Creation of open electronic libraries as a way to manage library collections

Preservation of the national cultural heritage and providing access to it are two contradictory tasks which libraries have to solve. Nowadays digitization of the documents helps to solve these tasks and eliminate contradictions.

Creation of full-text electronic collections is one of the priorities of the National Library of the Republic of Karelia. Due to digitization preservation of rare documents is guaranteed, besides users of the library including remote users have access to these documents.

The National Library gives priority to digitization of local documents and manuscripts. Besides we scan rare and most valuable documents from the rare book department. The next categories of local documents have been chosen for digitization:
- Books published at the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries.
- Documents which are of interest for historians, folklorists, linguists, ethnographers and for other scientists. These are descriptions of Olonets province by scientists, travelers, local ethnographers.
- Books in Karelian, Vepsian and partly in Finnish.
- Documents published during and after the Second World war.

There are moments which we have to comply during digitization. The main requirement for document scanning is providing of its preservation as a document shouldn’t be damaged during the process.

It is important not to permit distortion of the original sources during scanning. This is achieved by conversion of pages in a graphic image. JPEG-image has been chosen at the National Library. Copies are stored on the library server and the access is provided by using the active links. Reserve copies of the documents are kept on a separate network drive.

It is important not to duplicate documents for digitization. Each document is checked for a copy in other open electronic libraries or electronic catalogs and databases at the libraries of Russia. The document is not scanned if there is a digital copy.

Cooperation with Yeltsin’s Presidential Library has increased quality of graphic images. The National Library started creating graphic images on requests developed by the Presidential library. These are the main demands for the graphic images which are used at the National Library:
- JPEG, PDF images;
- Resolution of 300 dpi;
- One size for all pages of the document;
- Continuous file numbering in Latin without any repetition;
- Scanning of all pages, including blank pages without any information;
- Orientation of graphic images according to orientation of the pages in a document;
- Perpetuation of the background of the page on the graphic image close to the original;
- Maximum of uniformity of depth and color saturation of pages on graphic images;
- Approximately the same field from the edge of the sheet to the text on all the graphic images of the document.

If there are any defects in the original document then they appear in a special statement which is attached to the document.

Each digital document has full bibliographic record with the address of the resource.

I would like to provide an overview of our electronic resources and specificity of their formation.

One of the wide-scale projects is the Electronic Library of the Republic of Karelia (http://elibrary.karelia.ru/). It functions beginning from 2002 and actively develops today. This project is corporative and some institutions take part in it. These are Petrozavodsk State University, the National Library of the Republic of Karelia and Karelian State Pedagogic...
Academy. Software and technological support is provided by the Regional Centre of New Information Technologies of Petrozavodsk State University.

At the moment the Electronic Library of the Republic of Karelia contains more than 2300 full-text publications in all fields of knowledge, including more than 800 electronic versions of the rare books which were published starting from the 17th to the beginning of the 20th centuries. My colleagues digitized and placed more than 700 digital copies.

You have two access points to get full text digital copy. They are: the site of the National Library and the electronic catalog of the National Library.

The electronic Library is widely used. According to statistics (statistics is from 2004) total number of users of the Electronic Library is about 60000 and per month its number increases about 500 people. Documents of the 18th, 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries are very popular among the users. These documents reflect administrative structure, nature management, life and culture of Olonets district, surrounding areas and the Russian empire. Publications to aid the educational process are rather popular, too.

You can find the collection of manuscript copies on the site of the National Library. The original manuscripts are kept in our library (http://library.karelia.ru/folder/rbooks.html). Distinctive feature of this resource is the presence of digital copies of the manuscripts and electronic versions of the most interesting manuscripts which are converted into modern Russian spelling by co-workers of the library.

A unique internet-project “Olonetskiye Gubernskiye Vedomosti” (“Olonets Provincial Gazette”) (http://ogv.karelia.ru) is extremely important for those who is interested in the history of Republic of Karelia. An official edition of this newspaper with the same title was first issued in 1838 and continued till 1917. The most valuable information on statistics, demography, ethnography and economy one could find in it. Nowadays not a single institution in the republic has a full printed archive of this newspaper. Several Karelian institutions such as Petrozavodsk State University, the National Library of the Republic of Karelia, the National Archive of the Republic of Karelia, the Karelian Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Science united their efforts to create an electronic archive of the newspaper. In addition, printed indexes for different periods were digitized. The index of articles which has no geographical relation to the Olonets region, is presented separately.

The access to this full-text database is available on the Internet from 2006. This database includes about 5 thousands issues. Nowadays, the collection is almost complete. The staff of the library is working on edition and replacement of the digital copies into more qualitative copies.

Beginning from 2005 a joint project of the National Library of the Republic of Karelia and the Institute of Russia and Eastern Europe in Helsinki “Electronic collection of documents in Finno-Ugric Languages” has been realized. The collection is published in Finnish and Russian on the “Finno-Ugric Libraries in Russia” portal (http://furl.karelia.ru). The National Library of the Republic of Karelia fulfills the electronic collection in Finnish, Karelian and Vepsian languages. Also, the collection of copies of different editions of the national epos “Kalevala” in Finnish, Swedish and Russian is placed on the library site.

A new Internet project of the National Library of the Republic of Karelia “The Electronic Library of the Karelian Writers” presents contemporary Karelian literature (http://avtor.karelia.ru/main.html). Karelian writers, literary scholars and publicists present their prose, poetry, publicism, criticism, translation, etc. on this site. We look forward to fruitful cooperation with Karelian authors. It will help develop the web-site and attract attention of our patrons.

Now the project “Summary of Musical Manuscripts of Karelian Composers and Musicians” is under stage of development. Musical manuscripts are dispersed in different institutions of Karelia in one copy and most of them have never been published.

Musical manuscripts is the most significant part of the library collection. Access to the musical manuscripts is restricted for patrons. That is why it is so important to merge all the
musical manuscripts in a single point and provide access to the users. A new software will provide storage and access to the collection of digitized copies of musical manuscripts with the help of electronic catalogues which include electronic scientific descriptions. It is planned to create bio-bibliographic electronic database “Composers of Karelia” where one can search necessary documents, look through materials, explore bibliographic descriptions and digital images from the sites of all project participants.

The National Library continues to cooperate with the Yeltsin’s Presidential library presenting digitized copies of the local documents. Our library has already passed 261 documents with 60 thousands pages to the Presidential Library.

The European Digital Library “Europeana” is interested in the resources of the National Library of Karelia. At the moment the National Library is handing over the collection of Kalevala epos and the collection of other publications in Finnish in XML-format to “Europeana”. Right now the Kalevala digital collection is transferred into XML image.

Thus, one can say that the National Library of the Republic of Karelia does a lot of work promoting its valuable collections among Internet users. Creation of open electronic libraries contributes to the rise of effectiveness of serving patrons and awakening their interest to the Karelian culture. It also widens access to rare local history documents and provides storage of documentary heritage of the republic as a part of cultural heritage of Russia.