

The changing role of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library : Bridging the Information Gap between the developed and developing countries

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Introduction

The year 2001, a year of dialogue between civilizations is past. It has once again revealed that all of us, all people of the world, are interdependent and correlate with each other, that various aspects of human vital activities are taking on global character on an ever growing scale.

I am gratified to realize that the DHL is a source of information about the activities of the UN and so it serves the cause of the enrichment of the cultural life of the humankind and makes for the cultural pluralism, tolerance in reference to multifarious cultures and civilizations.

While attending the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Dag Hammarskjöld library and seizing this opportunity we are figuratively speaking in a position to address 189 sovereign member-states of the UN.

Issues designated as being fundamental ones and brought up for discussion at the conference which I have the honour to share in represent the core problems for the future advance of the mankind.

What country but Russia which has suffered all hardships of the World War II takes the problem of the role of the DHL as a library promoting peace.

I look at the role of the Russian State Library in the light of the second theme of the conference “The changing role of the Dag Hammarskjöld library: bridging the information gap between developing and developed countries” too.

Cooperation between the RSL and the UN library

To begin with, the Dag Hammarskjold library has all along paid and continues to pay much attention to the state and development of the stock of the UN documents in the RSL. Worth speaking of among the forms of close collaboration are regular visits of its employees to the RSL as the depository library of Russia with a view to checking the receipt of documents, maintaining the collection and its use, the access to the documents. The RSL is always filling in the questionnaires sent out by the DHL to all UN depository libraries the world over for the purpose of clearing up the availability of the UN documents on the part of users.

The UN Information Centre in Moscow is always showing interest in the UN depository libraries in Russia too. Thus 1988 saw a regional conference of representatives of the libraries arranged by the UN Information Centre in Vilnius with Dag Hammarskjold library taking part.

The RSL sets much store by the cooperation with the UN Information Centre in Moscow.

The political situation having changed, new depository libraries have come into being on the territory of the former USSR.

The calling of an international seminar of these depository libraries with the aid of the Dag Hammarskjold library for the purpose of stirring up the use of material and documents and carrying out the tasks set among others by the given conference seems to be useful under new conditions.

UN documents in the RSL

The RSL has acquired UN materials since 1954 and since 1965 it has been a depository library of the UN documents and publications. At present the UN stock numbers upwards of 250 thousands items.

The RSL holds practically all official UN documents in the shape of series of official accounts including those of the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council.

A no less valuable part of the stock is the produce of the specialized agencies coming within the range of the UNO, with some of them being founded earlier than the UN: Universal Postal Union and the International Labour Organisation.

Besides the RSL is the depository library for the publications of the UNESCO-United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the World Health Organisation, the International Atomic Agency.

The RSL likewise acquires documents of some further international bodies, for example, the Food and Agricultural Organisation.

The making of the UN collection

In 1992 the RSL passed the decision to set up the Department of official and normative publications together with the Centre of legal information with the UN documents and materials and papers of its affiliated organisations constituting one of its main stocks. The life has shown this decision to be quite prudent.

To use the UN materials in a rational way they have been broken down into two storage levels. The literature of the first level that is most widely read publications and new additions are found next to the reading room and readers can use them all by themselves.

UN documents on human rights, periodicals and serials, publications of the leading UN bodies, statistical reference books, yearbooks of different standing committees, materials and publications of such specialized agencies as the World Health Organisation, the International Labour Organisation, the UNESCO and so on are to found there.

The publications of the second level requests for which the are not so frequent remain in the restricted access and they are issued to the reading room on users' call. It allows for the rational utilization of the library flooring.

Services to readers

By offering the readers the UN materials for perusal in the open access the RSL makes its contribution to the legal education of the society.

Presently one can familiarize oneself with the UN yearbooks and annual catalogues of the UN publications with information on the literature published by the UN being arranged by alphabetical order and according to subject and thematic hallmarks.

The reference matter attached to the UN publications has been called into being with due regard to readers' requests, with all new accessions being revealed according to their contents.

Information on the UN materials dealing with the burning affairs of the present time is to be found in the electronic catalogue of the RSL.

The UN website in the Internet is much frequented.

Apart from permanent exhibitions of new additions to the UN stocks the reading room arranges subject expositions every two months, with the subject being determined by topics of the day both in Russia and abroad.

According to the statistics of readers' demands of the last years approximately 250 RSL readers use UN publications every month. This is indicative of the keen and ever growing interest in the UN literature.

UN literature

The UN publications of the last years dwelling upon the legal issues of great importance for Russia: ecology and environment protection, human rights of main, rights of national minorities, prevention of criminality, fighting against terrorism and illegal distribution of narcotics, corruption cause the readers' interest to rise. I have no need to prove that it is just these questions that set our minds racing, the youth included.

Conclusion

In arranging for the celebration of such a significant date as the fortieth anniversary of the Dag Hammarskjold library to be observed on the 1st of March 2002 I cannot but think back to close personal ties of the RSL with it.

Doctor of pedagogics N.Tyulina, one of the oldest employees of the RSL devoted eight years of her life to the Dag Hammarskjold library in New York in the capacity of its director (1970-1978). It was on her initiative that the UN library launched out on automation which resulted in the successes the Library has achieved by now.

Tyulina passed on the duty to V.Orlov, who was also an employee of the then Lenin State Library (1978-1982).

It will be also recalled that doctor of pedagogics L.Vladimirov, a representative of the USSR, director of Lithuania's oldest library, the Vilnius University Library for many years was at the head of the DHL in New York between 1965 and 1970.

Thus Russia has also done its own bit of 18 years' standing to the development and thriving of the Dag Hammarskjold library in New York. The RSL is prepared to cooperate for the welfare of our readers henceforth too.