimdas izdevumu bibliogrāfija* [Bibliography of Latvian publications published outside Latvia].

The first comprehensive bibliography of Lithuanian books came in 1824, even if only 73 publications and manuscripts could be found in Lithuanian at that time. It was compiled by Kajetonas Nezabitauskis and published as part of his Lithuanian reader. Silvestras Baltramaitis compiled a major bibliography, which in its expanded edition in 1904 covered 1553–1903.²⁵ The earlier-mentioned Vaclovas Biržiska published a four-volume, retrospective bibliography covering the years 1547–1910, entitled *Lietuvių bibliografija* [Lithuanian bibliography]. The National Library of Lithuania is continuing work on retrospective materials. Records of books from 1547 to 1830, Lithuanian Polish books of the eighteenth century, and Lithuanian Hebrew books from 1799 to 1830 all have been entered into the *Heritage of the Printed Book* (now an OCLC FirstSearch database and formerly called the *Hand Press Book*), a database of European publications from the hand press period (ca. 1455–1830). The National Library of Lithuania has also completed the retrospective conversion of *Lietuvos TSR bibliografija, serija A, Knygos lietuvių kalba, 1547–1861* [Bibliography of the Lithuanian SSR, series A, Books in Lithuanian, 1547–1861].²⁶

²³ Valm, "National Library of Estonia," 1979.

²⁴ Valm, "National Library of Estonia," 1984.

²⁵ Pilch, "Baltic National Bibliography," 83.

²⁶ Varniene, "Bibliographic Control," 6.

Article Indexes

When the author visited major research libraries throughout the Baltic countries in 1993, it was fascinating to see the huge rooms of wooden catalogs full of “analytics,” and it took a while to understand that these functioned as indexes. In the United States numerous organizations and companies index in their respective fields, which is why we do not have one comprehensive index to all articles and thus try to compensate with federated search tools. In the Baltic countries, the efforts have been for libraries and related organizations to index their entire book and serial production.

In Estonia, the Soviet-era book chamber published the monthly *Artiklite ja retsenioonide kroonika* = *Letopis' statei i retsenzii* [Index of articles and reviews] (1954–91). Numerous other publications covered earlier years. In 1993 the name was changed to *Eesti rahvusbibliograafia: artiklid* [Estonian national bibliography: articles], and in 1999 the index became electronic. Some articles were entered into the ESTER online catalog and the *Eesti artiklite andmebaas* [Database of Estonian articles], formerly known as *Index Scriptorum Estoniae*.

In Latvia, Augusts Ģintars began the daunting task early in the twentieth century of indexing articles in Latvian publications from 1763 forward, and published his findings in multiple volumes, first as *Latviešu zinātne un literatūra*, with later volumes titled *Latvijas zinātne un literatūra* [Latvian science and literature]. His work covered articles published up to 1942, though the years 1907–1920 and 1937–42 remained in manuscript form on index cards. Ģintars' work was continued by the State Library in the Soviet era and continues today. Under the Soviet system, the book chambers created and published indexes to periodical literature. In Latvia it was part of the *Latvijas PSR preses hronika* [Latvian PSR press chronicle] and is now online as the *Analītikas datubāze* [Analytics database], available through the Web site of the National Library of Latvia.

In Lithuania, article indexes were included in some of the retrospective bibliographies, such as the compilations by Baltramaitis mentioned earlier. During the pre-Soviet independence years, books and articles were listed in *Bibliografijos žinios*. During the Soviet years, the book chamber indexed articles and published compilations, primarily in the periodical *Spaudos metraštis* = *Letopis' pechati*. In 1992 they returned to publishing the article index under the title used in the pre-Soviet era, *Bibliografijos žinios* [Bibliographic news]. The article index has now become part of the online *Nacionalinės bibliografijos duomenų bankas* [National bibliographic database], which is maintained by the national library's Center of Bibliography and Book Science.

Though there have been various digitization projects in the Baltic states, there are still few links to full-text articles. In Estonia, the *Eesti artiklite andmebaas* [Database of Estonian articles] is linked to full-text newspaper articles from 2009 forward, and some older publications are included. In Latvia the company Lursoft has procured the digital rights to provide online subscriptions to over 60 newspapers from around the country, with coverage starting as early as 1994 for some titles. In order to increase search

capabilities, Latvia's *Analītikas datubāze* [Analytics database] has been linked to Lursoft's full-text provision. Lithuania now includes a full-text option for recent documents when searching in the *Nacionalinės bibliografijos duomenų bankas* [National bibliographic database].

Publishing Statistics

One of the book chambers' functions was to gather statistics on all publications issued within the country. In the Soviet period these statistics were sent to Moscow. This information was then published in the annual compilations *Eesti (NSV) trükitoodangu statistika* = *Statistika pechati Estonskoi SSR* [Estonian (SSR) publishing statistics]; *Latvijas (PSR) Prese* = *Pechat' Latviiskoi SSR* [Latvian (SSR) publishing]; and *Lietuvos (TSR) spaudos statistika* = *Statistika pechati Litovskoi SSR* [Lithuanian (SSR) publishing statistics].²⁷ The statistics are now reported to internal government offices as well as to UNESCO.

Statistics reveal interesting changes from the Soviet era into the present independence years. In 1990, the number of publishers sharply increased, the same year that, for the first time, non-governmental agencies were allowed to be listed as publishers of books and brochures. Kathlenn Ladizesky and Ron Hogg noted that in Russia there were 300 publishers in 1990 and 6,000 in 1994.²⁸ In Latvia, after many years in which there were only six state-approved publishing houses, the number jumped to 46 in 1990, to 140 in 1991, and to 448 in 2000. Though the number of individual book titles increased, Latvia's print runs have decreased substantially, from 28.5 million copies in 1991 to 7 million in 2000. The statistics for 2008 show further decreases: 413 publishers that year produced 2,855 books in 5.2 million copies.²⁹ The categories for reporting publications by subject and audience have changed to reflect more closely bibliographic/subject categories used in the West.

In 2008 Estonia published 4,685 books and brochures with 7.2 million copies. In 2007, some 458 publishers in Lithuania produced about 4,567 books and brochures, totaling 8 million copies.³⁰ The online database of Lithuanian publishers is called *Lietuvos leidejai* [Lithuanian publishers].

²⁷ After 1991 the various SSR designations were removed from the titles, which is why they are in parentheses.

²⁸ Kathlenn Ladizesky and Ron Hogg, "Libraries in the Time of Transition: Changes in Libraries East and West Since the Fall of Soviet Communism," *New Review of Information and Library Research* 2 (1996): 1-2.

²⁹ National Library of Latvia Department of Press Statistics, "Izdevējdarbība 2008 gadā," <http://www.lnb.lv/lv/izdevejiem/izdevejdarbibas-statistika/izdevejdarbiba-2008-gada>.

³⁰ Martynas Mažvidas National Library of Lithuania, "Lietuvos spaudos statistika, 2007," <http://www.lnb.lt/lnb/selectPage.do?docLocator¼5F955532C7911DD8F7A746164617373&inlanguage=en>

ISSN, ISBN and ISMN Agencies

All three national libraries are the agencies that distribute ISSN, ISBN, and ISMN numbers in their respective countries. The national library Web sites have links for publishers, as publishers are one of the main user categories of the national library sites.

Archiving Electronic Publications

In this age of electronic publishing, the national libraries have struggled with managing the ephemeral nature of these publications and their bibliographic control. In Latvia, the Institute of Bibliography is creating an electronic depository of Internet resources with cultural, historical, research, or otherwise noteworthy content. The National Library of Lithuania has created the Archive of Electronic Resources, with the intention of gathering and preserving electronic documents from Lithuania and Lithuania-related electronic documents from abroad. Librarians of the Baltic countries have participated in conferences on standardizing the archiving of electronic publications, especially after 2003 when UNESCO published *Guidelines for the Preservation of Digital Heritage*.

Databases

Since the restored independence in the Baltic states coincided with the explosion of computerized catalogs, indexes, and other databases, there was a struggle to choose appropriate systems and find funding for them. It has been challenging to sift through the numerous catalogs and indexes listed on the Web sites of the national libraries and understand their purpose. Each nation is compiling its current national bibliography online, though these are different from the actual online catalogs of the national libraries. Indexing of articles is sometimes included in these large databases, but sometimes it is separate. Each country has a union catalog that reports the holdings of major libraries within the country. Most, but not all, of the databases have an English language interface as an option. The main databases are listed below. (To avoid providing complex URLs that may change, all of these databases are available from the Web sites of the national libraries listed in the references, and there is an English-language link on each site.)

National Bibliographies

- Estonia – *Eesti Rahvusbibliograafia Andmebaas* [Estonian national bibliography database]
- Latvia – *Monogrāfiju un turpinājumi devumu datubāze* [Monograph and serials database]

- Lithuania – *Nacionalinės bibliografijos duomenų bankas* [National bibliographic database]

National Library Catalogs

- Estonia – ESTER Tallinn
- Latvia – National Library of Latvia catalog
- Lithuania – National Library Online Catalog. The library also offers online images of pre_1998 catalog cards held in its old card catalog.

Union Catalogs

- Estonia – ESTER (one for Tallinn and one for Tartu)
- Latvia – Union catalog of eight institutions
- Lithuania – LIBIS (Lithuanian Integrated Library Information System) Union Catalog

Article Indexes

- Estonia – *Eesti artiklite andmebaas* [Database of Estonian articles]
- Latvia – *Analītikas datubāze* [Analytics database]
- Lithuania – *Nacionalinės bibliografijos duomenų bankas* [National bibliographic database]

All three Baltic states have made tremendous progress in making their materials available to researchers worldwide through these catalogs and indexes, though full-text access is still limited.

Research and Standards

All of the bibliographic departments deal with bibliographic control and standardization issues. In Latvia, and especially Lithuania, this department also conducts research on bibliographic questions.

Conclusion

The creation of national bibliographies, acquisition of deposit copies, compilation of publishing statistics, and other tasks were begun in the Baltic states in the state libraries that predated the Soviet book chambers. At present, these tasks have mostly returned to the national libraries. Librarians in each of the three countries have diligently worked on current and retrospective bibliographies for decades and there has been tremendous progress since 1991. The biggest challenge may be in providing easy worldwide access to this bibliographic data and full text of their resources online.

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