

**«Контент-стратегия» Британской Библиотеки
и ее влияние на формирование русского
и славянского фонда Библиотеки**

**The British Library Content Strategy
and Its Implications on the Development of the Russian
and Slavonic Collections**

**«Контент-стратегія» Британської Бібліотеки
та її вплив на формування російського
та слов'янського фонду Бібліотеки**

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25 апреля 2006 г. Британская Библиотека выпустила в свет документ под названием «Контент-стратегия Британской Библиотеки – для удовлетворения потребностей страны в знаниях». В этом документе говорится, какие информационные ресурсы следует комплектовать для того, чтобы лучше удовлетворять информационные потребности научного сообщества Великобритании как в настоящее время, так и в будущем. Важно отметить, что в этом документе говорится о ресурсах, которые Британская Библиотека приобретает и на которые подписывается в рамках бюджета на комплектование, а не получает по обязательному экземпляру.

Указанный документ получил хорошую прессу от британского и мирового научного и библиотечного сообщества. Безусловно, он оказывает влияние на развитие тематических собраний. В июне 2007 г. в Британской Библиотеке было образовано специальное структурное подразделение по контенту. Для достижения обозначенных в Контент-стратегии целей были также образованы группы по контенту (или предметные группы). Особое внимание в докладе уделяется проблемам, с которыми столкнулись библиотекари славянского фонда, а также практической деятельности, направленной на реализацию Контент-стратегии.

On 25 April 2006 British Library published a consultation paper, 'The British Library's Content Strategy – Meeting the Knowledge Needs of the Nation'. This document sets out the proposals for what information resources should be collected and connected with, in order to meet the needs of UK research, both today and in the future. It focuses on the materials that the Library purchases and licenses through its 'acquisitions' budget, rather than what it receives through legal deposit.

The document received good response from the academic and library communities in the UK and worldwide. Obviously, it has certain implications on the collection development in individual areas. In June 2007, a structure of content specialists was created in the Library and content or subject groups were formed to achieve the goals set up by the strategy. This paper focuses on the challenges faced by Slavonic curators and the practical work that is being carried out in line with the strategy.

25 квітня 2006 р. Британська Бібліотека видала документ під назвою «Контент-Стратегія Британської Бібліотеки – для задоволення потреб країни у знаннях». У цьому документі йдеться про те, які інформаційні ресурси варто комплектувати для того, щоб краще задовольняти інформаційні потреби наукового співтовариства Великої Британії як сьогодні, так і в майбутньому. Важливо зазначити, що в цьому документі мова йде про ресурси, які Британська Бібліотека купує й на які оформлює передплату в межах бюджету на комплектування, а не про ті, що отримує як обов'язковий екземпляр.

Зазначений документ одержав схвальну оцінку від британського й світового наукового та бібліотечного співтовариства. Безумовно, він має вплив на розвиток тематичних колекцій. У червні 2007 р. у Британській Бібліотеці був утворений спеціальний структурний підрозділ, спеціалісти якого займаються питаннями контенту. Для досягнення визначених у Контент-Стратегії цілей було також утворено групи з питань контенту (або предметні групи). Особлива увага в доповіді приділяється проблемам, з якими зіштовхнулися бібліотекарі слов'янського фонду, а також практичній діяльності, спрямованій на реалізацію Контент-Стратегії.

In April 2006, the British Library issued for consultation a new document under the title “The British Library’s Content Strategy – Meeting the Knowledge Needs of the Nation” (<http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/contstrat/index.html>). The document generated a lot of interest from fellow librarians, academics, other readers’ communities, professional organisations and general public in the UK and abroad. The British Library received useful and interesting comments which were collated and analysed by a team of consultants.

This strategy is innovative and unique in many ways. First of all, the familiar term “collection development” that has been in existence for so many years was replaced by “content strategy”. In the view of the authors of the document this new term was more in line with the rapid changes in the publishing industry, which libraries have to follow and accommodate in their policies, changing needs and requirements of the Library’s users and other stakeholders and the recent internal developments in the British Library. Content strategy implies that the British Library is not only concerned about its holdings, but also about the role it should play in providing access to content held by others, e.g. to licensed or free material on the web and in other formats. The document was developed by the British Library staff as a result of the series of reviews conducted over the last 5 years. Also, for the first time the British Library holdings were analysed with a view of academic subjects defined by the Higher Education funding bodies, such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DEL) for the Research Assessment Exercise which takes place regularly and affects all UK universities.¹ For each subject or discipline a template which outlined traditional strengths of the collection, the new priorities and new trends in collection development was designed. A group for implementation of the content strategy was set up and a new structure of content experts was created. Each content expert also has a working subject group. It has to be said that in the British Museum Library which became part of the British Library in 1972 when the latter was established, the collections and responsibilities for their development were primarily divided by languages, geographical areas and formats. There were no subject librarians as they are known in the UK university libraries, but each specialist was called a curator and was responsible for a certain collection, for example, German, French, Hispanic, Modern British, early Western manuscripts, maps, philatelic, etc. With some minor changes this structure survived several reorganisations and collection development is still in the hands of people whose job title is curator. Curators are responsible for selection, some cataloguing, and, as the British Library never had special research departments, for exploring and promotion of the collections which they are in charge of.

The new structure is in many ways an additional layer on top of the existing one. For example, curators of different language based collections were appointed content specialists in various area studies, such as Hispanic studies, German studies, Slavonic studies. Some new content specialists were appointed for social science subjects, which is an entirely new concept for the British Library. We now have content specialists in sports, business and management, urban studies, health, sociology, etc. The most problematic subjects proved to be such broad and diverse disciplines as history, literature, philosophy, where the British Library has the best and the biggest collections in different languages and formats.

There is a lot to be said about this new development in general, however, I would like to show how it affects Russian, Slavonic and East European Studies. The vision is that we have to identify the needs of our users and new trends in research activities and on the basis of that create a working structure that could quickly and effectively respond to them as well as to the changes in the publishing market.

Here I would like to identify the tasks and the challenges that we face and the impact of this new structure on the collection development as we know it in my area.

At the moment the selection is being done by curators on the language and country basis and inevitably reflects their personal interests, knowledge and experience. We have very little feedback from the readers and there is no consistent way to check whether our selection satisfies their research needs. Of course, we already have close relations with the departments of Slavonic and East European Studies and

¹ The first RAE was undertaken in 1986. For the first time it introduced an explicit and formalised assessment process of the quality of research. Further exercises held in 1989, 1992 and 1996 became gradually more transparent, comprehensive and systematic. See: <http://www.rae.ac.uk/aboutus/history.asp>

research centres in the UK and abroad and know what the researchers are interested in, but the challenge is to make our role more proactive, find new ways of getting feedback, proposals, and recommendations. However, every librarian would quite rightly point out that this task should be carried out most carefully keeping the right balance between readers' expectations and what is feasible within the resources given on the one hand and between acquiring material for immediate use and perpetuity or future research on the other. So, we need to develop a two-way dialogue with our users and simultaneously, create the system in the internal library structure through which we can channel this feedback and adapt to it. There are different ways of working with our users, such as focus groups, interactive web spaces, workshops and seminars, lectures and conferences, polls and questionnaires. Some of these methods we are already exploiting on a regular basis, and some are entirely new to us.

Hopefully, this dialogue will help to provide solid methodological grounds for our future collection development. For example, we know that Russian archival material available on microforms is of great value and on demand among the UK researchers and many commercial publishers are operating in this area, but we do not know whether our holdings are being used extensively, and if not, was it our wrong choice of material, decline in the research area, or simply inadequate accessibility that caused it. In the recent years publishers started to offer this material in both microform and electronic format. Of course, electronic databases are more convenient to use, but libraries do not own them in the same way as they own hard copies or microfilms. Whether or not we should duplicate our holding in this way is still a question that needs to be answered. Certainly, for practical reasons, such as budget, storage capacities, resources available for processing and cataloguing material, it is not possible to duplicate electronic databases even if such an opportunity exists. However, it might be helpful to draw a more defined line between "not needed" and "not possible" when we talk about duplicating electronic content in what is now looks like a more stable format.

We also have to identify other groups of readers or potential readers of the Library, such as people working in businesses and looking for easy accessible information about Russia or Eastern Europe for a variety of business reasons, growing émigré communities from our countries, and family historian. We must say that until recently we did not cater for these groups of users and even did not notice that they had different needs and requirements. For example, businessmen need simple and reliable information quickly and in most of the cases in English. Many artists and designers are now interested in Russian and East European art and its legacy. People whose native language is not English are looking for books in their languages for personal development and recreation. Whether or not the British Library will take these needs as priorities and provide a fast-track delivery and translation service for businesses, a special enquiry service for designers and family historian or a dedicated reading room for recreational reading for émigré communities is another question. As a national library, the British Library cannot possibly be the place for everyone, especially if a niche is covered by other libraries, such as university, public or specialised libraries. Here we are talking about a permanent structure and developed methodology that will allow us to follow all the changes within the reader's communities.

For collection development it means that this information and data should be used to make quick and informative decisions about switching some resource from one area to another. For example, it is clear now that expensive art books are on demand and even if they are not in English, they still could be required by those who do not speak foreign languages. However, at the moment the internal relations within the Library is the most problematic part of the plan, as all curators are also budget holders for the areas of their responsibility, and therefore only informal relations work between them. It works with some limitations, of course, and curators simply recommend each other material that does not fall into their profile. Moreover, relocation of funds and budgets can be only done at a very senior level which slows down the process and makes it time-consuming and bureaucratic.

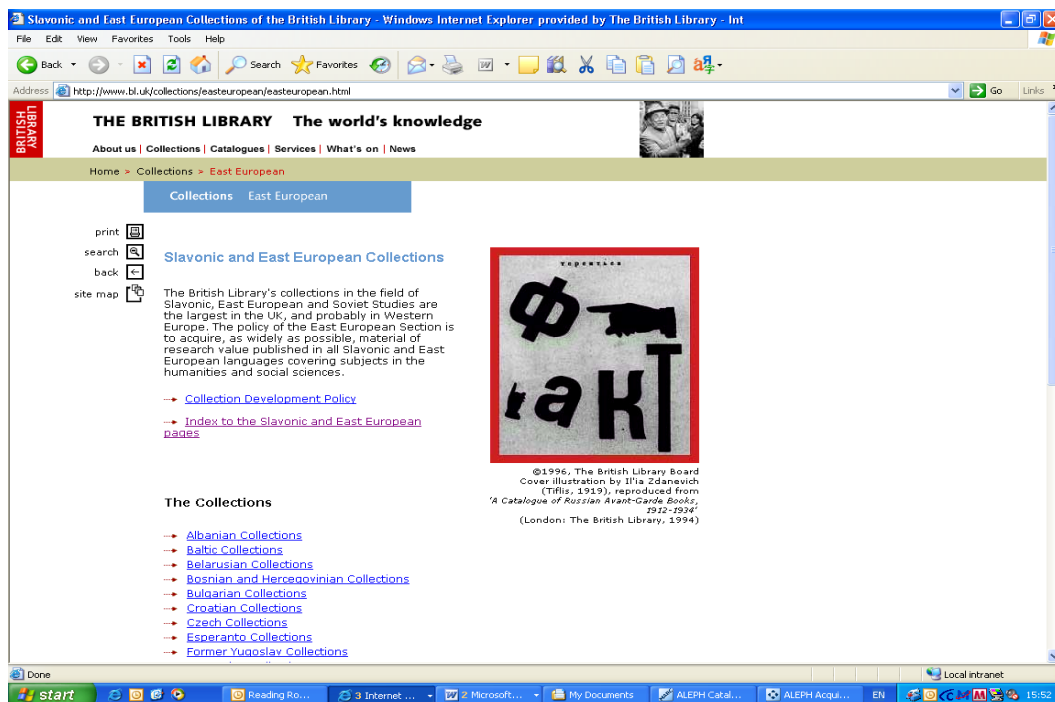
Selecting literature in the Russian language, I'm obviously interested in material on Russian literature, history, politics, economy, social development, etc. I automatically exclude material written in Russian on, for example, German Studies, although it might be of high research value. Similarly, my colleague responsible for the German section, and now – for the German Studies – would not normally pay much attention to material written in German about Russia. With some exceptions this seemed logical, but on the other hand, we might be lacking some material, that is essential. Although it is stated in the template that we will "continue very selective level of collecting of research material in other languages", this type of material in practice often falls between the chairs. Even a very selective level of collecting has to have

ownership; hence from now on we would have to learn seeing our areas in a different perspective, and will try to understand them in much broader way than we used to see and understand them before.

This applies not only to other area studies, but mainly to material on social sciences in our languages. It goes without saying that we have strong collections on Russian and Eastern European politics, economies, and societies. We are not (with some exceptions) collecting on psychology or sociology in our languages, but now is our opportunity to find out whether there is any demand for this. During one of the sessions with readers, it was suggested that the Library should collect comparative data on certain subjects, such as health, environment, finance, etc. That is a sign that people might be mainly interested in primary sources. The answer to this trend might be in providing access to and some guidance how to use free electronic resources with foreign domain names. Hopefully, our interaction with readers on the one hand and improved relations between different departments on the other would facilitate clear collection policies concerning social science material in foreign languages.

Overall responsibility for the areas studies also includes material collected in other than modern printed books or serials formats, such as manuscripts, maps, music, audio recordings, moving images, philatelic, visual material including photographs. And though the level of collecting of such materials always has been and will stay “selective” or “very selective”, these sections also require special attention in terms of collection development.

One of the activities that most of the content specialists consider to be of great importance is changing the environment on our own web-site. At the moment our collection pages just describe our collections.



Our web editing team started a new project that is called “Research help”. At the moment only new pages on social sciences have been created, and if the whole project is successful, Russian, Slavonic and East European Studies will also be presented in a new way on the Internet. It implies access to free electronic resources, improved resource discovery tools, interactive features, etc. For example, it might be logical to put the links to the database of Russian and NIS newspapers that we subscribe to next to the links to the most prominent Russian on-line media and electronic versions of some major newspapers; a select bibliography of our holdings of Ukrainian literature next to the free on-line libraries that contain full electronic versions of Ukrainian literary texts. It potentially can also have a strong impact on the decisions that selectors make while ordering hard copies.

I would like to conclude that the new vision of the content strategy outlined in the document that was issued two years ago is now being put into action. There are still lots of problems that need to be solved in

order to make the new system work, but hopefully, this approach and experience that we will gain and are gaining already while implementing it will not only help the British Library, but also could be of some use to the wider library community.