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Theophanes the Greek
Christ Pantocrator, 1378
Fresco in the dome of the Church of Transfiguration
in Ilyna Street. Novgorod

Introduction

Russia is a large country with more then 142 million citizens. Russia is a Federal State composed of 89 members of the Federation with the federal government and regional administrations. Cultural institutions and activities of world and national importance come under the responsibility of the federal Ministry of Culture, other institutions are subordinate to regional and municipal administrations. State archives are subordinate to another governmental body: the Federal Archives Service (Rosarchive). All branch and institutional documentary collections of museums, libraries etc. should be registered according to Rosarchive regulations by the federal law. So this paper should be considered as just an introduction to the digitisation policy and activities in Russia. A wider and deeper picture will require a special survey and a much longer report.
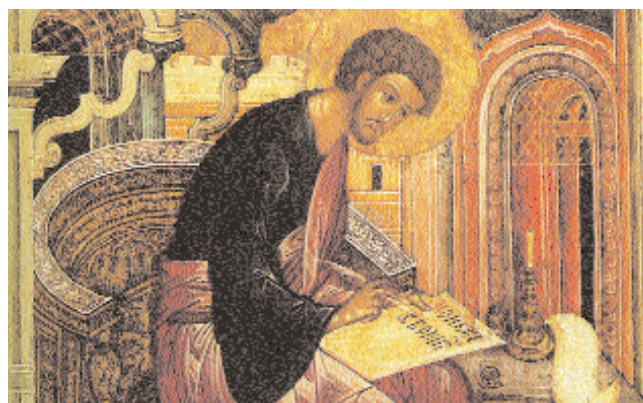
Heritage Institutions

There are 130,000 libraries in Russia, 50,000 of them are public libraries and about 100 of them are of world importance. Total library funds count about 2 billion items, including 2 million of old and rare books. There are over 3000 museums in Russia, 57 of them are of world and national level. The most valuable part of the Russian Federation Archive collection (over 39 million items) is concentrated in 14 federal archives. More than 123 million items are kept in 201 regional archives and more than 30 million items are kept in 2 500 local archives. There are about 2,5 million archive items in the Archives of Russian Academy of Sciences and more than 7 million items
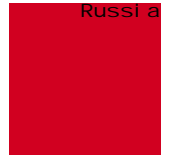
in museums and libraries. Every year the volume of documents in archives, subordinate to the Federal Archive Services increases by 1,6 million units.

Russian Internet sector (RUNET)

In the beginning of 2004 the Russian Internet volume was estimated as 1 terabyte. Cultural resources of RUNET, according to 2003 statistics, are about 22% and this sector is growing rapidly. Auditorium of RUNET is now about 10 million people, that is 7% of the population. Though Russian Internet penetration is still lower than in Europe it grows very quickly. The forecast is that the number of Internet users will be 2 times higher and will become around 20 million in 2005-2006. There is a good perspective for wireless broadband Internet. Russian Internet users are mostly young and educated and they need high quality cultural and educational resources. Though language skills (mostly English) are much higher now than in the Soviet era, not so many Russians (even educated) can read foreign languages. Multilingual access to the world cultural, educational, scientific heritage is needed and the world resources will find huge auditorium in Russia. Russian Internet resources even being mostly in Russian has large auditorium worldwide. Russian language resources are needed for the large Russian Diaspora, for Russian speaking population of the former Soviet countries, for educated people (mostly over 40) from Baltic countries and East Europe. Russian resources will find new users outside Russia among people not knowing Russian if a good multilingual access is available.

St. Luke, 1650
Detail of Royal Doors
in the Church of St. Ilijah the Prophet
Yaroslavl

National Information Policy

In Russia almost all heritage institutions are state bodies. Thus the role of the Government in cultural sector is of great importance.
Federal administration started to pay a serious attention to the Internet and to the information society policy after President Putin as signed the Global Information Society Okinawa Charter adopted by G8 in July 2000. National Information Policy is becoming more and more specific.
In 2001-2003 the official support of RUNET was the most significant: there was a series of Russian Government's decisions on Internet connections in post-offices all other Russia, on computerisation of country schools; the law on electronic signature was adopted by the Russian Parliament, the law on electronic business was discussed and adopted in the State Duma.
The Federal Programme "e-Russia 2002-2010" was designed and adopted. It will enable maximum use of intellectual potential, provide a way to enter the world post-industrial economy on a basis of co-operation and open information, overcome the "digital divide" and protect human rights including the right of free access to information and the right of private information protection.
Now the Ministry of Culture activities are being held under the programme "Culture of Russia 2001-2005" which includes some IST projects but this is not done systematically. Currently there is no national policy on digitisation of cultural and scientific heritage of Russia. However a lot is being done on national level, on regional level and by some cultural institutions and associations.
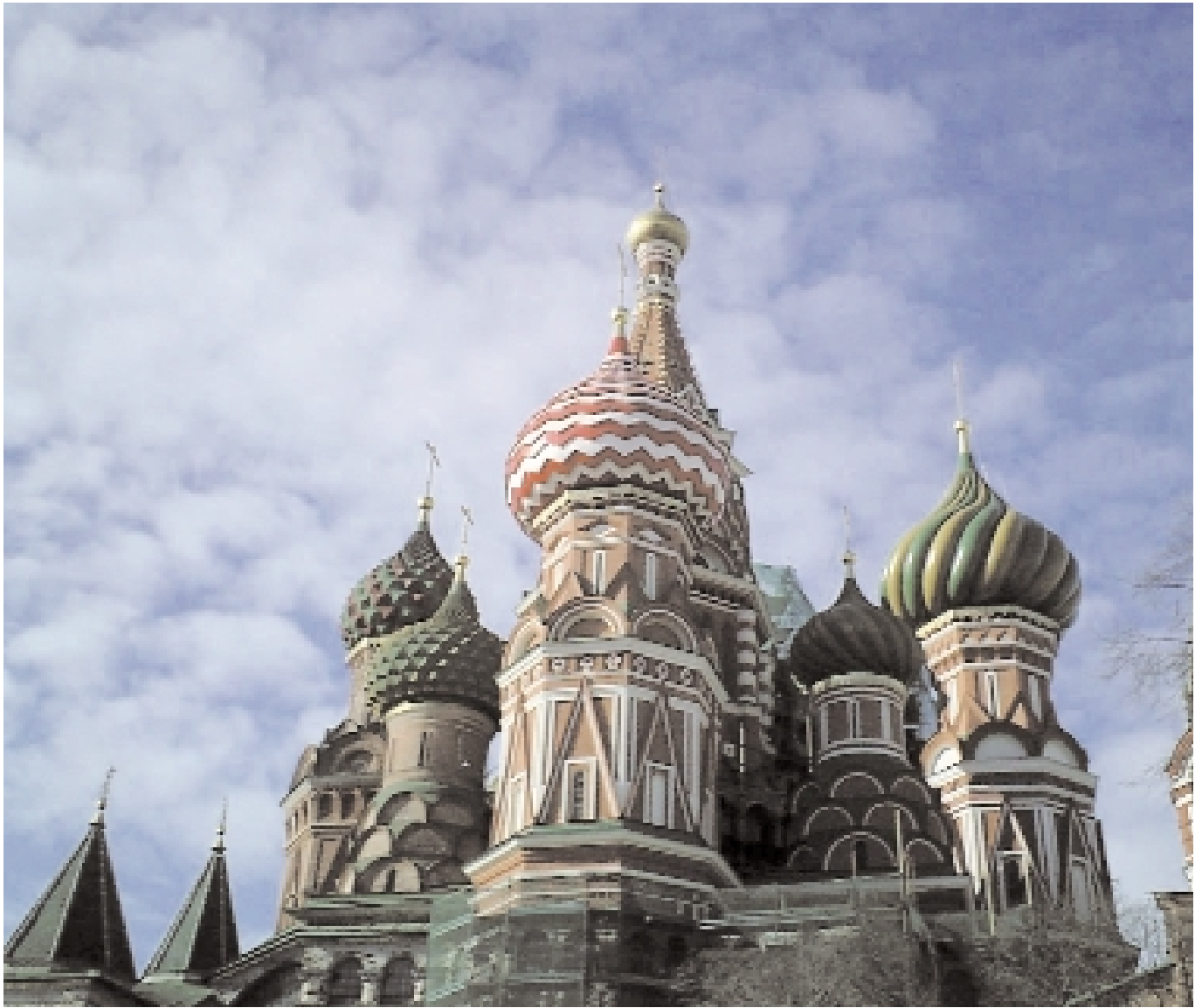The Library Department of the Ministry of Culture leads

on a number of long-term ICT projects. Informatisation of Russian libraries was supported by the LIBNET programme launched by the Ministry of Culture in 1998 and is supported now by the LIBNET-2 programme "Development of All-Russia Information Library Computer Network" started in 2000 (`http://www.ruslibnet.ru`). One of the main efforts was the development of Russian UNIMARK version officially adopted in 2002. One of the main projects of the LIBNET-2 programme is a National Information Library Centre (`http://www.nilc.ru`). The first stage of the project (2001-2003) is to create a specialised network for the National Union electronic catalogue of the Russian libraries. Currently the National Information Library Centre keeps united catalogue of new books of the Russian State Library (Moscow) and the Russian National Library (Saint Petersburg) and there is a mechanism for downloading bibliographic records which can be used by any subscribing library. National Information Library Centre is organised and works on OCLC scheme. In 2003 the Library Department of the Ministry of Culture started the project "National Digital Library" aimed at digitising and making accessible full texts of books. The first stage of the project is the digitisation of the dissertation thesis deposited in the Russian State Library.
The Russian Information Library Consortium (RILC) is a consortium created by the partners of the project 'Russian libraries in the third millennium'.
The project is funded by the European Commission, under the IBPP Key Institutions' the IBPP Programme (Institutions Building Partnership Programme). Building on the results of the Tacis Telrus 9705 project (1998-2000), which introduced a fully integrated library system in the Russian State Library, in Moscow,

RILC pursues different and broader objectives involving a partnership of five important Russian libraries which are working towards the goal of developing and implementing a joint Web gateway to their bibliographic and full text electronic resources via utilising the Z39.50 protocol and a gateway software with advanced searching capabilities. The partnership includes the Russian State Library, the Russian National Library, the Russian State Library for Foreign Literature, the Parliamentary Library and the Moscow State University Academic Library. The Library Department of the Ministry of Culture supports a number of other projects on corporate cataloguing and electronic documents' delivery. Russian Libraries are ahead of other cultural sectors in IST. Russian museums leg behind libraries in informatisation, integration of resources and presenting information resources on the Internet but there are a number of good examples like the State Hermitage that runs a long-term digitisation programme with the open Internet access (the project is supported by IBM). In 2000 the first museum of Russia gave Internet access to the full museum collection catalogue – this is the 'Rybinsk State Historical and Art Museum-Preserve'. The catalogue contains records of 50 000 museum items with good search possibilities and more then 3000 images, the image collection grows speedily. In the framework of the federal programme "Culture of Russia (2001-2005)" the Museum Department of the Ministry of Culture initiated a project of the United Museum Catalogue development. The project is currently in the stage of software testing and thesaurus development. The Federal Archive Service developed its own informatisation programme and has an ambition to make a joint archive collections catalogue.

Some large archives use automated systems and open catalogues on the Internet, for example, "Personal Photo documents Internet-catalogue of the Saint Petersburg Central State Archive of cinema and photo documents". There are efforts on developing science heritage accessibility. Here is just one example. During the last decade the Institute for Information Transmission Problems of the Russian Academy of Sciences carried out intensive research aimed at development of databases representing various collections with essential pictorial component such as archival drawings, photographs, watermarks, medieval manuscripts, incunabula, and other historical documents, those are an integral part of global cultural heritage. The development is mainly focused on archive funds not known to the world community.

Co-operation and networking

There are a number of initiatives on cultural heritage co-operation and networking, some them are concentrated around professional associations.Russian Library Association plays an important role in ICT activities. The list of available library catalogues can be found at the site of the Russian Library Association (http://www.rba.ru). The portal "Libraries of Russia" (http://www.libs.ru) initiated by the Library Department of the Ministry of Culture gives access to the list of Russian libraries, their sites and catalogues, forum facilities and other networking services. Association of Regional Library Consortia was founded as an organisation in May 2002. It was launched as a result of 3-years all-Russian project developing a series of regional library consortia in different regions of Russia, based on the Internet technologies and open standards (http://www.ruslan.ru:8001).

Architects Barma and Postnik
Saint Basil the Blessed Cathedral
(Pokrovsky Cathedral on the ditch)
1555-1561
Red Square, Moscow

Now it has a working system, joining 200 libraries from 43 regions, providing access via the common entry point (virtual union catalogue) for search, retrieval, ordering and delivery of about 20 million documents. Nowadays the emphasis is put on filling the virtual library of Russian resources with quality content. Russian Cultural Heritage Network (RCHN) was founded in 1996 in co-operation with some cultural institutions. RCHN is an information network that brings separate information sources together and creates a central resource base that provides easy access to the information and promotes Russian culture using Internet technologies. RCHN leads on several important projects, museum.ru by now is the main. The Russian Museums Web portal (`http://www.Museum.ru`) is the main Russian museums resource centre, which is also used as information and communication centre for public and museum professional area. The museum Association on Documentation and Information Technologies ADIT (`http://www.adit.ru`) plays a large role in museum IST activities. Since 1997 ADIT organises annual conferences "Museums and Information Space: informatisation and cultural heritage" in different cities. In 2003 ADIT was the Russian organiser of the CIDOC annual conference in Saint Petersburg. ADIT now has 13 Regional Representatives in Central Russia and Siberia (Yaroslavl, Kemerovo, Nizniy Novgorod and others). ADIT is constantly moving from a museum association to a real cultural heritage network uniting different types of cultural heritage institutions, universities, technological companies etc. Multimedia Centre and Department of Art Museums of Russia (`http://www.rusmuseum.ru`) of the State Russian Museum (Petersburg) has strong connections with art museums of Russia and leads a number of joint projects. For example, the project "Russian Museum in the Russian towns" – Virtual Russian museum in small towns of Russia, the development of information and education centres of the Russian museums in the Russian towns and " Virtual Exhibition from 32 Art Museums of Russia" (as a part of a large program of the Russian museum on collaboration with Art museums of Russia - named "Russia"). Internet server "From Russia with Art" (`http://www.artinfo.ru`) is the largest Visual Art Databank in Russian Internet. The Modern Art Computer Data Bank contains information in Russian and English about more than 1300 prominent modern Russian artists and over 7,000 digital pictures of their art works. From 1999 ARTINFO is publishing daily art world news (`http://www.artinfo.ru/ru/news`). The portal "Architecture of Russia" (`http://www.archi.ru`) has been live on the Internet since July 1999 and deals with the history of Russian architecture, modern design and construction projects. It is addressed to architects, art-critics and those, who are interested in Russian culture. It covers the history of the architecture of Russia, non-movable heritage of history and culture and includes news, publications, contests, problems of restoration, educational institutions, bibliography and useful links, a catalogue of monuments (now 370 monuments, 940 photos) and a catalogue of new buildings (currently under development).

International Co-operation

In 2000 according to recommendations of the Intergovernmental Council of the Unesco "Information for all" Programme the Russian Committee of the programme was organised

and now it plays an important role in speeding up the information society development in Russia. The Committee is supporting a Russian language Internet site of the Programme where the Recommendations on multilingual development and Charter on digital heritage preservation as well as some other important issues are discussed now. The Committee organises a set of international and all-Russia conferences and workshops and supports projects on open access to information. For the first time in Russia MINERVA was presented at the International conference "Unesco Programme Information for All: National and International Policy Development" at Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky in September, 2003. An important part of Russian MINERVA activities lies in close co-operation with the Unesco "Information for All" Programme. Russian heritage institutions participated in a number of FP5 projects, EVAN, CULTIVATE-Russia, Open Heritage, Pulman-XT are some examples. The International conference EVA Moscow is an annual event starting from 1998. The 6th International Conference EVA2003 Moscow was held in the State Tretyakov Gallery 1 – 5 December 2003 and MINERVA was presented there. Some Russian heritage institutions are going to be partners of FP6 projects BRICKS and CALIMERA and the synergy with these projects is planned in Russian MINERVA activities.

Russian participation in MINERVA Plus

Russian plans for MINERVA Plusparticipation include:
· to participate in work groups activities to provide the political and technical framework for improving digitisation activities of cultural and scientific contents

· to disseminate information and to facilitate the adoption of the Lund principles in Russia
· to disseminate information on MINERVA Plus member States National Policy Profiles concerning digitisation and to design Russian National Policy profile
· to promote in Russia and implement the existing benchmarking framework on digitisation, recommendations, methodologies and best practice;
· to develop and support Russian Internet site on MINERVA Plus activities
· to organise training workshops on digitisation for Russian specialists
· to promote MINERVA Plus results at professional all-Russia conferences and International conferences in Russia
· to co-ordinate all the activities with Unesco "Information for All" programme and other EU projects
· to participate in MINERVA Plus project meetings and conferences.