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Appendice

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## Exchange of Library Material of Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb

*The paper presents the practice of exchange of library material of Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb as one of essential segments of work in a museum library. The exchange has been going on since the Museum beginning. The Museum has a comparatively big exchange with a number of institutions in Croatia and abroad. Certain problems occurring in exchange are caused by: lack of qualified library staff in museums and lack of resources for exchange. Exchange of publications is only one of the segments of work in museum libraries that points to the need to solve the status of these libraries as well as status of museum librarians.*

Ethnographic Museum started collecting library material as an essential part of its professional and scientific work from its foundation in 1919. The Library was established as a separate department already in 1920. The Library was based on the books donated by Salamon Berger the first Museum director and Vladimir Tkalčić, the first Museum curator. The first collection included some 200 volumes (Gjetvaj, 69).

Library holdings grew at first owing to numerous donations by Museum staff and institutions from all over the world, as well as by exchange. Despite the fact that the first curators were aware of the importance of library for the Museum, the Library of Ethnographic Museum did not have a qualified librarian up to the year 1995. During all the previous years, one of the curators was in charge of the Library as a casual job. Unfortunately, in many special, and especially in museum libraries, even today the opinion prevails that no special education is necessary to work in a library. Thus museums that have libraries without a librarian are run inappropriately can be found. This is reflected in the exchange of publications as well.

Since there was no librarian in the Museum, it is difficult to determine when the exchange has begun because there are no data. But, according to the inventory books, it can be assumed that the exchange started when the library began working. The records of exchange were kept from mid-1950s and already then the exchange with

numerous museums was impressive. It included almost all the museums in the former Yugoslavia and a number of museums from all over the world. The exchange with scientific institutes, faculty libraries and other bigger libraries and other institutions also took place.

The Library of Ethnographic Museum today exchanges material with nearly 200 institutions, 50 of those are from Croatia and 150 are from different parts of the world. In the recent years the number of institutions in Croatia with which the material is exchanged has grown. The main reason was the establishment of several new conservation departments of the Ministry of Culture that need to have our publications. More faculty libraries also want to get our publications by exchange. These institutions often do not have their own publications, but when they occasionally publish something this is recorded as exchange and not as gift. The Museum wants that its publications reach the readers, so the publications are gladly exchanged, although sometimes the exchange ratio is unequal.

The exchange is performed in several ways: most often the Museum regularly sends its publications to other institutions, and they send their publications in return. But there are other established practices, like the longstanding exchange with The Royal Anthropological Institute of the British Museum. Since they publish a lot, the principle of exchange is book for book. Thus we send our publications and receive their list of publications to choose what interests us. This type of exchange is ideal for us: we get to choose the material we need for our Museum. Namely, routine exchange often leaves us with publications the Museum does not need. In this way the Museum Library is not encumbered with publications that are not within its scope of interest, so they just occupy the shelves and nobody will search for them. This is often due to the already mentioned problem that there are no competent professionals in museum libraries who would know what kind of publications should be exchanged with other museum libraries. Namely, not all publications are sent to every library, there are defined criteria, one of the basic being to take into account the profile of the museum and which publications would be interesting to the museum and its library.

In the last twenty years, due to political changes, the exchange with some institutions was intensified, and with some suspended. Some institutions do not exist any more, others do not send materials. There are museums in Croatia that publish, but do not have money for distribution of their publications. Postage is today a great expense for many museums, and there are no resources for distribution of museum publications, because the basic museum activity: exhibitions and collection of material have the priority. Although one can expect that the exchange of museum publications is a part of promotion and presentation of a museum, unfortunately this is not often perceived that way. It is not unusual that librarians and curators bring their exchange publications themselves when they come to Zagreb on business to save on postage.

Some museums are unwilling to exchange lavishly produced editions, so in these cases Ethnographic Museum has to buy the publications. Still, the cooperation between museum libraries is quite good and frequently a publication can be obtained on request, although there is a regular exchange with an institution.<sup>1</sup>

The regular exchange practice is to send material with a card which is returned as a receipt. Today these cards are frequently replaced with the confirmation of receipt sent electronically.

From all that was stated above, it can be seen that some clear principles of exchange should be established, but there are a lot of undefined principles of work<sup>2</sup> in museum libraries, not enough qualified staff and inadequate care for the holdings of the library that is often less important than the museum holdings. The status of museum libraries remains unresolved despite some attempts, and the status of museum librarians has not been resolved either. They are not under jurisdiction of either the *Law on Museums* or the *Law on Libraries*. The unresolved principles of exchange and other aspects of work in museum libraries are just a reflection of the unresolved status of museum librarians and of the issue who can work in a museum library.

Still, despite all the mentioned above, the Library of the Ethnographic Museum can be pleased with the number of institutions with which exchange has been established, so the Museum's publications can be obtained in some two hundred institutions all over the world and in return the Museum receives valuable material that it would otherwise be unavailable.

*Translated by: Jasenka Zajec*

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<sup>1</sup> This was the case on several occasions with the Museum of Arts and Crafts that publishes lavishly produced editions on several occasions.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, there are no clear rules who are the users of museum libraries and to whom the material can be lent; many museum libraries do not send deposit copies because they are not aware of this requirement and so on.