

Digital Future of National Libraries
Presentation by Dr. Alexander Visly
Russian State Library (RSL)
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Dr. Alexander Visly opened his presentation by saying that the mission of the national library is to provide users with all modern knowledge in all languages. He observed that in the electronic era there are three ways to deliver knowledge: The first is via printed publications, which may take up to two hours to serve. While printed publications should be represented by catalogs composed of electronic records, not all publications are so represented. The second is via e-literature, either owned or leased. This category is in competition with the first and there is a constant balancing between the two. And the third is via e-resources generated by the library itself, which can be served immediately.

So, how does the RSL set priorities for its 1 million visitors annually? Dr. Visly answered by asking two questions: What about the other 149 million citizens of Russia who cannot make a visit to RSL to see the collections? What good is it if only a small percentage of the population sees the collections of RSL?

With the e-subscriptions, most are scientific periodicals in the English language. e-Library.ru does supply Russian-language publications, but according to a case study conducted in 2008, not many Russian-language monographs are being digitized. Part of the problem is that the market for Russian materials is too small. That's why commercial publishers are not interested in creating full text databases of Russian research publications. Because of market size, both Chinese and Spanish-language digitized materials are on the increase.

Annual Russian scientific publishing output is approximately 40,000 titles authored by about 100,000 scientists. Intellectual property rights are difficult to obtain from authors for digitization. Digitization is the only way modern knowledge can be delivered to all citizens of Russia. There will always be limitations on the delivery of knowledge. These limitations include the issues of access, reproduction, and printing.

Dr. Visly said that the RSL must become the aggregator for all Russian scientific publishing output. Collections that can be aggregated include Russian dissertations, for which RSL holds a complete collection. Since 2000, they are all in digital form. Books published before 1930 in Russian are out of copyright and can be digitized.

Regarding the status of legislation to support the legal deposit of digital content, Dr. Visly said that the Public Committee for the Advancement of Russian Libraries, chaired by Boris Gryzlov, chairman of the State Duma, was organized to address these issues. Some actions are being undertaken by the Ministry of Culture, which will introduce amendments to Part IV of the Civil Code. One of these amendments would give RSL the right, without permission from the author, to digitize publications two years after they

were first published. Other amendments would allow access to born digital publications on the premises of the Russian State Library and Russian libraries contracted by it. Dr. Visly noted that sometimes digitizing an object locally is easier than converting various digital formats to formats that can be handled locally.