

This book was published some years ago, but still is worth recommendation and wider presentation as it gives an overview of the early stage of libraries computerisation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in the time of complex changes that have to be introduced after breaking the Iron Curtain in 1989. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation was one of the first who decided to help financially to overcome the political, economical and social difficulties in the time of system change from socialism where communication between people and foreign countries wasn't welcome and even such books like *Open Society* by Karl Popper had been forbidden.

In 1990 the Foundation chosen a few senior advisers to be appointed in order to provide leadership in the selected programs. One of them was professor Richard Quandt, econometrician from Princeton University, a Hungarian descent, who got a mission to launch a program for Central and Eastern Europe in the area of economics and business management on university level, in addition to implementation IT in research libraries. The program was complex and started with such countries like Hungary, Czech and Slovak Republic (at that time known as Czechoslovakia) and Poland and has been extended to the so called Baltic countries i.e. Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia at its end.

Author of this book gives an overview of the situation in the countries supported by the Mellon Foundation in all aeries, among them he presents Book and Journal Donation Projects, and gives detailed information about libraries computerisation. Working with many libraries from the region Quandt presents step by step all the efforts and problems with changing the library system from manual catalogues to computerised once, from a manner of working as individual library to the network of consortia on a number of levels: regional, national.

Professor Quandt has a deep knowledge of all the problems with selecting the system vendor, and systems never working properly. He describes the pioneering work of devoted librarians made responsible for the systems implementation, and at the same time for financial, and progress reports of usage of the grants received from the Foundation. Many times the progress was much slower than declared in the applications because of the unexpected problems. Professor Quandt not only generously accepted all these delays, but also different use of the grants if well explained, and tried to urge the system vendors and motivate them to give more adequate support to their new clients. He also pushed libraries forming consortia to chose the same system for all libraries in the consortium even sometimes it was a difficult choice because of different option. His demands towards the libraries were as simply as tough as we can read in the book *"the issue of what system to require (Dynix's Marguis or ALEPHE or any other) may pose a difficult problem. The Mellon Foundation is completely determined that the Consortium members must use an identical system. This is deemed by us to be much more important than precisely what system you end up using, provided that the system you use 1) is satisfactory for your needs, 2) does not cost more than you can afford.if one or more institutions have so great a preference for one system, and other institutions for another system, so that neither side is willing to take a chance on being outvoted on the system choice, then agreement is not possible. In that even the Mellon Foundation will cancel and revoke the grant and demand the immediate return of all moneys, including accrued interest"*. (p.240-241). Such option however difficult turnout into a number of good consortia. Much worse situation was when planning the national catalogues by libraries and consortia that purchased different systems. However, with Professor Richard Quandt mediation much more had been done in the Central and Eastern Europe than with any other foundation. It was not only financial help of the prestigious foundation, but friendly and personal support given by Professor Richard Quandt himself to many leaders who felt obliged to not let him down, and made even impossible like forming national consortia in which they had to fight for their own ideas implementation. The Mellon Foundation support in the early nineties in the Central and Eastern Europe happened to be a great success. I was fortunate to be a small part of this program in which I made a journey from 19th to 21st century library within less than ten years time. Thanks to Professor Richard Quandt this time was so successful.

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