

ST. PETERSBURG'S HYDROLOGICAL LIBRARIES

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It would not be an exaggeration to say that St. Petersburg is one of the largest "library cities" of the world. By the beginning of the 90s there were more than 3,000 library and non-library book depositories in the city. The joint stock of St. Petersburg's libraries contains about 250 million volumes. There are large general-purpose libraries in St. Petersburg, such as the Russian National Library and the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences. There are also small specialized libraries.

Many of the libraries are united in library systems or networks. For example, the Russian National Library has a lot of branches in different parts of the city and at the same time it is a center for all the public libraries of St. Petersburg and the northwest region of Russia. The Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences has a network of libraries in academic research institutes. This network consists of 32 institute libraries; their collections and reference resources form a single collection together with the collections and catalogues of the main library. The libraries affiliated with different state institutions, as a rule, exist independently, though in recent years one can see a tendency to integrate the academy and university libraries. This is embodied in the development of joint projects aimed at informational support of scientific research within the framework of specific financing. As for the specialized libraries (including hydrological libraries belonging to various state departments), interlibrary loans are the sole form of co-operation among them.

Intended by the Peter the Great to be a "window to Europe," today's St. Petersburg is a major scientific and educational center of Russia, the largest port of the northwest of the country, and the main naval base in the Baltic Sea. Each of these aspects brings into being related library services. The services can be subdivided into five categories: libraries of research institutes, libraries of planning institutes, libraries of universities, libraries of companies and expeditions, and naval libraries. Apart from general purpose libraries, there are 45 specialized libraries in St. Petersburg which possess literature on hydrology. The joint collection of these libraries has almost 7 million volumes of books and periodicals.

The libraries of research institutes located in the city. There are 12 libraries of research institutes specializing in the analysis of marine and fresh water. Their joint collection has more than 1.5 million volumes. Among these libraries are the libraries of the Institute of Oceanology, the Institute of Limnology, the Hydrological Institute, and the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute. The Zoological Institute of the RAS and the National Research Institute of Lake and River Fish Economy are engaged in research on marine and freshwater hydrobionts. They have their own libraries.

The libraries of universities. The library of the Marine Technical University and libraries of educational institutions preparing civil specialists in marine and fluvial navigation belong to this category, which consists of six libraries in total. Their joint holdings amounts to 2.3 million volumes, including domestic and foreign literature on hydrology, meteorology, navigation, ecology, etc.

The libraries of planning institutes own literature on applied hydrodynamics, fluid mechanics, hydrological engineering surveys, hydrotechnic building, shipbuilding, ecology, etc. In total there are eight libraries of this kind in St. Petersburg with joint holdings of 703,000 volumes.

The libraries of companies and expeditions possess literature on shipbuilding, geological oceanography, hydrometeorology and monitoring of the environment, hydrography, and system design of water facilities. There are ten such libraries in the city, their joint holdings consist of 340,400 volumes.

The naval libraries possess both literature on military topics and literature on natural sciences and engineering. Personal collections which belonged to many outstanding figures of the Russian Navy are gathered here. A considerable portion of the holdings consists of books and periodicals on geography as well as geographic maps. As a rule, these are large libraries. In total there are nine of them in St. Petersburg; their joint holdings total over 2 million volumes.

Detailed information on libraries of St. Petersburg can be found in a reference book published in 1993. Publishing this book was an important event in that it combined the efforts of different library structures to optimize library information services in the northwest region of Russia. The reference book allows you to find libraries which have literature on a particular subject, and contact them directly. In the last ten years, citizens of Russia acquired the right to access information about environmental pollution. Formerly, this information was considered classified, access to it was limited, and that prevented the free exchange of information among libraries. Now these limitations are reduced, but the libraries have confronted new problems. Lack of financing and, as a result, low-grade technical equipment hinder libraries' efforts to share information in similar fields of knowledge.