
An Ongoing Process of Modernization: Libraries and Librarianship in Estonia

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ABSTRACT

Libraries are a component of our ever-changing social environment. Organizational change in libraries involves many activities, including the development of mission statements, the refinement of goals regarding the role of the library in the knowledge society, the restructuring of organizations, the use of information and communication technologies, the training of librarians, and the management of finances. Estonian libraries are information centers that support research and innovation by providing the access to scholarly and professional information; supporting education, lifelong learning, and cultural development; introducing world culture; ensuring information provision to all social groups; supporting the development of the information society through the implementing new technologies; contributing to the integration of the European information treasury; and helping to gain an international reputation for Estonia.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ESTONIA

The Republic of Estonia (EestiVabariik) is a state in the Baltic region of northern Europe. It is bordered to the north by the Gulf of Finland, to the west by the Baltic Sea, to the south by Latvia, and to the east by Lake Peipsi and the Russian Federation. Across the Baltic Sea lies Sweden in the west and Finland to the north. The territory of Estonia covers 45,227 square kilometers (17,462 square miles) and is influenced by a humid, continental climate. The Estonian language is a Finno-Ugric language closely related to Finnish, and distantly to Hungarian and to the Sami languages. Estonia has a population of almost 1.3 million people; 69 percent are ethnic Estonians, and minority groups are composed of Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Finns. Estonia is a democratic, parliamentary republic divided into

LIBRARY TRENDS, Vol. 63, No. 2, 2014 (Libraries in a Postcommunist World: A Quarter of a Century of Development in Central and Eastern Europe and Russia: Part 1, edited by Hermina G.B. Anghelescu), pp. 183–196. © 2015 The Board of Trustees, University of Illinois

fifteen counties, with its capital and largest city being Tallinn. Estonia ranks high in the Human Development Index and performs favorably in measurements of press freedom, economic freedom, civil liberties, and education. The country is often described as one of the most “wired” countries in Europe and is recognized as a leader in e-government (“Estonia,” 2014).

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The history of the East European region in general, and Estonia in particular, has been a troubled one. Talking about nations and states in historical context is a rather complicated business because of the changing political, military, economic, and ethnic composition of the region. Kasekamp (2010) pays attention to the twentieth century, during which the Baltic States achieved independence but also endured occupation by both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. He explores how the Baltic States recovered their statehood and transformed themselves into members of the European Union. Although all historical periods have left their mark in the cultures, books, and libraries of the states, especially university libraries, the roots of the modern library system can be traced to the second half of the nineteenth century with the establishment of the first public libraries, and especially to the first independence period of the region. The Baltic States emerged from the political turmoil caused by World War I into an initial independence period, which lasted from 1918 to 1940, years that were critical to the development of the region’s present-day, modern states. It was also an important period for establishing the library systems that have developed since. The introduction of higher education in librarianship and bibliography helped start modern research in library and bibliography sciences (Lepik, Maceviciute, & Pakala, 2013, p. 155).

Soviet rule from 1940 onward significantly distorted the role of libraries and diverted their natural development. Collections were destroyed, and their replacements tightly controlled. The functions of the libraries changed, and the Librarians’ Association ceased to exist. Libraries mainly served as ideological institutions. The practical requirements of life, however, demanded the provision of certain services, and so evaluating library development during the Soviet period is far from one-dimensional (Nauta & Ermel, 1997). The Soviet period saw the expansion of mass libraries (the equivalent of public libraries) and the creation of the State System of Information Support for industry and other branches of the economy. The Book Chambers established after World War II took over work on the current state bibliography and started work on retrospective national bibliographies (West & Lowe, 1998). Education and research in library science and bibliography were conducted at higher education institutions and gained strength. Despite being under tight ideological control, librarians managed to accomplish significant work in preserving the cultural heritage of Estonia (Lepik, Maceviciute, & Pakala, 2013, p. 157).

Since 1990, when the Soviet period ended, the second independence era has been controversial from the point of view of library development. The problems that beset developing states, such as the cost of adopting new information and communication technologies in a difficult economic climate, have been the major factor influencing the Estonian library system rather than the earlier problem of an ideologically driven (Soviet) media (Lepik, 1995). The keyword describing what happened to the network of Estonian libraries in the 1990s is *change*. According to Virkus (2003, p. 11),

academic libraries in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe have experienced a period of rapid and profound change during the last decade, in connection with the transformation in the political and economic structures, changes in territorial and administrative situations, as well as with the rapid development of information and communication technologies.

In evaluating developments in Estonia libraries over the past decade or so, it is possible to detect a shift from an ideologically indoctrinated library system toward a democratic one—that is to say, from

- closed, inward-looking libraries toward open, user-friendly information, recreation, education, and cultural centers;
- safe, predictable state-funded functions toward a proactive, innovative, and creative library paradigm;
- traditional library education to a modern curriculum of library and information management; and
- deeply centralized decision-making to decentralized accountability for each library's profile and performance (Valm, 2002; Virkus, 2000).

THE LIBRARY NETWORK IN ESTONIA

Responsibility for libraries in Estonia falls under many different ministries and authorities. Changes in the Estonian library system have taken place mainly in connection with the transformation of the economy and changing territorial and administrative arrangements and have resulted in an optimization of library services. It is broadly true that there have been no unjustified library closures brought about by a lack of funding, something that might have been expected in the years immediately following the transition from socialism (Lepik & Liivamägi, 2003).

The network of Estonian libraries consists of five types: research libraries (national library, universal libraries, state university libraries, and special research libraries); libraries of various other higher education institutions (libraries of private universities, libraries of state nonuniversity higher educational institutions, and libraries of private nonuniversity higher educational institutions); special libraries (government libraries, health service/medical libraries, libraries of professional institutions and associations, industrial and commercial libraries, and libraries of cultural

institutions); public libraries (central libraries, municipal libraries, community libraries, and rural libraries); and school libraries (elementary school libraries, basic school libraries, secondary high school libraries, vocational school libraries, evening school libraries, and hobby school libraries). An overview of the number of Estonian libraries, library use, items in collections, and the number of librarians is shown in table 1.

The library network in Estonia functions well. It is a national network that has good representation across all regions. As of January 2013, 986 Estonian libraries form the library network, including fifty research and special libraries, 559 public libraries, and 377 school libraries. Research and special libraries are the National Library of Estonia (NLE), libraries of higher educational institutions, and special libraries of various institutions. The NLE serves, among other things, as a public law library. Libraries of higher educational institutions and school libraries are governed by the Ministry of Education and Research. The Council of Research Libraries' Directors was founded by the ministry for making joint decisions on research libraries. Public libraries are subordinated to the local authorities and governed by the Ministry of Culture. The Council of Public Libraries was founded by the Ministry of Culture for making joint decisions on public libraries. The Council for Digitizing Cultural Heritage was founded by the Ministry of Culture for the purpose of making joint decisions on digitizing and preserving Estonian cultural heritage. The council draws together libraries and other cultural and research institutions (Riet, 2007).

Library activities in Estonia are governed by a series of legal acts covering the past two decades. The most important are the National Library of Estonia Act (1998), the Public Libraries acts (1992, 1998, 2011), and the Legal Deposit Act (1997). Since it was first passed, the NLE Act has been amended six times. In February 2011, the Riigikogu (Estonia's parliament) passed the act, which became law on April 1, 2011. It was formulated with the aim of specifying and complementing the tasks of the NLE, the membership of the supervisory board, the management and responsibilities of the library, and the provisions related to the director general. Other acts of relevance to libraries are the Organization of Research and Development Act, the Universities Act, the University of Tartu Act, the Education Act, and the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act.

The aims of the NLE are to increase the initiative, awareness, and sense of responsibility of citizens based on knowledge and access to information; to enhance the fundamental values of the Estonian state and promote common European values, such as culture and democracy. In seeking to achieve its aims, the NLE is guided by the recommendations of UNESCO for national and parliamentary libraries. The functions of the NLE are those of a national library, a parliamentary library, a research and development organization, and a humanities and social sciences library (the functions of which include the collection, preservation, processing,

Table 1. Libraries in Estonia (2013)

	Number of libraries	Users	Visits	Virtual visits	Loans	Items at the end of the year	% of books	Librarians
Research and special libraries	50	227,634	1,520,681	13,997,995	1,848,837	14,027,636	72.2%	777
Public libraries	556	377,713	5,953,352	1,925,206	11,197,756	11,677,385	97.6%	1,294
School libraries	371	150,701	2,239,958	0	1,915,394	4,241,946	95.7%	434
TOTALS	977	756,048	9,713,991	15,923,201	14,961,987	29,946,967		2,505

(Source: "Estonian Library Statistics" [n.d.]. Retrieved September 1, 2014, from <http://www.nlib.ee/index.php?id=23131>)

analyzing, and granting of access to information related to the humanities and social sciences) (National Library of Estonia, n.d.).

The NLE has developed a center for librarianship in charge of statistics, standardization, and terminology work (the development and maintenance of library and information science terms, the work of which includes management of the database of library terms, consultations on the issues of terminology and linguistics, and the arranging for terminology working-group meetings). One of its important goals is the organization of professional training, which will ensure that the knowledge and skills developed by Estonian librarians will meet the requirements of both traditional and digital libraries.

The strategic goals of services provided to the library network include the development of the search portal of the NLE into the information portal of Estonian libraries and the development of the digital archive (DIGAR) into the archives of Estonia's printed cultural heritage (Andresoo, 2009). The NLE's digital archive (<http://digar.nlib.ee>) collects web publications, preprints files of publishers, and digitizes copies of publications; it contains books, newspapers, journals, geographical maps, printed music, photos, and postcards. The content of the digital files is seachable, and the archive's publications are linked to its online catalog, ESTER. International cooperation is essential for Estonian libraries and library organizations, which actively work with many international organizations and participate in different international projects.

LIBRARY SYSTEMS AND DATABASES

Most Estonian public and school libraries use two locally developed library systems (RIKS) and (URRAM) e-catalogues (established in 2000 and 2001). A total of 353 libraries use RIKS, and 436 use URRAM. Both library systems are used by central, local, school, higher education institutions,

and special libraries. RIKS and URRAM are shared catalogs, which enable records to be downloaded from ESTER. ESTER, established in 1999, is the shared catalog of the largest libraries in Estonia, all members of the Estonian Libraries Network (ELNET) Consortium. The acronym derives from MARC 21 language and the country code: EST (Estonian) and ER (Estonia). The catalog includes books, periodicals, manuscripts, maps, sheet music, audio-visual materials, photos, cultural items, and e-publications. Digital collections are linked to the e-catalogue. ESTER is freely accessible to all libraries for duplication and use (Pai & Sepp, 2012).

Two examples of cooperation in creating databases are the Estonian National Bibliography and the Database of Estonian Articles. The bibliography registers all publications issued in Estonia, as well as other Estonian-language publications, works by Estonian authors, and translations and foreign-language publications about Estonia and Estonians issued abroad. The Database of Estonian Articles is compiling all articles into the *Index Scriptorium Estoniae (ISE)*, the result of cooperation among twelve libraries in the ELNET. The *ISE* contains articles from newspapers, magazines, journals, serial publications, anthologies, and collections from the 1990s onward, allowing access to full texts in free digital archives and web publications. About 200 articles are added to the database daily (Database of Estonian Articles, n.d.).

There are some good examples of digital collections in university libraries. For example, the University of Tartu's digital archive, DSpace (<http://dspace.utlib.ee>), is a repository for electronic materials that includes e-theses and e-publications, digitized rare books, manuscripts, images, movies, and so on. Tallinn University Academic Library's repository E-Ait (<http://e-ait.tlulib.ee>) is an electronic archive dedicated to preserving doctoral and master theses conferred by the university, as well as study materials, articles, and digitized rarities. Tallinn University of Technology's All Digital Library (<http://digi.lib.ttu.ee>) comprises theses, e-study materials, and other publications.

RESEARCH LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVE LIBRARIES

Research libraries and archive libraries are designated as such by Estonia's government upon the recommendation of the Minister of Education and Research, who regulates their requirements. According to the Organization of Research and Development Act (1997), a research or archive library is one that provides public services, and its function is the collection, preservation, and processing of scientific information, and the making of such information available. A national publication's archive library is also an archive of Estonian publications as national cultural heritage. The research/archive library's primary functions are: the development, permanent preservation, and systematic structuring of a complete collection of printed matter published in Estonian and in Estonia, and of

publications about Estonia or containing information concerning Estonia; making the collection available for research purposes; and participation in the preparation of a national bibliography.

At the end of 2013, there were six university libraries nominated by public law as research libraries: the Library of the Estonian Academy of Arts, the Estonian Academy of Theatre and Music Library, the Academic Library of Tallinn University, Tallinn University of Technology Library, the Library of the Estonian University of Life Sciences, and the University of Tartu Library. Three libraries were nominated as archive libraries: the Archival Library of the Estonian Literary Museum, the Academic Library of Tallinn University, and the University of Tartu Library. University libraries that act as research libraries have an obligation to ensure the availability of necessary information to students, being also study libraries. The information resources of research libraries are open to the public (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 2013).

The oldest research library in Estonia is the University of Tartu Library, established in 1802, when the university was founded. A historically valuable collection of Baltica literature is maintained by the the Academic Library of Tallinn University (Pai & Sepp, 2012). Estonian research and archive libraries aim to ensure the availability of scholarly and professional information for sustainable social development and further research and development activities via library and information services (table 2).

PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Public library services are readily available to all Estonians. The present public-library network was established during the 1920s. The initial principle was that every rural municipality had to maintain at least one library, and the distance between libraries could not exceed seven kilometers. Today, a public library must exist in a settlement with at least 500 residents;

Table 2. Research and special libraries in Estonia (2012)

	Number of libraries	Users	Visits	Loans	Items at the end of the year	Librarians
National Library of Estonia	1	16,887	123,460	77,555	3,252,716	301
University libraries	6	150,353	1,032,526	1,668,749	7,816,135	345
Other higher educational institutions libraries	13	19,599	214,651	186,114	384,702	42
Other special libraries	30	12,555	97,269	144,394	2,501,919	92
TOTALS	50	199,394	1,467,906	2,076,812	13,955,472	780

(Source: "Estonian Library Statistics" [n.d.]. Retrieved December 17, 2013, from <http://www.nlib.ee/statistics-2/>)

however, approximately 150 libraries are in much smaller villages. In some remote areas of Estonia, public libraries are often the only institutions that provide public services and also function as cultural community centers. Public libraries are administered by local authorities and are state supported within the framework of various programs and projects. The building and renovation of public libraries has been successful, the majority having been modernized mostly by state support (table 3).

In considering the country's changing social needs, the Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with local authorities, has prioritized the development of high-tech environments in public libraries. All are equipped with computers and have free access to the internet. The national government provides support for the acquisition of public-library collections, as well as for the provision of electronic services. These libraries use three integrated library systems, two of which have been created in Estonia. In recent years, the number of electronic lending libraries has increased (Veskus, 2005). For example, the e-library (ELLU) (<http://ellu.keskraamatukogu.ee>) at the Tallinn Central Library is an internet-based resource for the lending and reading of e-books mainly in Estonian, an initiative launched in 2012.

Access to libraries' databases enables users to individually reserve documents or renew material on loan. The calculation of author royalties derived from lending includes electronic lending. A single, designated library coordinates library services in each county, functioning as a county library and financed by the national government. County libraries also coordinate the acquisitions of public libraries' collections and the professional training of library staff. Libraries' acquisitions are financed by both state and local authorities. Over half-a-million documents are purchased annually, which equates to 1.1 documents per Estonian citizen (Pai & Sepp, 2012).

Estonia's public libraries occupy a prominent position in the country's advanced information society. In addition to maintaining collections of materials and offering electronic services, they also support the state by being responsible for the national census, elections, and other kinds of public activities. Public libraries are ubiquitous throughout the country, providing citizens with opportunities to improve their quality of life.

There are 545 general education schools in Estonia, with 377 of them having libraries (table 4); the ones without libraries have textbook collections instead. From the perspective of supporting the learning processes, school libraries carry out four vital tasks:

- Assist schools' learning processes by providing necessary textbooks and other materials
- Enable the employment of various learning methods via the provision of literature that supports study programs

Table 3. Public libraries in Estonia (2012)

	Number of libraries	Users	Visits	Loans	Items at the end of the year	Librarians
Central libraries	20	209,003	3,325,996	6,475,346	4,467,733	606
Libraries of general use	553	378,084	6,127,348	11,580,735	11,588,267	1,299
Other libraries	6	5,150	31,804	113,019	64,839	4
TOTALS	579	592,237	9,485,148	18,169,100	16,120,839	1,909

(Source: "Estonian Library Statistics" [n.d.]. Retrieved December 17, 2013, from <http://www.nlib.ee/statistics-2/>)

Table 4. School libraries in Estonia (2012)

	Number of libraries	Users	Visits	Loans	Items at the end of the year	Librarians
Primary school libraries	9	1,096	18,748	13,358	30,001	8
Basic school libraries	131	20,914	285,569	246,955	688,968	135
Gymnasium libraries	201	107,114	1,792,679	1,517,717	3,080,436	271
Evening school libraries	13	4,573	24,897	34,861	52,575	13
Vocational school libraries	22	16,788	207,644	146,573	463,365	29
Hobby school libraries	1	480	1,934	2,885	27,637	1
TOTALS	377	150,965	2,331,471	1,962,349	4,342,982	457

(Source: "Estonian Library Statistics" [n.d.]. Retrieved December 17, 2013, from <http://www.nlib.ee/statistics-2/>)

- Support information-technology requirements
- Develop pupils' learning and information-retrieval skills and reading habits via the provision of literature, lessons in reading, and library events

In many local government units, the school library and the public library have been combined. In such cases, the school has to acquire only educational literature, leaving the public library to purchase all other kinds of materials. There are two types of school libraries in Estonia: *learning centers*, which support the teaching process and students' information-literacy development; and *study libraries*, which comprise mostly textbooks and other teaching materials (Pai & Sepp, 2012).

EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR LIBRARIANS

Professional training for librarians in Estonia has been available for about ninety years. Such training became a major issue for the Estonian Librarians' Association during the 1920s. In 1927, the study of librarianship became an optional subject in the curriculum of the University of Tartu.

Following this, at the same university, in 1944, a Department of Bibliography was opened, and, in 1954, the Faculty of Librarianship was founded (Lepik, 1995, p. 28).

Library and information science (LIS) education has been offered at Tallinn University since 1965. A modernization of its curricula commenced in 1988, and since 1991 it has been possible to obtain master's and doctoral degrees in librarianship. The university began offering full-time university credit courses in the fall term of 1994 (Lepik, 1995, p. 29). In order to promote research, development, and continuing professional education (CPE), the Centre for Information Management (CIM) was founded, on a departmental basis, in 1995. Since 1999, the CIM has offered three programs: CPE, research and development, and distance education (DE). In December 2001, Department of Information Studies' curriculum adapted the Bologna Process and was the first of its kind to be accepted by the Academic Council of Tallinn Pedagogical University (TPU). In 2002, a new DE master's program in Information Management was developed; its delivery platform is IVA—an electronic platform developed by the Educational Technology Centre of TPU according to the principles of social constructivism (Virkus & Wood, 2004, p. 325).

The Institute of Information Studies at Tallinn University currently offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs in Information Science. The development of joint international programs and English-language courses have been important recent initiatives in preparing students for professional life in a global setting and also for dealing with scarce resources, rapid technological change, and increased calls for quality assurance. In 2007, a joint international master's program in Digital Library Learning (DILL) began among Oslo University College, Parma University, and Tallinn University, which was supported within the framework of the European Union's Erasmus Mundus program (Virkus, 2008).

The Viljandi Culture Academy has been educating librarians since 1960; in 2005, the academy merged with the University of Tartu. Currently, the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Tartu offers a program on Information Management and a master's degree program on Knowledge and Information Management (University of Tartu, n.d.).

LIBRARY ORGANIZATIONS

The community of Estonian librarians is organized in several professional associations: the Estonian Librarians' Association (ELA), the Estonian Music Library Association (EMLA), the Society of Estonian Art Libraries, and the Estonian Libraries Network (ELNET) Consortium.

Estonian Librarians' Association (ELA)

The ELA was founded in 1923, but lasted only seventeen years, from 1923 until 1940, the Soviet invasion putting an end to the association's

existence. However, in 1988, at the time of the “Singing Revolution” and perestroika, a few years before independence, many new societies and associations were created or were brought back to life after having been prohibited under the Soviet regime. The ELA was among the first organizations restarting their work when favorable conditions returned after the end of the Soviet occupation (Johnson & Lepik, 1998, p. 106).

The mission of the ELA is to help preserve Estonian national identity through appreciation, preservation, development, and acknowledgment of the country’s libraries. Its vision is to bring together different types of libraries and librarians while acting as policymaker, treasurer, and moderator of information. The association partners with the state, civil societies, and the private sector, and hosts

- three sections for particular types of libraries: special, rural, and school;
- five committees that solve issues in specific fields of librarianship, such as collections, training, children’s services, terminology, and rare books;
- three working groups: acquisitions for public libraries, bibliographies of local history, and marketing; and
- the “ex-club” (a senior club for former librarians).

The ELA organizes events to introduce libraries to a wider public. Its annual highlights are its annual meeting and forum (February) and Library Days (October). The forum discusses subjects relevant to libraries and librarians; Library Days brings together librarians from both small and large libraries throughout Estonia. The latter hosts the “Day of the Estonian Book,” “Day of the Rural Librarian,” the research and special libraries seminar, summer camps for rural and school libraries, additional seminars, and information days. An Estonian Librarians’ Congress is held every five years, and a Baltic Librarians’ Congress every four years. Since 2005, the ELA has been granted the authority to certify professional librarians, and during the 2006–2011 period, it awarded 830 certificates (Estonian Librarians’ Association, n.d.).

Since its founding in 1923 through 1940, the ELA published its own journal, titled *Raamatukogu* (The library); nine annual sets were published (twenty-two issues in toto). For political reasons a break of several decades followed, with *Raamatukogu* ceasing publication. Beginning in 1964, a new publication, *Huvitavat raamatukogudetööst* (Interesting aspects of library activities), appeared, published by the Kreutzwald State Library, but it was not a fully fledged periodical and did not systematically reflect the conditions of libraries (Riet, 2002, p. 186). Since 1989, the ELA has published *Raamatukogu* in cooperation with the national library, NLE. It is the only Estonian library journal that covers academic, public, and school libraries; most issues feature articles focusing on cultural topics alongside those on librarianship. *Raamatukogu* is published six times a year; in addition, since 1990, the *ELA Yearbook* has been annually published (Riet, 2002, p. 7).

The ELA is a member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). By the end of 2013, the association had 799 active members, almost one-third of all librarians in Estonia (Riet, 2002, p. 8).

Estonian Libraries Network (ELNET) Consortium

The ELNET was founded in 1996 as a nonprofit organization representing the public interests of libraries. The main areas of activity of the consortium are

- the development and management of the shared library system Millennium, as well as the e-catalog ESTER and the Estonian articles database ISE, which are built on this system, and the management and development of the *Estonian Subject Thesaurus*;
- in cooperation with libraries, the development and implementation of information systems, and the development of standards and guidelines;
- the coordination of joint procurements of electronic research information; and
- holding negotiations on behalf of member libraries for developing e-services (ELNET Consortium, 2011).

Since its establishment, ELNET has been engaged in creating and developing a shared information system. The consortium's member libraries use Millennium (owned by Innovative Interfaces), and it is responsible for the management and development of three databases (on two servers): the e-catalogs ESTER Tallinn (<http://tallinn.ester.ee>) and ESTER Tartu (<http://tartu.ester.ee>), and the Estonian article database, *Index Scriptorum Estoniae* (<http://ise.elnet.ee>).

Since 1998, ELNET has been coordinating the joint procurements of electronic research information. Database tests and negotiations are carried out regularly for potential joint procurements. Under an agreement reached with the Ministry of Education and Research, the consortium implemented a program, Electronic Research Information, during 2009–2013 to facilitate this function.

Since 2003, some members of the consortium have been compiling the Digiteeritud eesti ajalehed (DEA) (<http://dea.nlib.ee>), a digitized database of Estonian newspapers, which consists of a large collection published in Estonia from 1821 to 1944, and abroad since 1944. In 2010, some of the consortium's member libraries supplemented the *Red Book of Estonian Publications, 1535–1850* by cataloging publications issued during 1851–1917 that have been preserved in limited numbers of copies or contain culturally important information. (The original *Red Book of Estonian Publications, 1535–1850* [<http://www.nlib.ee/PunaneRaamat/indexeng.html>] is the electronic database of historically, culturally, and scientifically

valuable Estonian books, together with information about the availability of original items, their states of preservation, and images of covers and title pages [Reimo & Konsa, 2011].) A further task of the consortium is the mapping of digitization activities in member libraries, and the development of principles and guidelines, the so-called activity standards, for the preservation of digital information.

Since 2009, some member libraries have been compiling the *Estonian Subject Thesaurus (EMS)* (<http://www.elnet.ee/en/ems>), which is a universal, controlled vocabulary in the form of a thesaurus for indexing and searching Estonian-language material. Initially, this electronic database was created for optimizing the operation of the information system, but since then has become an important service for Estonian memory institutions. Use of the *EMS* is free to the public. Since 2010, the cataloging guidelines developed by ELNET have been made available to all Estonian libraries.

The newest library in Estonia, called the “From Passenger to Passenger Library,” is located at the Tallinn airport. Passengers can browse and choose books to pass the time while waiting for flights, and they are allowed to take the books along with them and then to return them upon their return. If a book has not been finished during the trip, it may be taken home and returned some other time. The library is entirely self-service and operates on the principle of trust.

Despite the problems of development and the recent international crisis of financial markets, the library sector in Estonia is undergoing a modernization process. International resources, such as financial support from developmental foundations and European structural funds, are used to implement the strategic decisions of the government in this important knowledge sector.

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