

Scientific and Technical Libraries of the USSR; Short Survey

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1. Introduction

Scientific and technical libraries are not only a part of the cultural life but they also are an integer of the national economy. Drawbacks and shortcomings of the Soviet economy, its rapid decline starting from 1989 have drastically affected scientific and technical libraries.

Inherent inability of the socialist industry to accumulate scientific breakthroughs made the Soviet government to develop an elaborate system of compulsory introduction of progress: from the specialized units and groups in enterprises and factories up to the All-Union Exhibition of Economic Achievements. The network of special libraries is an essential component of this system. To date the network has stored up an enormous amount of knowledge and is now facing a threat of disintegration.

The above mentioned system of compulsory introduction of progress hasn't altered the basic relations between manufacturers and consumers, and thus it hasn't influenced the technol-

ogy advance. Under such conditions administrators were constantly seeking additional forms of bureaucratic activity. Readiness to set up new organizations at the government's expense (without analysing the causes of inefficiency of those already existing) resulted in creating numerous independent information centres dealing with separate kinds of literature: translations, R&D reports, manufacturers' catalogs, information exchange with the countries of Eastern Europe, etc. Generally speaking the tendency to strengthen the information network was typical for the government's policy.

The new centres got more attention and more funds whereas the old ones (the libraries first of all) were falling into decay and poverty.

The unprotected libraries' system has badly suffered from the inadequate changes in the national economy during the last years. Introduction of market elements in industry, establishing boundaries between republics, liquidation of ministries, conversion of the military enterprises to commercial ventures brought many libraries into the state of free falling.

It's not of course librarians' conservatism that is to blame; the point is that the libraries being nonprofit organizations should get funds from the government. And in the transitional period when we have no stable government the situation has grown desperate. Therefore a complete stabilization can be achieved only on the basis of healthy economy and steady administration.

Let's consider some problems of scientific and technical libraries in this country taking as an example the activities of the USSR National Public Library for Science and Technology (later referred to as "Library")

2. The Collections

The main source of acquiring domestic literature is a free deposit copy (60,000-70,000 items annually, it provides 20-40 per cent of the total acquisition of domestic literature). This source being complemented by purchases of the charges deposit copies which are sold by special stores and usual purchases in book shops.

In the last 10 years literature acquisition was steadily decreasing (902,000 items in 1980 and 279,000 items in 1990): in particular, declines were caused by alterations in collections' structures (transferring collections of translations and manufacturers' catalogs to other organizations). One of the major and, in my opinion, longterm trends is the reduction in publishing scientific and technical literature in this country; changes in the national economy have only strengthened this tendency. In addition, a great number of private new publishing houses and joint ventures have sprung to life. Those don't follow the Deposit Copy Law and for the time being are not eager to supply libraries with their advertizing materials.

Foreign literature acquisition (120,000 items annually) proved to be more steady, deviations during the past 10 years being less than 3 per cent. Purchase of foreign literature through the Soviet Book Agency (50-60 per cent of the total foreign literature acquisition) is a constant problem and we are seeking direct contacts with vendors and publishers abroad.

As compared with 1985 the international book exchange (we have 1,700 agreements) has been reduced by 20 per cent due to the decrease in literature deliveries from Eastern Europe, Cuba, Mongolia, Vietnam.

The Library's collection size is being affected by acquisition problems, transfer of some kinds of technical literature, losses due to the accidents.

Alterations in the Library' Collections in the last 10 years:

	1980 millions of items	1990 millions of items
Books	2.5	2.4
Periodicals	2.9	3.8
Microforms	1.1	1.5
Translations, manufacturers' catalogs, etc.	3.2	0.6
TOTAL	9.7	8.3

The problem of cataloging in our Library includes, as I think, two points: - creation of the electronic catalogs and retrospective conversion of existing ones; the process has been started but the problem is that the major libraries work in fact independently. I think that future developments will lead them to some form of unification on the basis of adoption and promotion of gener-

ally accepted international cataloging system UNIMARC. The faster the libraries of this country make their connections and reference information sources internationally accessible the better; - the lack of reliable domestic computers delays practical introduction of new technology. Most libraries have no hard currency to buy modern PCs and software.

Preservation of the collections in the libraries has become a matter of primary importance nowadays. The main problem for our Library is the physical loss of the literature. More than 75% of our collections are contained not in the main library's building but in twenty different locations in Moscow. They are stored in basements and other premises wholly unfit for these purposes.

Disasters from fire and/or flooding often occur there. Frequent transportations of literature from storages to the reading rooms (some 2.5 million items annually) result in damage, deterioration and stealing of publications. The solution of the problem for our Library lies in the construction of a new building capable of housing all the collections.

At the 57th IFLA General Conference I have made several practical proposals supplementing the Preservation and Conservation Programme:

- world-wide cataloging of rare books;
- development of the recommendations on the storage of rare books;
- setting up (analogous to IAEA practice) an international ad hoc expert group authorized to check up storage conditions;
- setting up an IFLA group (an analog to the rapid deployment unit) for international aid to book collections in cases of emergency and development of a rescue procedure.

I invite the honoured Korean colleagues to

consider these ideas.

There is also an idea (which I wholly support) to organize the exhibitions and displays of rare and precious books by joint efforts of several major libraries similar to the art exhibitions arranged internationally.

It is urgent to define on the international level the limits of libraries' collections expansion. The problem could be considered as a theoretical, social and cultural one reflecting the ideas of the well-known work "Limits of Growth" by the Rome Club. Now a vast majority of libraries acquire not only printed publications but also diskettes, compact discs, audio and visual records. It's impossible to transfer them into printed forms for depository storing. Therefore the preservation of the collection as a whole wouldn't depend on the paper quality, but on durability of compact discs and reliability of repeated use of records as well.

I join the opinion that for special libraries it's essential to preserve the information itself and not the forms of its record.

3. The User

In the last three years the attendance of the Library was steadily declining, by 10-12 per cent every year. The external causes include: reduction in the amount of scientific and technical literature published, keen interest of the public in political events and preoccupation of people with their own problems. The newly born enterprises play the same role: managers are not willing any longer to give the staff an opportunity to visit the Library during working hours.

Of our drawbacks we must point out: incompleteness of the collections, limitations on the number of readers due to lack of space and long

waiting for the requested literature. Nevertheless, the Library has 246,000 permanent users. More students have become our readers; the number of others has remained the same.

The intensity of work is high, more than four readers for one seat daily. The amount of publications handed out by one librarian (up to 14,000 annually) is constantly growing and the cost of service is also going up: in 1990 a visit to the Library cost a taxpayer 12.5 roubles (compared to 6.3 roubles in 1984).

Having analyzed readers' behaviour and claims the following tendencies can be observed:

- 1) Increased interest in patents, authors' certificates, foreign manufacturers' catalogs, price lists, norms;
- 2) Growing interest in literature on economic problems, in particular, in information which could be applied practically—setting up small firms and joint ventures, foreign companies management, etc.;
- 3) Steady demand for literature on physics and mathematics (annual circulation is 14 with a tendency to still grow up), a special interest is displayed in "Physical Review", "Thin Solid Films", "Journal of Applied Physics", "Journal de Physique", publications on computers (hardware and software) ("Byte", "IEEE Transactions", "UKW-Berichte", "Data Pro", "Faulkner"), chemistry ("Chemical Abstracts"), reference literature (circulation is 4), "Science Citation Index", "Science Abstracts"), conference proceedings, current periodicals (circulation is 2). Average circulation of the total collection equals 0.79.
- 4) Permanent demand for hard copies of microforms or computer files;

- 5) Pronounced profit seeking of users; many of them visit the Library not to get primary sources but to obtain documents for further production of secondary information.
- 6) groups of selfish users who cut out articles and references from books and take cards out of catalogs.

Improvement of readers' service by introducing new technologies is being carried out too slowly. We'll mention here several reasons: unreliability of Soviet computers; technological policy which was aimed in the past 15-20 years rather at satisfying needs of big organizations instead of the individuals; lack of users' training. In 1990 in our Library there were only 43,000 requests (8 per cent of visits) addressed to the computerized system.

4. The Librarian

In this short survey I'd like to speak about five problems which librarians are now facing:

- a threat to existence of some groups of libraries;
- urgent need to modernize several major libraries;
- computerization of libraries' technologies;
- economic activities of the libraries;
- social and political activities of librarians

Elimination of some ministries endanger the very existence of their libraries; their unique collections (0.5-1 million items each) form together with our Library's collections an integral information resource. Now when the financing of many libraries has been stopped and the rent costs of the premises have been drastically increased these libraries won't be able to function without quick help of the government. The trade-union libraries have found themselves in

the same position. As far as the national problems and separation of the Republics are concerned it can be said to the librarians' credit that there is no disintegration on the national basis.

The working conditions of librarians are characterized mainly by lack of space and hard labour. It stems primarily from the insufficient governmental support for the libraries. There are also some other reasons: librarians caring more for the libraries' collections have completely sacrificed their own needs. In other words, they let books oust people. So far the new technologies haven't vacated a single square metre (by the way, the new technologies has not resulted in release of even one librarian). Dr. C. E. Wall quite correctly writes in "Library Hi Tech": "For generations, there critical components—personnel, collections, and facilities—comprised the traditional library. Today, libraries are undergoing a generational shift characterized by the addition of a fourth major component: technology. Library buildings, which previously only needed to house people and materials, now must also accommodate technology".

Our building is 114 years old and desperately needs reconstruction. However the construction of the new Library's building has been going on for more than 20 years and we don't have any hopes for its completion. Though this problem is much the same all over the world; according to the available data presented in the "IFLA Journal" it takes on the average 7.1 years to build a new library (from 1 to 69 years).

The Government constantly falls behind in increasing librarians' wages. The average salary in our Library increased from 160 roubles per month in 1988 to 235 roubles per month in 1990 and 340 now. This growth doesn't compensate inflation rates.

Special libraries today are actively involved in fee-based services, the main principle of this work is to provide users with added value services besides the free ones. Although the activity covers only some 10 per cent of the budget the feeling of freedom and the possibility to pay for the high-quality work are very essential. It is of great importance for us to get a paid job for foreign libraries or information centres; it would lessen the burden of hyperinflation and keep the highly qualified staff.

The state-of-the-art in computerization of library technologies is marked by a wide application of PCs which play an important social role as they change the nature of librarian's labour increasing his or her personal creativity (and not only of electronic engineers as in the case of mainframes).

Our Library uses computerized technologies in the lending department (100 per cent of requests are processed); the foreign literature acquisition is fully automated; some 20 per cent of the domestic literature acquisition procedures are computerized; there is also a computerized system for the Library management. Efforts are being made to develop desk top publishing, to introduce bar-coding. the Library's mainframe computers support the union catalog database providing telecommunication access to it through the networks of "Aeroflot"—the Soviet agency. They also ensure the work of terminals in reading rooms.

Social and political activities of librarians and their readiness to cooperate beyond the framework of the governmental bodies have resulted in setting up library associations. From those I know I would like to mention the Moscow Library Association comprising several hundred of members. The Association efficiently defends

the interests of individual librarians, publishes its own newspaper and has already organized some civil actions. Similar regional associations have combined to form the Russian Federation.

The Association of Research Libraries and Libraries for Science and Technology, the vice-president of which I have the honour to be, has discussed the fee-based services problems, coordination of technological policy, has offered its assistance to member libraries in the literature acquisition and in the preservation filming of publications. On behalf of the Association we submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers our proposals on the possible ways of tackling the prob-

lems of suffering libraries.

A close cooperation between librarians and governmental bodies has been established while discussing a new Libraries' Law. The Law will postulate; conditions and procedures of libraries' opening and closing; libraries' cooperation with the governmental bodies; responsibilities to readers; social protection of librarians. I think it is of primary importance to free libraries from any taxes as far as their money making activities are concerned. The same goes for donation to the libraries. It can serve as the basis for their independence.

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회원구분	회비(연)	입 회 기 준
단체회원 1	180,000원	특별시·직할시·도청소재지의 국공 사립 공공도서관/대학(교)도서관/연구기관 부설도서관/금융기관 및 기업체 부설도서관/중앙부처 부설도서관/군기관 부설중앙도서관/기타 주요도서관
단체회원 2	120,000원	시소재지의 공사립 공공도서관/전문대학 도서관/관공서 및 사회단체 부설도서관/ 군기관 부설도서관/기타 주요도서관
단체회원 3	40,000원	초중고등학교도서관(실)/군읍면소재 공사립 공공도서관(부회비 2,000원 포함)
개인회원	15,000원	도서관에 근무하는 직원으로 자격증 (1급정사서·2급정사서·준사서·사서교사) 을 소지한 자 및 도서관학을 18학점이상 이수하고 자격증을 소지한 자