

THE MEDICAL LIBRARY NETWORK IN LITHUANIA

The first attempts of setting up medical libraries in Lithuania were made just before World War II and were interrupted by the onset of it. Net-working began in 1944 after the foundation of Lithuanian Library of Medicine (LLM) the formerly Central Medical Library. Since that time smaller libraries have emerged throughout the country: in the district central hospital, major city hospitals, medical teaching and research institutions, health resorts. At present the network consists of 104 medical libraries scattered all over the country, including LLM located in Vilnius and the Library of Kaunas Medical Academy, which is the second largest medical library in Lithuania. The network's combined resources total over 1300 thousand volumes providing information services for 48 thousand users. Over 30 thousand items are added to the collection annually. Libraries differ in size from 2 to 30 thousand items. The users are medical practitioners, administrators, researchers, teaching staff and medical students and some also serve patients. Links among libraries are maintained for document acquisition, bibliographic and reference activities, and interlibrary

loans supervised since 1951 by LLM which is the coordinating centre in the network.

Close cooperation between medical libraries ensure availability of holdings for every user in the country. LLM with the largest collection of medical literature, works under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Health. It has 12 branch libraries in major hospitals and research institutions and holds about 700 thousand items, books and periodicals in health care, medical and related sciences. The main functions include literature acquisition, cataloguing, lending, bibliographic and reference work. Traditional card catalogues based on indexing by medical subjects are still in use. The reference system includes issues of current awareness bulletins on new acquisitions (6 per year) and current periodicals (once a year), regular new literature displays, topic lists for health promotion and individual searches on specific subjects.

Recently the LLM started to use the CD-ROM version of Medline and the Current Contents on diskette-database for medical information searches. The searches are delivered in a printed ver-

sion and on diskette. The availability of a modern computerized database is of great help in fulfilling the need for Western medical literature as acquisition of primary sources (periodicals, books) is hindered by the critical financial situation of the LLM.

Since 1959 the LLM has been producing the fundamental medical bibliographic edition "Lithuanian Medical Literature", covering the period from 1940. Since there is no other specific training for health library personnel, the LLM is also involved in the professional development of medical librarians. Every year a one week workshop and regional seminars are held to present changing library techniques and innovations. In 1993 the LLM was granted official status as the **WHO Documentation Centre** with specific responsibilities to promote WHO ideals and help to implement specific targets on national levels by means of information resources.

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THE LITHUANIAN LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

I received a letter from Dalia Daujotiene, principal librarian of the Lithuanian Library of Medicine, who was one of our guests from the Baltic States at the EAHIL European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries held in Oslo last summer, as well as from Salvinija Kociene, the Director of the Library. These letters made me very upset about the bad conditions imposed on medical libraries in Lithuania.

J'ai reçu une lettre bouleversante de Dalia Daujotiene, bibliothécaire principale de la Bibliothèque de Médecine de Lithuanie, qui était une de nos hôtes lors de notre Conférence Européenne à Oslo, ainsi que de Salvinija Kociene, Directrice de la Bibliothèque. Ci-contre, des extraits.

E. Husem

"Dear Elisabeth,

... I must confess that we are very much upset here, in Vilnius. We are so much disappointed and upset with the attitude of our government towards libraries, and namely, towards our library. It's almost a year that we are fighting hard for the existence of our Library. After almost 20 years of waiting, we are now in the centre of town and in our own building given by the former government. ...

Now that we are successfully functioning for almost three years, we have to give up our building for this government has decided to give it to the Court of Appeal. We have to move till the end of March, and that with a collection of 700,000 books and journals!

We have appealed here and there. The press and the medical society and librarians, supported our struggle, but nothing helped. We even were scared that if we do not go, our Library will be closed and the holdings given to the University. ... Some of us are leaving the library for good, because they are tired of such an uncertainty. ...

I am staying, but I am upset and helpless because I know what it is to carry books and things all way up 5 floors without any lift.... That building is a factory in the suburbs, and we think that means a slow death for our library. ... Our director still fights, meets people, is doing a lot to fight back our building which is given to the Ministry of Justice. ..."

Dalia Daujotiene

Lithuanian Library of Medicine

(extracts, letter Jan. 21, 1995)