

DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIBRARY OF MEDICAL ACADEMY OF LATVIA IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS

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The Library of the Medical Academy of Latvia (AML) is one of the structural units of the Academy. Its main task is to provide students, postgraduate students, teaching staff, researchers and doctors participating in retraining courses with the latest textbooks and reference books, scientific literature as well as with current medical and socio-political information by making use of modern information technologies.

The library was established in 1951 when medical education was separated from the Latvian University. Today the library has 3200 users and 24 staff members. Its stocks comprise about 312.000 items and the total area is 1900 m². The Information Centre of the library has 28 computer workstations for working in CD-ROM, Internet or with text editing programs.

When Latvia became an independent country, the "iron curtain" was raised and information from abroad became something real and accessible. In 1992 the first steps towards library automation were made (system COMPASS in the Acquisition Department); in October 1993 the integrated library automation system ALISE, developed in Latvia, was introduced in the library. When "leaping into Europe and the U.S.A." and moving towards new information technologies, staff members had to become psychologically adapted to a new situation, which during the first years was very complicated.

Since 1994 the library has participated in about 20 different projects to gain resources for its main task — information service on an up-to-date level.

The new style of work and information retrieval require new global links. The library has become a member of EAHIL and BMA. The librarians have attended international conferences and seminars. They have improved their knowledge in Latvia through participation in seminars and courses led by foreign or local specialists.

The library has received considerable support from the Soros Foundation — Latvia, the Open Society Institute in Hungary and A. W. Mellon Foundation as well as from the administration of the Academy. After reconstruction, a modern Information Centre – Reading Hall was opened in the library in September, 1998. Work continues on a new, consortium, level. Eight biggest libraries of Latvia have joined to participate in a national project — united information network for libraries.