

Archives of Lithuanian Emigration in the Lithuanian Libraries

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After fifteen years of independence let us already make conclusions about how much of and what written and printed documental heritage has been delivered to the Lithuanian libraries that are some of the most important depositories of documental heritage during this period.

The Soviet iron curtain, censorship of press, *Glavlit*, special departments separated for half a century the readers of libraries from numerous political, scientific literature and fiction, and restricted researchers' possibilities. When the Baltic States regained independence in 1990, to Lithuania as well as, I believe I am not mistaken to say, to all the post-Soviet countries flowed written and printed documental heritage of emigrants. Other attitudes also changed; if theretofore one had considered that written documental heritage had to be accumulated only in the main libraries or archives, then during the independence years, when new higher schools were established in provinces and the functions of public libraries were expanded, the number of manuscript document departments increased.

In 1998 Lithuanian Archives Department created a working group of specialists from archives, libraries and museums, who had to compose principles of compiling and structure of indexation of the archival documents brought into Lithuania since 1990, and prepare their form of presentation. After the workers in the department changed, the work was interrupted. The index has not been prepared.

After receiving invitation to the conference organized by Estonian colleagues, I had an idea to look how much and what kind of written and printed documental heritage is stocked in Lithuanian libraries. Looking through Lithuanian professional bibliographic literature on library and book science – there are 4 such publications in Lithuania – we also failed to find statistical data. There were significant and extensive presentations of single collections of published and archival documents and of the events related. The *Lituanica* Department in the National Library of Lithuania headed by Silvija Vėlavienė is in good standing and well-known in the Lithuanian librarian society. Bibliographies issued by this department are important publications informing about the emigrant documentary heritage.

We deliberately dissociated from other institutions, which also hold emigration heritage, i.e., from archives, museums, Lithuanian Emigration Institute, because we would need much more effort to get acquainted with Lithuanian emigration heritage in these institutions too. Therefore we limited ourselves only to Lithuanian libraries of various levels. To see the situation, two-part questionnaire was prepared for the collections of printings, containing the following questions:

- How many and what kinds of collections of printings were delivered over to the library during the period 1990–2006?
- Who were the compilers of these collections (fellow-countrymen, their children or episodic persons)?
- Number of printings in the collections
- Chronological lines of printings
- Character of collections of printing (fiction or scientific literature)
- Sources of acquisition (donations or testamentary)

- Which five-year period (1990–1995, 1996–2000, 2001–2005) was the most productive one
- How documents from these collections were used
- Has the library a special plan for preservation and dissemination of these collections?
- Is any information about these collections of printing placed onto the library website?

Analogous questions were asked about collections of the hand-written archival documents as well.

The questionnaire was sent to 84 libraries: 5 major libraries: National Library of Lithuania, Library of Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Lithuanian Library for the Blind, Lithuanian Agriculture Library, Lithuanian Library of Medicine), 15 academic libraries, 59 public libraries (region and town) of municipalities, 5 regional public libraries.

We can say at once, is that colleagues were not much interested in the survey. 40 responses were received (respectively, from 4 major libraries 7 academic libraries, 28 public libraries (region and town) of municipalities, 1 regional public library). The reasons might be that the contributions from emigration are not as important any more as during the first years of independence; mostly they consist of out-of-date, non-relevant literature, which does not meet to-day's informational needs. However, the results obtained expose the present situation and answer many questions related to written and printed documental heritage of Lithuanian emigration preserved in the libraries of Lithuania.

Among the answers received, only 6 noted that they do not possess emigration heritage. I hope that the destitution of this heritage was a reason of many non-answers.

The questionnaire data indicate that on average, Lithuanian libraries hold from 1 to 6 collections of printed publications (books), which amount to more than 60,000 copies. This number does not include data from the National Library of Lithuania, because this library was a co-coordinator for distribution of emigration books among Lithuanian libraries. Collections of the *Lituanica* Department in the National Library of Lithuania have been substantially accessed during the last fifteen years and currently they contain more than 250,000 items of periodicals, and about 120,000 copies of books.

Answering the question about the printed collections received, academic libraries reported that in many cases the books were for teaching process, therefore they did not form special collections, but supplemented the library collections with these books.

Lithuanian emigration hand-written archival documents are preserved in 13 libraries (2 main libraries, 3 academic libraries, 7 public libraries of municipalities, 1 regional public library). The clear leader in this field is Vilnius University Library, the oldest library in Lithuania. During the last 15 years this library received 32 collections of hand-written archival documents. It numbers more than 15,000 collected units. The second place belongs to the Library of Lithuanian Academy of Sciences: 16 collections, more than 10,000 collected units. The leader among the public libraries of municipalities – Īilutė region public library of the municipality – possesses 7 collections. All in all, Lithuanian libraries hold about 30,000 collected units of Lithuanian emigration hand-written archival documents that come from 81 collections.

The questionnaire contained the question which five-year period (1990–1995, 1996–2000, 2001–2005) was the most productive. The answers revealed that for receiving printed matter, the most productive was the 2nd five-year period (1996–2000) – 14 respondents indicated that; the 1st five-year period (1990–1995) was indicated by 10 respondents, the 3rd one (2001–2005) – by 7 respondents. Answering the question about the acquisition of hand-written archival documents, 6 respondents indicated the 3rd five-year period (2001–2005), 5 – the 2nd five-year period (1996–2000), 2 – the 1st five-year period (1990–1995).

Judging on prevalence of publications and hand-written archival documents of a certain period, we can conclude that they are mostly from the 20th century. However, one can find also unique things. For example, the library of Klaipėda University got incunabula (1471), four regional libraries of municipalities – books from the Lithuanian press-ban period (1864–1904). This is an important fact, since quite few copies of Lithuanian books of this period have remained, because they used to be confiscated and destroyed. Among 40 correspondents only one responded that he received books published in 2005, and 4 – books published in 2004. It probably might be worth to discuss the question of looking for contacts with the new emigrants.

Concerning hand-written archival documents, the earliest dates indicated are 1904–1906. However, if the dates are early, these mostly are not original documents, but copies.

To answer the question about how documents found their way to the library, all 100 percent of the respondents noted that books and hand-written archival documents were donated. But there were also some supplements when books were acquired via the National Library of Lithuania, Lithuanian Emigration Institute. There was one record that the book was bought in antiquarian bookshop.

The compilers of the collections were mostly public figures of Lithuanian communities (United States of America and Chicago city predominate): writers, doctors, bibliophiles, scientists, figures of culture and art.

The repertoire of the publications is varied. Mostly there are fictional works of Lithuanian emigrants, works of religious content, scientific publications, periodicals, fiction published in pre-war Lithuania, works of world classics in English, children literature. However, depending on the type of a library, some libraries got also special literature. For example, the library of Vilnius Gedimino Technical University received books on architecture, design, history of bridge construction, the library of Sports Academy – publications on sports.

Concerning hand-written archival documents – these were mostly correspondence, memoirs, manuscripts of fictional works, photographs.

How were the books and hand-written archival documents used? Most of respondents indicated that the documents were used for exhibitions, in preparing publications, projects, user service.

The questionnaire revealed that the books and hand-written archival documents received from emigration are not well enough presented on libraries' websites. For the meantime, just 4 respondents have indicated this. 5 referred to do this in their nearest plans. One library has plans to issue a catalogue. It is very popular in the public libraries of municipality to exhibit the above-mentioned documents on the shelves. What is important, is that libraries try as soon as possible to enter their data in the electronic catalogue LIBIS (Lithuanian Integral Library Information System) so that the LIBIS system users could be informed about their documents.

Finally, one more fact is worth mentioning. In 1953–1969, in Boston (USA) the Lithuanian Encyclopedia (37 volumes) was being published. It became a symbol of printed emigration heritage. It is still one of the main Lithuanian sources of information. Seemingly therefore many respondents, especially small libraries, indicated this Encyclopedia.

Conclusions

- Printed and hand-written archival documental heritage of Lithuanian emigration is stocked in 36 Lithuanian libraries.
- This amounts to more than 100,000 printed publication copies, and more than 30,000 hand-written archival documents collected units.

- The most productive as to the document acquisition was the period 1996–2000, while for the hand-written archival documents – the period 2001–2005.
- The main source of acquisition was donations.
- The repertoire was the following: fictional works of Lithuanian emigration, books of religious content, works of world classics in English, children’s literature, informational publications.
- The documents were used for exhibitions, in preparing publications, projects, in user service.
- Libraries try as soon as possible to enter their data into the electronic catalogue LIBIS (Lithuanian Integral Library Information System) and to present the documents on their websites.