
Foreword

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My generation, born before World War II, grew up during the era of the cold war, roughly between 1945 and 1990. It was a peculiar time, when the Soviet Union and its satellites were pitted against the United States and its allies. Measured against the times, before and since, when national borders were more open and freedom of thought and movement prevailed generally, this period will always hold special memories for those who lived through it.

As one who during these years was educated and entered his chosen career—library historian and bibliographer in professional education—this was an unusually interesting period. Most people only read about the East–West struggle in Europe, and comparatively few from the North Atlantic community traveled much in Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union. In the fall of 1975, along with my wife, Avis, I attended the Library History Seminar VI in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. After we had picked up Paul Kaegbein, a distinguished and indefatigable German library historian, at the airport, we shared dinner with him at a restaurant that featured Central and Eastern Europe cuisine. A native of Estonia who was caught up in the war and the Soviet hegemony of Eastern Europe in its aftermath, Kaegbein was passionate about maintaining somewhat risky collegial relationships with our professional colleagues in the Eastern bloc. They often could not travel, he said, but we in the West could. That dinner talk was the beginning of my interest in embracing my mentor's passion for crossing the Iron Curtain for the sake of library connections. Subsequent trips to Poland and the Soviet Union cemented this interest.

My enthusiasm was rewarded when Hermina Anghelescu, guest editor of this two-part issue, came from the Romanian National Library to study in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Texas at Austin in the 1990s. She stayed on to complete her doctor-

ate with a magisterial dissertation on the history of libraries in modern Romania. Hermina may have left Romania, but her heart was always with her colleagues at home. Thus, she organized four short summer seminars for Romanian public and academic librarians in the late 1990s, for which she enlisted American friends as faculty. I accompanied the team on three of these ventures and witnessed for myself how librarians were developing new attitudes and charting new courses in a society free of former constraints. While the communist mentality had boosted literacy on a wider scale, librarians were now eager to provide new resources and services. Later, the 2004 IFLA Conference in Berlin brought the post-World War II period into clearer vision for me as my family and I stayed in a beautiful apartment in what was once East Berlin. We roamed all over the reunited city at will, enjoying its beauty and treasures.

True, we have had surveys of libraries during the cold war. Now it is time to assess the status of Eastern European libraries in the twenty-five years that have followed since its demise. The commissioning, collecting, and editing of the extensive essays that follow in this comprehensive survey could only have been accomplished by the guest editor who possesses extraordinary gifts of imagination, networking, persistence, and completion. This collection will provide a new benchmark in the history of libraries in Eastern Europe. While all the news may not be good, we can be grateful for this summary review.

Donald G. Davis Jr. is a professor emeritus of library history at the University of Texas at Austin, where he taught from 1971 to 2006, having received his education at UCLA, UC-Berkeley, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He edited the quarterly journal *Libraries & Culture* for thirty years and coedited *American Library History: A Comprehensive Guide to the Literature* (1989) and *Encyclopedia of Library History* (1994).