

Annual Report to CDNL 2005 – 2006

Name of Country : Iceland
Name of Library : National and University Library of Iceland
Name of Chief Executive : Dr. Sigrún Klara Hannesdóttir

On December 1, 2004 the library celebrated its 10th anniversary as an amalgamated national and university library, located in a brand new and modern building. Many things were done to commemorate the anniversary. The Library published one of its old manuscripts, *A Book of magic: Spells to ward off evil forces of this world and the other*. The book was published in Icelandic with translations into English, Danish and German. The Book of magic is one of many old manuscripts that are kept in the Manuscript department. The Library also held a conference jointly with the University of Iceland where Gerard van Trier from the Royal Library of the Netherlands, dr. Sandra Thomas director of Cornell University Libraries, dr. Kai Ekholm national librarian of Finland and dr. Sigrun Klara Hannesdottir outlined the possible future scenarios for these types of libraries.

Iceland has a very small population, or only about 300.000 people with their own language, culture and publication activities. The country therefore has to develop new solutions to many problems, solutions that demand creativity and ingenuity. The most obvious is that the National Library is also the Library of the University of Iceland, which is by far the largest university in Iceland. The two functions – that of preservation of the national heritage as well as the provision of information for the students and staff of a modern and competitive institution can sometimes cause conflicts. The two user groups have very different needs and requirements but the Library makes an effort to serve both as well as possible.

Two other things should be mentioned as national solutions. One is that there is one library system for the whole of Iceland, university libraries, public libraries, school libraries, special- and research libraries. A library system, Aleph from ExLibris, was opened in April of 2003. The library system is run by a limited company, *Landskerfi bókasafna* (Icelandic Library Consortium) which is owned 50% by the local governments and 50% by the national government. Now there are about 170 libraries linked to the same system. Libraries pay service fees to the Consortium depending on several criteria such as population for the public libraries and the size of stock and number of students for the university libraries. The bibliographic records were first transferred from the older system, Libertas, which had been operated by the National Library and served the main research libraries in the country. The other large system, Dobis-Libis, was run by the public libraries and all the records from the public and school libraries were included in the new system. This amalgamation of the two databases created serious discrepancies because of different cataloguing traditions. The quality control of the data base is in the hands of the National Library.

The other unique solution which has been developed in Iceland is the signing of national licences to electronic journals and databases. The National Library is in charge of signing the contracts with the vendors and then to collect user fees from the largest libraries. The difference to other types of licences is that the material is made available to every person in Iceland, independent of location and area of interest. It is a public policy to have this national access to as much material as possible and the purpose is to provide small communities and research institution around Iceland with access to the world of learning.

The National and University Library has defined its role in the information society as a knowledge provider comparable to the water-works and energy providers that guarantees that the users will have these commodities in their homes. The Library has set its focus on the the development of the *Electronic Research Library* as well as *Electronic National Library*. The basis for the *Electronic Research Library* is the electronic subscriptions to foreign scientific information which is either through national licencing or through licences signed on behalf of the University of Iceland. The foundations of the Electronic National Library are extensive digitisation projects carried out in the Library. The digitised Icelandic material includes now a large collections of manuscripts related to the Icelandic sagas, historical maps and more recently the digitisation of historical journals, newspapers and books in Icelandic. All this material is available through the Library's homepage www.bok.hi.is.

Address : Arngrimsdata 3, 107 Reykjavik, Iceland

Telephone and fax details : +354-525-5600

Web address of Library : www.bok.hi.is