

Cross boundaries – join forces

15 years of medical library cooperation
1994 — 2009



Cross boundaries - join forces. Transfer of knowledge. 15 years of medical library cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region.

Oslo, June 2009.

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Transfer of knowledge
15 years of medical library cooperation in
the Baltic Sea Region, 1994-2009



The Norwegian Library Association
Section for Medicine and Health (SMH)
Baltic Sea Region Committee

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15 years of cooperation

As 2009 is the year when we celebrate 15 years of cooperation as well as the year when we terminate our project, we wanted to tell the story of a Nordic-Baltic-Russian professional and personal relationship, through facts as well as memories and photos. People who have in one way or another been close to or involved in the project give their story, and the committee has tried to communicate some of the richness of experience that this work has given us.

It takes time to build relationships, and what we have learned above all is that cooperation that lasts a long time is most likely to grow and succeed.

Perhaps we can even hope that our story may be an inspiration to others to engage in similar projects?

The SMH Baltic Sea Region Committee
Elisabeth Akre, Elisabeth Husem, Astrid Müller, Signe Emilie Romuld



To make a difference

By Elisabeth Akre, Astrid Müller and Elisabeth Husem
SMH Baltic Sea Region Committee

In his book with this title the Norwegian Minister of foreign affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, talks about how small nations can contribute to international political solutions.

Medical librarians can make a difference to the work for better global health. Harald Siem mentions in his article that access to recent and relevant literature is an essential element in fighting communicable diseases. We can add to this: as is the professional development of medical librarians. This is the goal of our cooperation.

During these past 15 years the goal has been pursued with enthusiasm by all parties involved and by continuous hard work and different activities. However, a red thread of coincidence runs all the way through, and the insight to seize opportunities as they appeared has smoothed the path towards this goal.

An example: if it had not been for tuberculosis, this might have turned out quite differently. Tuberculosis was a serious problem in the Baltic Sea Region when we started. We got in touch with Harald Siem, the secretariat leader of the Task Force of Communicable Disease Control in the Baltic Sea Region. He participated at a workshop in 2001, arranged when Lithuanian librarians came on a study tour to Norway. This resulted in a request to expand the activities to Russia and St Petersburg where the Task Force had a partner institution. As a result of this coincidence we have now worked with Russian librarians as well as with Baltic librarians for many years.

Mutuality has been another red thread through the cooperation. In the beginning it must have seemed rather a one-way thing for our Baltic colleagues. Even so, the mutuality has been there all the way, by receiving the visitors from

Norway cordially, even if with some reservation, at the start, and by making use of all opportunities for professional development. In a letter to the SMH Newsletter in 1996 Meile Kretaviciene concludes: “I am sure we will be able to return the same kindness to you in the future” (SMH-Nytt 2/1996). She hardly knew at the time how important this was to be later on. Working with Russia would have been impossible without the our Baltic friends and colleagues and their knowledge of Russian language and culture.

Communication is all important in partnerships - to share information, develop professional skills and awareness, and promote the interchange of ideas. To be successful and sustainable there must be a two way process

Jean Shaw, UK EAHIL Newsletter, 1996, nr 36

The strongest network is founded on personal contact and relations. Looking back at what has made the cooperation what it is, there is one more thing to mention: singing in a green garden. To build a network we had to break the ice and overcome language difficulties. Meile's garden is the stage where this happened. A garden party has been part of all activities in Kaunas. Baltic and Russian librarians love to sing and dance and the more formal Scandinavians were dragged into a sistership of singing and dancing, crossing all borders, languages and cultures.

We cannot say that all we have done has been a success. It has been a process of trial and error, but as a whole, the cooperation has lasted for 15 years, there has been a continuous expansion and development and some great results and highlights. It is making a difference.

Highlights



1994: The EAHIL conference in Oslo. At an informal gathering in Elisabeth Husem's flat, the Nordic-Baltic partnerships are born.



2001: Lithuanian librarians visit Norway on a study tour. A workshop and gala dinner at the SAS Radisson Hotel in Oslo results in expansion of the cooperation to St Petersburg and Russia.



2005: Elisabeth Husem is awarded The King's medal for her international work, in particular for working with with the Baltic countries and Russia. A great recognition of the cooperation



2007: The magnificent new medical library in Kaunas. Meile Kretaviciene has reached her goal and tributes the cooperation for playing a part in this.

Interview with Elisabeth Husem

By Signe Emilie Romuld
SMH Baltic Sea Region Committee



Elisabeth comes to our meeting in down town Oslo on a bike, of course she does, fit as she is. This is a challenging and funny lady to interview, because she is so learned, interested and engaged in so many things. In our conversation about international collaboration and visits to many countries, it is tempting to hear about beautiful Russian Orthodox churches, religious art, - not to talk about icons! All who know her, emphasize her enthusiasm and engagement for the arts, culture and people. Perhaps she values friendship most, and art and culture are about people, in the end. All comes together.

Elisabeth has been internationally oriented ever since she was young au pair in Paris. She trained as a librarian in France, met her husband there, got a job in UNESCO and lived in Abidjan at the Ivory Coast for 8 years. As Elisabeth says, it may be accidental what she runs into, but it is curiosity and engagement that drives her around the next corner. She likes to follow up on what she has decided get into, and we have absolutely seen the fruits of that labour, both in Norway and internationally. She was the leader of SMH from 1990 to 2003, and she was made honorary member of SMH when she stepped down. She was president of EAHIL 1994-98 and advocated strongly for EAHIL to get more involved in East Europe. It is likely that this engagement and this attitude are what made Elisabeth such a central person in this collaboration project.



Elisabeth and Astrid Nøklebye Heiberg celebrating the Order of Merit.

An important drive in all Elisabeth does, is joy for the friendship that developed with people she has met, but also meeting another culture. The Eastern Baltic is so close to Norway, says Elisabeth, and it is so exciting to get to know this region. She had dreamt of coming to St.Petersburg, but never believed it would happen. The many cultural experiences have been an extra dimension in it all. Through the work on the "Festschrift" "we have gone over many pictures, and Elisabeth repeatedly exclaimed: How much I have had a chance to experience! That the collaboration brought good results has been inspiring and given energy to continue.

In 2005 Elisabeth was awarded the King's Medal of Merit in silver for her accomplishments. She says it was so unexpected, a great joy – and almost an unreal experience. Not the last was it fine that she thus could show friends and family what she work on, something few of them knew much about. Elisabeth appreciated very much the reception arranged by SMH and all those who took part. In addition to the County Mayor, Norwegian colleagues from libraries and psychiatric institutes, Meile Kretaviciene and Tony McSean had met to share the joy with her. In her thank you address she emphasized that she shared the medal with so many good friends and supporters over the years. But Elisabeth's grandchild put it all in place by asking: But grandma, who won? Elisabeth told the King about this and he laughed strong and long! We who have watched Elisabeth's work over the years, think however, that she deserves a gold medal!

Elisabeth was interviewed by SMH-News when she stepped down as leader of SMH. Then she expressed the hope that she would be a member of the Baltic Committee until 2005. After that she wanted to spend more time on her leisure interests, such as the Renaissance and Italian. But Elisabeth still attends the course in Italian. She tries to tell me that she retires in a year or so from now, incredibly she will be 70 in 2010. But I have problems believing that Elisabeth suddenly should withdraw from all that which has meant so much for her for so long. She herself may not quite believe this either. Her course in Italian certainly is likely to last yet some more years.

Cross boundaries – Join forces: it can make a difference

By Elisabeth Husem, Astrid Müller and Elisabeth Akre
SMH Baltic Sea Region Committee

After the fall of the iron curtain, in 1991, it was natural to establish Nordic-Baltic relations in many fields, often on an individual basis. Institutions such as hospitals started cooperating with each other, and books and journals were sent as gifts to the hospitals. The problem was that the literature sent this way seldom reached a library for open access, but often remained locked up in the office of one particular doctor.

The Norwegian Medical Association had made this experience and applied therefore to SMH in order to ensure a better literature delivery and a good library service. SMH has a long tradition of cooperation with other libraries, both within the Nordic countries and internationally and saw this chance to work with the Baltic countries as a challenge.

In 1994 SMH was the local organizer of the 4th European Association for Health Information and Libraries (EAHIL) Conference in Oslo, and thanks to many generous sponsors among libraries and librarians, we could welcome 40 participants from Baltic countries as well as from Central and Eastern Europe. The Norwegian Medical Association sponsored two librarians from Lithuania.

The Oslo University Library (UBO) invited the librarians from Kaunas and Vilnius, to buy some new books for their libraries, on UBO's account.

At a meeting during the conference, the Nordic-Baltic cooperation was decided, and within this framework Norway and Lithuania established a special bilateral programme. Shortly after, Finland and Sweden initiated contacts with Estonia and Latvia; Denmark cooperated with Lithuania together with Norway.

SMH continued its contact with the Norwegian Medical Association's Baltic Committee and with Vestfold County, who had many projects in Lithuania, also within medicine.

SMH Baltic Committee was established: Elisabeth Akre, Tove Gellein and Elisabeth Husem. We went to Lithuania on our first visit in 1996, with good assistance from Ivar Haug,

County librarian, Vestfold. It was an exciting experience. We could still feel some reminiscences from the Soviet time, but our colleagues in Vilnius and in Kaunas received us with open minds and kindness. Looking at life in Lithuania today, we can smile remembering our stay in the hotel in Kaunas, very simple, but "correct" as Ivar Haug assured us, with a strict lady sitting in her little "cage" watching us, and distributing tickets for breakfast.

Kaunas and Vilnius Medical Libraries asked if it was possible to get free article copies from Norwegian libraries, as they had few journal subscriptions, and also few textbooks in English. So copies and books become our first task. DNL's Baltic Committee had edited a booklet with core literature for the Baltic countries, which was of great help. We also got an offer from "SOS Baltikum" about free transport of books and journals. We were pleased to experience the great enthusiasm from libraries and others to help the Baltic libraries to develop their collections. About 80 libraries joined a free photocopy service, LITNOR, hosted by the Nordic Union Catalogue of Serials (NOSP).

In May 1997, Tove died in a tragic car accident and we lost an engaged colleague and a dear friend who was so happy to work with Lithuanian colleagues. Astrid Müller was asked to continue Tove's work in the SMHBaltic Committee, and she has been there all the time since. From 2008 the committee was reinforced with one more member, Signe Romuld.



Our first visit to Lithuania

In the Nordic-Baltic cooperation there was a strong focus on the exchange of knowledge and experience. The Nordic Association for Medical and Health Information was formally founded in 1993 and from 2000 representatives from the Baltic countries participated as informal members, and in 2004 the Nordic Association became the Nordic-Baltic Association. The participating countries have always worked closely together.

By 2000, an American Sister Library initiative was evolving within the American Medical Library Association, and in May the same year, we (Elisabeth Husem and Eva Alopaeus) were invited to a meeting in Vancouver, and later the same summer to a meeting in London, to explain how the Nordic Group, as they called us, had chosen to work. The Nordic- Baltic cooperation was considered a good example and a Latvian library was chosen as MLA's first cooperation project.

Through an important grant from the Nordic Council of Ministers, who strongly supported the idea of exchanges in health information, SMH organized, in close cooperation with Kaunas Medical University Library, and with our Danish sister organization, educational courses in Kaunas, free and open for medical librarians from all three Baltic countries. All courses were given in English and the course holders were medical librarians from Norway and Denmark.

When we organized the first courses "Transfer of Knowledge I" in 2000, we realized that there might be some language problems, so we decided to translate the course material into the three Baltic languages, and from 2002 also into Russian, because three librarians from St. Petersburg had joined the courses. With good

help by some of the Baltic librarians, every course was translated into their own language, and then sent to us to be put into the course book. That was a thrilling affair! We did not know any of the three languages, they all looked more or less alike, so putting the right translation in its right place was an exciting challenge. But we did it!

In 2004 we had a last Transfer of Knowledge workshop in Kaunas and celebrated 10 years of cooperation with the Baltic countries. The participants had achieved an impressive professional level and a much better knowledge of English, and we felt that they were more than able to continue without us.

So we decided to continue our Transfer of Knowledge courses in St. Petersburg.

Why should we do that? Because of what happened in May 2001! Our six librarians from Kaunas and Vilnius on study tour in Oslo had a busy programme visiting medical libraries and meeting health authorities with focus on tuberculosis. At the mini workshop "Cross boundaries –Join forces" at the end of their visit, Daiva Sirkaite from Lithuanian Medical Library and Meile Kretaviciene from Kaunas Medical



Sorting Baltic languages is a challenge for Norwegians



Study tour to St Petersburg 2003

University Library presented papers about their libraries and their role in the medical and academic society. Harald Siem presented a very interesting paper on tuberculosis in the Baltic and Nordic countries.

The last matter on the programme was a question: “How can medical librarians contribute in the struggle against tuberculosis and other communicable diseases. Discussion”. This successful meeting contributed to fulfill towards our aim of a mutual transfer of knowledge and proved medical librarian’s willingness to work towards better health information. Because of our experience so far and our network established in the Baltic countries, SMH was invited to join the Task Force project.

After two visits to Medical Academy of Postgraduate Studies (MAPS) and its library in St. Petersburg, where we met a kind and positive attitude, we organized the first Transfer of Knowledge courses, (nr IV in the series) in 2004. This was a quite new experience, and we were of course excited to meet more Russian colleagues and thrilled about being in St. Petersburg. We had already met two of the librarians in Kaunas and in Oslo (EAHIL Workshop 2003) Larisa Zhmykova and Elena Ganina, and they became our main cooperation partners for northwest Russia. This new partnership programme is of course built upon the experiences and network we made from our courses in Kaunas. And to our great relief Meile and Lina Saferiene (Kaunas), and later also Velta Poznaka from Riga, joined us as facilitators in St. Petersburg. Their former experiences with our courses and their knowledge of Russian language and culture have been of great help for us. Their discussions with the Russian librarians proved to very useful, on both a professional and a personal level, they made an exchange of ideas easier.

After the Transfer of Knowledge courses IV, V and VI held in St. Petersburg, SMHBaltic and Meile invited Russian and Baltic colleagues to come together in Kaunas. Russian colleagues had strongly expressed a wish to enlarge their network and to visit modern libraries outside Russia. So what could be better than Meile’s new and modern library equipped with all conference facilities? It became a great success. It seemed that the participating Russian librarians strongly appreciated getting together with colleagues from the Baltic and Nordic countries, and we all had a great time. And as



Joining forces - Hilde Strømme, SMH, Harald Siem, Task Force and Meile Kretaviciene, Kaunas

always we were dancing and singing in Meile’s garden, one joyful and happy family!

In June 2009 a workshop with courses is again organized in St. Petersburg. This will be the last workshop in this programme and at the same time a celebration of our 15 years of cooperation with Russia and the Baltic countries. This time we also have got experienced lecturers from the EAHIL milieu in addition to our Nordic and Baltic course holders.

The president of EAHIL will be present during the courses; we hope in this way to connect the Baltic and Russia librarians closer to the European professional network.

In between the courses, there has been many study tours to the Nordic countries. Generous and engaged colleagues have opened up their homes and libraries to our Baltic and Russian colleagues, in Gothenburg, Stockholm, Helsinki and Oslo. Getting to know other libraries and ways of working is important for inspiration and creating new knowledge.

We have many good memories from these tours. One is from the visit of our six Lithuanian friends in 2001. After many busy days in Oslo, we took



St. Petersburg 2006



2005 - study tour from St Petersburg to Oslo



Cooking together strengthens the friendship

them to the west coast of Norway. We went through valleys in beautiful springtime, over Hardangervidda covered by snow, down to the Hardangerfjord with fruit trees in blossom, up and down mountain hills again and back to Oslo. Norway appeared with its most beautiful and impressive scenery. We had rented a cabin where we spent the night. We had a most joyful evening, we were making food together, and we were eating, drinking, laughing and singing into the late night. We are not going to advertise for alcohol drinking, but we cannot deny that it has a certain positive effect in breaking the ice and creating a merry and informal ambiance. It has worked very well more than once.

Another happy memory is when we had the visit from St. Petersburg by Galina But, library director from MAPS, and Galina Kovalchuk, library director from Pavlov Medical University Library. Meile was invited to be the interpreter, and we had some very interesting days together. However, Meile did not stay in the same home as the two Galinas, and as they did not speak English, Russian and Norwegian were used, with

much laughter, in long conversations, using hands and miming.

Participation at EAHIL conferences and workshops has also been an important part of our cooperation. Many colleagues from the Baltic countries and St. Petersburg have brought home with them new knowledge and useful information for their libraries.

In June 2003 there was a joint Nordic-Baltic-EAHIL Workshop in Oslo. On the international programme committee were representatives both from the Baltic and the Nordic countries.

Looking back on 15 years of cooperation, we see some very rich and rewarding years; we have broadened our knowledge and our horizons in many ways. We have got more experiences and better understanding of each other.

We must admit that there has been a few obstacles on the road; language problems could make communication a little strenuous now and then. There has been some hours of hard work: writing



Enjoying beautiful scenery

intricate applications; trying to find more support elsewhere; working to make good course programmes with qualified lecturers. However, that does not matter, taking into consideration all the positive effects of our cooperation.

We have been working together in high team spirit and the support of our Baltic colleagues and the contributions by our Nordic lecturers has been invaluable.

So has the attitude of the SMH members who value international cooperation and are willing to see part of their membership fees going into this work. Our employers also play an important role in giving us time to work with this project. The enthusiasm and commitment shown by all the involved parties have been an important motivation and a requirement for the project.

During these 15 years we have had the privilege to participate in innumerable cultural events thanks to our colleagues and friends in the Baltic countries as

well as in St. Petersburg. We have been to operas, ballets and concerts, we have been in great museums and beautiful churches; we have visited palaces and been to interesting places.

You never get tired of the fascinating old towns in the Baltic countries, filled with exciting history, where there is a pleasure just wandering around. St. Petersburg makes your heart go pit-a-pat each time, it is thrilling, it is always more to see and discover. We have visited Novgorod where many of our great Viking kings lived and got their education. In June 2009 we visit Petrozavodsk and our colleagues there. We are very grateful.

We started our story with a quotation from our foreign minister; we have crossed boundaries and joined forces in the assurance that we together can contribute to better global health. We could end with the Norwegian 2009 Eurovision Song Contest winner, Alexander Rybak's "Fairytale". Our fairytale is not only a memory, but also a living story of friendship and mutual understanding.



Dancing and singing in Meile's garden

Instructors and speakers

Elisabeth Akre
Eva Alopaeus
Viveka Alton
Suzanne Bakker
Karen Buset
Julija Dresher
Anne-Marie Haraldstad
Tiina Heino
Elisabeth Husem
Arne Jakobsson
Daiva Jurksaitiene
Meile Kretaviciene
Irene Wiik Langengen
Astrid Müller
Lena Nordheim
Lise Nørregård Christensen
Slava Plavinsky
Velta Poznaka
Ilze Purina
Ioana Robu
Marika Rosenthal
Keiu Saarniit
Lina Saferiene
Liisa Salmi
Conni Skrubbeltrang
Hilde Strømme
Therese Svanberg
Jurate Stukiene
Benoit Thirion
Guus van den Brekel
Larisa Zhmykova

Transfer of Knowledge Continuing Education Courses

I Kaunas 2000 - 24 participants
II Kaunas 2002 - 35 participants
III Kaunas 2004 - 10 Years of Cooperation - 38 participants
IV St Petersburg 2004 - 20 participants
V St Petersburg 2006 - 30 participants
VI St Petersburg 2007 - 36 participants
VII Kaunas 2008 - 29 participants
VIII St Petersburg 2009 - 65 participants



Daiva Jurksaitiene, Kaunas 2008.



The instructors take a coffee break, Kaunas 2000

Study Tours

To Oslo:

- 2001 6 from Lithuania
- 2003 3 from St Petersburg
- 2005 2 from St Petersburg
- 2006 4 from St Petersburg
- 2007 4 from Lithuania, 1 from Latvia

To Gothenburg: 2005 2 from St Petersburg

To Stockholm: 2005 2 from St Petersburg

To Kaunas: June 2007. 2nd Opening Ceremony of the Kaunas University Library.

8 librarians from Estonia and Latvia, 5 from St. Petersburg.

To Helsinki: 2007. 2 from St.Petersburg. 1 week.

To St Petersburg:

- 2001 2 from Oslo, 1 from Kaunas
- 2003 1 from Gothenburg, 4 from Oslo, 1 from Kaunas

Economic contributions

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- Nordic Council of Ministers
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- Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, Division for International Affairs
- Norwegian Library Association's Special Group for Medicine and Health Sciences (SMH)
- University of Oslo Library of Medicine and Health Sciences
- Overskuddsfondet, IFLA - Norwegian Library Association
- Norwegian Medical Association
- Norwegian Embassy, Vilnius
- American Embassy, Oslo



2005 - study tour from St Petersburg to Gothenburg



2001 - study tour from Lithuania. Visit to the Oslo University Library.



Astrid Nøklebye Heiberg

To make dreams come true

People who are visionary and strong willed can make most things happen. The Baltic Sea Region Cooperation is a shining example of that.

When the iron curtain was lifted, it became obvious that there was a great need for information about new medical developments and librarian service in the former Soviet Union. But there was no money for it. That did not stop the Norwegian Library Association's Section for Medicine and Health (SMH) from starting a silver collection, enabling them to invite representatives from the Eastern countries, especially from the Baltic Region to international conferences, the first one being the conference of the European Association for Health Information Libraries (EAHIL) in Oslo in 1994.

This became a boundary breaking meeting between "the have and have not" as to material resources and at the same time an enormously enriching meeting between peoples with different experiences. The trickle connection between East

and West has now widened into a broad stream of discussions and two-ways information.

The well-equipped new library in Kaunas is often mentioned as the outstanding result of the Baltic Sea Region Cooperation, and truly this is a monument. But the spiritual, professional and human connection is even more important. This is peace building in the true sense and the reason why this work was rewarded by His Majesty's Order of Merit in 2005.

...But the spiritual, professional and human connection is even more important. This is peace building in the true sense ...

Astrid Nøklebye Heiberg. Norwegian professor of psychiatry, former politician, cabinet minister and president of the International Red Cross (1997-2001).

Meile Kretaviciene

Mutual benefits and innovations during 15 years of partnership



Fifteen years for libraries is a short time of existence, but fifteen years of close partnership between librarians from different countries is quite a long time. How have we changed during this time? Have we obtained mutual benefit of our communication?

Looking fifteen years to the past I remember how we were happy having possibility to participate at the EAHIL conference in Oslo for the first time. Elisabeth Husem was an EAHIL president at that period and she looked very important person to us, however she was so warm and careful about us. We appreciated Norwegians proposal to stay for a several days after the Conference in Oslo and visit their libraries, get acquainted with colleagues and sightseeing.

We were lucky that colleagues from the Norwegian Library Association SMH initiated set up a long period partnership programme between Lithuania and Norway. I'm thankful to Norwegian colleagues for their friendship and patience, as we were not so skilled in English at the beginning and had some psychological barriers to communicate freely.

Through the Partnership Programme, our medical librarians have gained a great deal of professional knowledge and skills for implementing new library technologies, have had the possibility to participate in the European conferences and workshops, go for a study tours in Norway and to get acquainted with colleagues from various countries.

One of the most important part of the partnership programme were educational courses "Transfer of Knowledge" on very essential topics in the health librarianship during years 2000-2008.

During six blocks of the training courses alongside professional knowledge we have gain experience in organizing workshops and pleasant communication with good friends.

After regaining the independence we inherited Soviet type libraries with closed access to holdings and a heavy structure. The knowledge acquired through the partnership programme has stimulated to reorganize libraries as physical place, introduce new services, user training, and has had on the strong impact on the building and organization of a new modern Library and Health Sciences information Centre at Kaunas University of Medicine.

Now we are happy having possibility to continue partnership with Norwegian colleagues and contribute to organize educational courses in Saint Petersburg where our Russian language knowledge and experience in communication are accepted.

Has there been a two-way process? Colleagues

...fifteen years for libraries is a short time of existence, but fifteen years of close partnership between librarians from different countries is quite a long time...

from the Nordic countries consider that "it has been a process" from very first visit to Lithuania whereas today Nordic colleagues are welcome to the new modern Library and Health Sciences Information Centre in Kaunas and can get some ideas for their future developments.

Meile Kretaviciene, Library director.
Kaunas Medical University Library, Lithuania.

Velta Poznaka

How to move mountains



15 years is just a teenager age. What will become of the child is in many ways dependant on parents' and teachers' input. Although the Medical Library of Latvia is almost 68 years old, the number 15 is very important to our library as well. It covers a completely new stage of development. We only started using computers in our library in the year 1993. In 1994 we learned how to work using electronic mail and GratefulMed.

It is not easy to suddenly realize that you are not an inhabitant of a mighty country, that there are many things you don't know how to do. Those who knew English had become notable persons. We weren't used to accepting presents. After all, we thought we were the mightiest! In 1994 there was the first trip to an EAHIL conference. Those feelings when you are in a different world, that things around are happening, that medical librarians have a really significant role in all that! There was a different world on the other side of the sea.

...after years of hard work, we achieved the result that training courses are now being evaluated by credits which are needed in later re-certification procedures for physicians and nurses...

Thanks to the activities of fascinating people - Elisabeth Husem, Astrid Muller, Liisa Salmi, Eva Alopaeus, Elisabeth Akre and many others we had been given a chance to start living.

Firstly, the training courses "Transfer of Knowledge". Hard to think of a better name for it. Even our library's blog was made thanks to these courses.

Secondly, thanks to the financial support, we could attend further education courses and conferences. In our country we are continuing to convince health care professionals of the important role libraries and informational resources have in supporting the medical treatment. Everything we gain from training courses we actively use in our work. Since there wasn't a demand in Latvia for medics to know how to use a computer or internet we started almost a Don Quixote battle for the training of physicians. We published two books with internet addresses for physicians.

Feeling we had the strong support of librarians from the Northern countries we started the training process of physicians and nurses. After years of hard work, we achieved the result that training courses are now being evaluated by credits which are needed in later re-certification procedures for physicians and nurses.

A huge achievement is the programme and teaching aids "Searching of medical information in electronic resources" which was prepared at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009. This material will be the basis of health care professionals' training until the year 2013.

Right now, Latvia is going through a really difficult period. Institutions in my country are being merged, or reorganized or simply made to disappear. There is a large chance that this will affect our library as well. But even if that happens, the mountain has been moved and it has been done by us. And we have been able to do it because our neighbours in the time of globalization have been generous in sharing their knowledge and giving us all sorts of their support.

Thank you for all we know.

Velta Poznaka, Library Director.
The Medical Library of Latvia, Riga



enthusiastic students

Eva Alopaeus

Highlights from a long lasting cooperation



The theme of the project "Transfer of knowledge" - a Nordic-Baltic-Russian Partnership programme for medical librarians, clearly signals the intentions of the organizers: A mutual willingness to share professional ideas, knowledge and information between medical librarians.

Norway and Lithuania have been the leading partners, Norway as organizers and Lithuania as a generous and knowledgeable partner. The role of individuals cannot be overestimated. Norway's Elisabeth Husem's leading role and talent for ambiance and Meile Kretaviciene's positive attitude have been critical success factors.

...The role of individuals cannot be overestimated...

The project has run on a low budget basis and great efforts have been made to get full value for the funds provided on a year by year basis. Not asking too much and delivering a lot - in combination with continuity has given the project credibility with the fund raisers.

Many persons have been involved throughout the years. A lot of work, commitment and enthusiasm on behalf of the teachers and a lot of generosity and interest on behalf of our hosts and students has taken us all forward.

From Sweden three lecturers have been involved. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to be part of the Transfer of Knowledge project.

Personal highlights throughout the years:

- Courses in Kaunas in 2000. How we were met outside the city on our way from Vilnius by Meile and the efforts that had been taken to make us feel welcome
- Study tour to St Petersburg October 2003. The library visits to the old but beautiful building of the Scientific library of the Institute of Experimental medicine, the Pavlov State Medical University Library and the Russian Military medical Academy P.E. Rudenko Library
- The reaction from our small audience at an evening seminar in Kaunas when I was presenting the concept of Evidence Based Librarianship and the concept was perceived as a travesty on Evidence Based Medicine - and not for real
- The discussions we had with directors from each library over food, wine and coffee at our host library at MAPS regarding future courses in St Petersburg
- Breaks at every course, no matter where, with the pleasure of seeing everyone mingle and interact
- The realization that our common language, English, is working better all the time
- The beautiful but freezing study tour to Riga
- The new medical library in Kaunas
- Jurate's eminent lecture in Kaunas 2008
- Visits with Salviniija and Jurate in Vilnius
- The emotional garden parties in Meile's garden outside Kaunas
- The people we have met and all the beautiful sights

Eva Alopaeus, Chief Librarian, the medical libraries, Sahlgrenska university hospital, Göteborg, Sweden

Donna Flake

Sister libraries



The Nordic Group provided much insight and direction to the leaders of The Medical Library Association's International Sister Library Partnership with the Medical Library of Latvia. This was a MLA pilot project during the period 1999 through 2003. Afterward, the Medical Library of Latvia became the sister library of the Coastal AHEC (later SEAHEC) Medical Library in Wilmington, NC and this partnership continues.

Leadership of the Nordic Group and Leaders of the MLA Sister Library Initiative met face-to-face at the International Congress of Medical Librarianship in London in 2000, and

brainstormed the program. Leaders of the Nordic Group, particularly Elizabeth Husem, Liisa Salmi, and Eva Alopæus provided excellent recommendations and advice. The leaders of the MLA Sister Library Initiative included the Nordic Group leaders in important emails and developments in the partnership. This was essential since both the Nordic Group and the MLA Sister Library Initiative were and are working with Latvia. This careful coordination facilitated the development of the partnership.

I applaud the Nordic Group on all of its far-reaching achievements.

Donna Flake, Library Director. SEAHEC Medical Library. Wilmington, North Carolina

Robert M. Fales Health Sciences Library
SEAHEC / South East Area Health Education Center



Harald Siem

Working for control of communicable diseases



The deteriorating health situation in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea region, and in particular the growing threat of tuberculosis, and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (fig) and hiv infection, led to the initiative at the Baltic Sea States Summit in Kolding, Denmark in April 2000. A Task Force on communicable disease control in the region was established, with assistant ministers or high-ranking civil servants in health as members. The Task Force established several projects over four years, which was the mandated timeframe. The projects were cast in the model of the logical framework approach, LFA, and were developed through programme groups on tuberculosis, hiv-infection, drug resistance, surveillance and prison health. Two structural elements were identified as essential for progress; strengthened primary health care and access to recent and relevant literature.

A programme group was established for PHC (Primary Health Care), and the ongoing SMH Baltic-Nordic-Russian Transfer of Knowledge project was included for better access to documentation. A project planning frame on a common home-page was at disposal. The Task Force and its activities were extensively evaluated (ref 1,2).

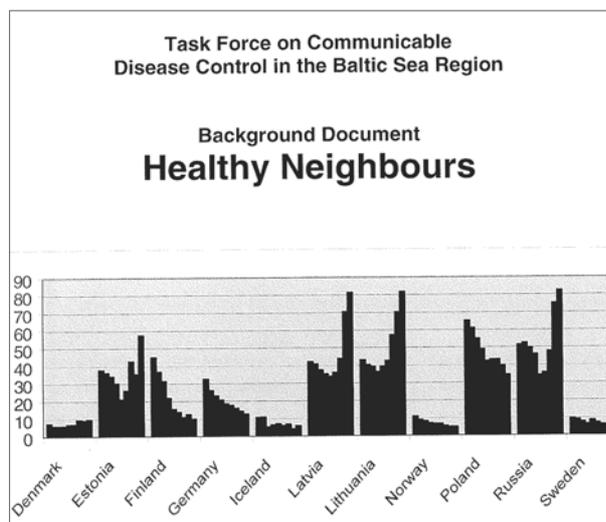
Task force, quick and targeted. Twenty mill euro and four years later, the initiative was transformed to become the Northern Dimension Partnership on Health and Social Wellbeing, a structure that was anchored in regular governmental structures.

Fig. The black picture: Case notification rates of tuberculosis (per 100 000) 1982-1998, two year intervals. The declining rates are reversed, turning upwards, in former Soviet states. A reason for alarm.

Refs:

1. Hønneland G, Rowe L. Health as international politics : combating communicable diseases in the Baltic Sea region. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.
2. Final Report, Task Force on Communicable Disease Control in the Baltic Sea Region To the 5th Baltic Sea States Summit, Laulusmaa, 21 June 2004.

Fig.



Harald Siem, Senior Adviser.
Norwegian Directorate of Health,



A beautiful bunch of flowers !



Study tour to MAPS, St. Petersburg 2003. St.Petersburg and North-West Russia are now part of the Transfer of Knowledge programme



St. Petersburg 2006 - Transfer of Knowledge IV - classroom work

Elena Ganina Larisa Zhmykhova

Partnership Programme for Medical Libraries in Russia



Medical libraries from St-Petersburg took part in Nordic/Baltic health libraries Programme cooperation in 2001. The Transfer of knowledge is a project which is aimed at strengthening and improving the professional knowledge of librarians in the medical field and in the health sciences. This project includes continuing educational programmes, study tours, participation in the international conferences.

Three main partners of this programme:

- Norwegian Library Association, Section for Medicine and Health (SMH)
- Nordic-Baltic Association for Medical and Health Information
- St-Petersburg Medical Academy of Postgraduate Studies Library (Russia)

...This cooperation is highly beneficial for all participants of the project. Russian librarians can gain new experience, new knowledge and ideas as well as develop personal and professional contacts...

For the first time librarians from St-Petersburg took part in the Continuing Educational programme for medical librarians in Kaunas in April 2002. They also participated in continuing courses in 2004, 2007 and 2008.

In 2004 courses were organized in St.-Petersburg and 19 librarians participated. The main attention was concentrated on Evidence Based Health Care. St-Petersburg hosted Continuing education courses in 2006. More than 35 librarians from St-Petersburg and North-West Russia took part in the courses “Providing and managing evidence-based health information” in 2007. Interest to courses constantly grows. About 40 librarians from St-Petersburg and North-West Russia will take part in courses in 2009

An important part of professional knowledge transfer is the participation of medical and health libraries in international conferences. The Russian librarians more and more actively take part in EAHIL. Librarians from St-Petersburg participated at EAHIL workshops in Oslo (2003), in Krakow (2007), in EAHIL conference in Santander (2004) where the paper was presented and in Helsinki (2008) where two posters were presented.

Study-tours are also an important part of the cooperation programme. Study-tours in medical libraries of Oslo (Norway), Stockholm and Gothenburg (Sweden), Helsinki (Finland) were organized for librarians from St-Petersburg.

This cooperation is highly beneficial for all participants of the project. Russian librarians can gain new experience, new knowledge and ideas as well as develop personal and professional contacts. It helps us to cooperate with medical specialists and to find and use exact information for their research and clinical practice.

Elena Ganina and Larisa Zhmykhova,
Medical Library, St-Petersburg Medical Academy
of Postgraduate Studies, Russia

Lise Nørregaard Christensen

Memories of Baltic connections



From the Medical Library at Aalborg Hospital Conni Skrubbeltrang and I were the Danish participants. Conni is now director of the library and very busy so I have accepted to contribute to this publication on behalf of us.

Since I am now retired I will allow myself to make a personal account and not stick to a completely professional description of our participation in the project. In this way I want to focus on *coincidence* but also underline the *importance of international relations*.

I was born in 1939 and grew up in Thisted, a small city in Denmark. After World War II many refugees from the Baltic states came to Thisted. Red Cross established a camp for them. The local school-children were asked to bring their surplus toys to the children of the camp. They, in turn, entertained us with choir-music and folkdances.

In 1984/85 I was the Medical Library Association's Cunningham Fellow and for 6 months I worked and studied in some of the best American medical libraries. In Los Angeles I was invited to stay as a house-guest of the USC library director and his wife Lelde, who was a refugee from Riga, Latvia, so again I met with somebody from the Baltic states. We are still good friends and I learnt more about Baltic culture.

1990 the Danish Medical Journal published an article about visiting doctors from the Baltic states. They described their lack of medical journals and textbooks. So we contacted Rikke Helms at the Danish Cultural Institute, established in Riga. She was instrumental in making the contact to the Medical Research Library in Riga and in 1991 we sent them duplicate English-language medical core journals. In 1992 we found ways to send them more journals and bibliographic materials that they had chosen from the lists we had mailed.

We also had doctors from Lithuania who worked for some time at "our" hospital and established some networking with them after they returned.

When the project Transfer of Knowledge was planned it was only natural that we wanted to contribute. It was essential for us that these courses were relevant to the Baltic librarians who had wanted the course "Health information resources on the Internet" that Conni Skrubbeltrang and I were going to teach. We did not know much about the availability of Internet access in the three countries, or the level of computer skills or language skills of the participants. We knew that many librarians knew several languages but that English had not been their first foreign language. The course materials that we prepared in English were translated into the three Baltic languages and later made available on the Internet. We were quite worried if we could make a course that would be relevant for the participants and could help them to be recognized as experts by the medical profession.

It was very nice to meet the Baltic librarians and Conni and I were happy to participate again in 2002 where we chose a more theoretical/analytical approach to the topic. It was so good to meet again many of the librarians from the 1st course! I was also fortunate to participate in the evaluation in 2004 and have noticed how the country (here Lithuania) has changed. Some of us have also met again at EAHIL conferences and have shared professional and social events. It has been very interesting to see how the librarians have become much more self-confident and how they have grown professionally. Computer technology, online journals and Internet-available medical information have changed the (library) world.

I send all my best wishes for our Baltic colleagues and hope they will be instrumental for a health care system based on the best medical information and evidence.

Lise Nørregaard Christensen, retired Library Director
formerly Medical Library at Aalborg Hospital,
Aalborg, Denmark

Tony McSean

Why Health Information Provision In The World's Poorest Countries Is Changing



The HINARI programme has been immensely valuable in changing the nature of the dialogue about how information provision in the world's poorest countries can be improved. The following thoughts deal with the HINARI effect and the broader context in which it has been able to flower. These are personal opinions and deal specifically with my own experience in north-south information partnerships and should certainly not be read as bearing directly on the excellent work of the Nordic Baltic partnership, whose achievements are a beacon for the rest of us to be guided by.

In the past 5 years the expectations of health information users have been raised radically. Improvements in technology, accessibility, availability and interactivity have all contributed, and it is perhaps in the developing world that the largest transformation has occurred. Despite the hard work of many dedicated professionals, north-south information flows had too often been second-rate: information resources discarded by northern institutions, outdated or flaky technologies, slow delivery, services which are irregular and prone to sudden discontinuation. This is not a criticism of the thinking or effort involved, the limitations were the inevitable consequence of the technologies of the time. This situation is changing, and so are the attitudes of health information professionals and end-users in developing countries.

Network access, bandwidth and reliability are still far below the levels taken for granted in the north, but some form of post-dialup access can now be assumed in a way that was impossible 5 years ago. As well as access to information and documents there is a new continuity and immediacy to north-south and south-south personal and professional networks. Coupled with the **Google** revolution, this has led to a change in emphasis *from* making the best of

scarce information resources *to* separating the quality information from the useless and the poisonous. With Google also comes the spread of end-users' increasing self-reliance in information finding, and a sometimes specious confidence in the results obtained in this way – the “satisfied inept”.

The greatest single factor in raising expectations has been **HINARI**. With access to a full-strength, no-compromise ejournals service – at least as comprehensive as Yale or Cambridge provides for staff and students – HINARI users are downloading c5m/year peer reviewed articles. Certainly there are areas to be worked on: bandwidth, training, cultural/political barriers and so on. Certainly there are gaps: availability of non-English language writing, interpretive A&I bridges such as Web of Science, material other than journals. HINARI, though, does both its headline job and also raises the level of expectations which others will now have to meet.

It has become unarguable in recent years that **bibliographic indexes** are not what information users want. They fitted the technology and structures of their time, they were better than the damnable paper indexes they replaced, but having seen instant-delivery eresources users are no longer impressed by structured subject analysis and abstracts. They want their indexes underpinned by immediate online access to the original documents, and when we are unwell we want to be treated by professionals who read more than abstracts and their national association journal.

Users no longer want information distributed by **print**, and publishers' eyes have also moved elsewhere.

Web 2.0 is diversifying and enriching the way people provide and access online information. It

is also changing expectations and perceptions of web site. Web users expect opportunities for interaction on their regular sites, and the traditional one-way sites will be increasingly seen as old-fashioned and lacking. In areas away from formally published, peer-reviewed science, interactive contributions can add real value to what web sites can offer, as well as giving opportunities to build communities, collect and deliver marketing information, etc.

The nature of web service partnerships is diversifying in important ways from the 2005 situation of monolithic, internally supported web sites and formal collaborations. An important

effect of these changes is towards one-way partnerships between organisations with a mission to inform. Large organisations often find it hard to move quickly in developing partnerships, but **Web utilities** such as YouTube, Flickr and Second Life offer low-complexity ways to extend web impact with “good enough” material with little or no organisational baggage.

For the future, there may also be opportunities to use established skills, resources and reputations in specific support of worthwhile initiatives such as neglected tropical diseases or basic public health initiatives.

Tony McSean
WHO, Geneva



Kaunas 2008— the participants in deep concentration



Liisa Salmi

Nordic – Baltic cooperation in health sciences librarianship - the Finnish history



The cooperation with the Baltic countries in Finland has always focused on Estonia for obvious reasons. Very early, before Estonia again became independent, Finnish people had informal relations to Estonia, much on a personal level. We had and have many personal friends, various organisations had and have sister organisations and Estonians have always been special to us. Many Estonians have studied in Finland and vice versa.

After the Nordic Association had been established in Turku soon after Mother's Day in May in 1993, the Scandinavian countries, first of all Norway, started formal relations with the Baltic countries. Denmark and Sweden quickly joined the educational programmes Norway had created and gave their own touch to cooperation with Latvia and Lithuania. BMF, or *Bibliotecarii Medicinae Fenniae*, went on with the informal ties, mostly because the corresponding Baltic organisations were still non-existent; we did, however, seriously discuss the character of our bonds to the Baltic countries, much admiring the work other Nordic countries did. Somehow we still decided to continue our way with informal interaction with Estonia. BMF visited Tallinn and Tartu in 1992, and a health sciences information specialist from Estonia had the opportunity to come to a one-week study visit to Helsinki. There were other trips, as well, to and from Estonia. A form of cooperation we participated in was

sending photocopies of articles to the Baltic libraries and organising database publishers to donate their products in form of CD ROMs in the critical times of the first years of Baltic independence.

The EAHIL Workshop in 1999 was held in Tartu, and this was an intensive time of cooperation with Estonia, because the prelude to the conference took place in Helsinki and much of the planning and organising was done together, with several meetings, either in Helsinki or Tallinn with representatives also from Latvia and Lithuania.

Then, eventually in the early 2000s, the first Finnish librarian, Liisa Salmi, joined the Scandinavian teaching team when the activities had been expanded to St. Petersburg. The reception by our Russian colleagues was very nice and warm, and it was exciting to teach in English, interpreted into Russian by Meile Kretaviciene. The two days in St. Petersburg were very rewarding – although I almost missed my plane back, due to the heavy and chaotic traffic in the city.

After this first time, Tiina Heino from the National Library of Health Sciences in Helsinki has continued Finnish participation in the Nordic teaching team.

Liisa Salmi, retired Library Director.
Health Sciences Library, Kuopio University Library,
Finland

Thomas Allen

An "unofficial" library tour : the Žaliakalnio Biblioteka



I was very honoured to have been invited by Elisabeth Husem to attend the "the second opening" of the new Kaunas Medical University Library, in Lithuania. Meile Kretaviciene, the library director, was proud of this accomplishment: online journals, self check-out counters, expansive study space for the medical students with computers at every information point. All were housed in a modern glass structure of four floors. This library on the cutting edge of library technology in a country ready to face the challenge of the new information age: an encouraging outcome for the members of the Nordic Baltic Association for Medical and Health Information and the Baltic Sea Region Committee of SMH who were seeing the benefits of their hard work and collaboration. This second celebration of the Kaunas Medical Library was a proud accomplishment for all the members.

After a full day of lectures, demonstrations and tours of the new facilities, it was time for visiting members to head back to the hotel. Eldbjørg Nâheim Eien, Pirjo Rajakiili and I decided that it would be much more interesting to return on foot to our hotel, located in the centre of Kaunas. Well prepared with some water bottles and only the vaguest notions of general direction towards the city centre, we began our trek. On a rather busy street with an unassuming façade, whether by natural librarian's instinct or by total chance, we found ourselves passing by a small public library that we later found out to be named Žaliakalnio Biblioteka. We did not hesitate to invite ourselves into the library and introduce

ourselves to the librarian who fortunately spoke English. Like most public libraries around the world, we found a dedicated librarian offering the best service possible with limited resources: a dial-up internet connection in a closet-sized room for both library staff and the public, older shelves sagging under the weight of a mixture of book, some in Lithuanian and still many in Russian and old style reading lamps on wooden tables.

The librarian gave us a tour of the small library and talked about the lack of resources and the challenges of trying to update the collection. A card catalogue was still the norm, as well as a manual-check out system. The main library users were school children, retired citizens and the unemployed. The librarian talked about future hopes of updating the collection with more reference materials, recent picture books especially for children, expanding resources for "English as a second language", setting up an online catalogue and most importantly increasing Internet access for all users.

Within the World Health Organization, we talk a lot of the digital divide between the developed and developing world. Within twenty minutes walking distance these two libraries: the Kaunas Medical University Library and Žaliakalnio Biblioteka demonstrated the digital divide that can exist not only between countries but also within a community. Common to both libraries was the willingness, desire and hope for better access to information and knowledge that will span this divide.

Thomas Allen, WHO Library, Geneva, Switzerland

Arne Jakobsson

The benefits of open access are universal



One important topic encompassed by the Transfer of Knowledge cooperation is open access. Free access to information is of vital importance not only for researchers but for society in general. Open access enhances the visibility and impact of the research generated within the institution as the result is available worldwide without any restrictions. A recent study published in *BMJ* (1) shows that articles available through open access were associated with 89% more full-text downloads and 23% more unique visitors in the first six months after publication than subscription access articles. This study does not, however, indicate that open access articles were more likely to be cited than subscription based articles. On the other hand, a Ten-Year Cross-Disciplinary Comparison (2) indicates that open access articles have consistently more citations, the advantage varying from 36%-172% according to discipline.

Even though the evidence is not conclusive and much more research is needed, more and more funding agencies, such as the US National Institute of Health and the Wellcome Trust and universities, require that grant recipients must self-archive or publish in open access journals. Academic publishing is going through interesting times. A *BMJ* editorial (3) points out that the rapid and unpredictable influence of web 2.0 might change the way in which we all communicate. Hit rates and online profiles may soon become as or more important than citations.

Libraries now play an important role, which will only increase in the future, in capturing the benefits of open access. The role of the library is moving from that of manager of scholarly products to that of participant in the scholarly

communication process. Through establishing and managing institutional repositories and promoting open access journals, libraries have a role in developing and supporting the mechanisms which make the transition to open access publishing. Libraries should in both their educational and in their outreach activities teach their users about the benefits of open access publishing and open access journals.

The Internet has brought unparalleled opportunities for expanding the availability of research. The benefit to the individual researcher is two-fold, independently of whether the researcher is coming from a wealthy institution or not, as no institution can afford to sustain all the journals needed by their faculties or students.

Only if all journal articles are freely available will individual researchers have access to all the journal articles he/she needs and the article he/she publishes will only reach all potential readers if they are freely available.

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Arne Jakobsson, Library Director.
Library of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Oslo, Norway.



Podvorye Restaurant, the place for our Celebration Dinner 2009. The restaurant is housed in a typical Russian log house and its interior is filled with wooden panels and bear skins hanging on the walls of the restaurant.



You can even share a toast with the bear!

Transfer of Knowledge VIII

Providing and Managing Evidence Based Health Information

Workshop with continuing education
courses for medical librarians in
St. Petersburg, June 16th – 18th
2009

- Getting Clinical Evidence into Practice
- Medical Resources on the Internet
- Open Access Initiatives
- Web Technologies for Libraries
- International Cooperation
- Patient Information
- Reference Managing Tools

Transfer of Knowledge VIII

A co-operation between the
Medical Academy of
Postgraduate Studies, St
Petersburg and The Norwegian
Library Association. Section for
Medicine and Health (SMH)





Meile - the hub of our cooperation!



St Petersburg 2009: Спасибо и до свидания! (Spasibo i do svidanja!)