

General Assembly 2022

**Minutes of the Bibliotheca Baltica General Assembly
Thursday, 15th September 2022, 9.00-10.00 hrs, Lübeck City Library**

Participants:

Liisa Savolainen, Tomasz Gruszkowski, Jürgen Warmbrunn, Jussi-Pekka Hakkarainen, Kristina Pai, Stefania Sychta, Anna Walczak, Robert Zepf, Tonis Liibek, Sonja Grund, Christian Winterhalter, Gudrun Wirtz, Christophe Didider, Antje Theise

(12 member libraries)

1. Opening and Welcome

The Bibliotheca Baltica President expresses the participants' gratitude to the host for the possibility to meet in the beautiful historic setting of the Lübeck City Library, which is a magnificent venue for the symposium in honour of the 400th anniversary of Lübeck City Library and the 30th anniversary of the foundation of Bibliotheca Baltica in this very place. The participants and the member libraries they represent are shortly introduced.

2. Establishment of the number of delegates authorized to vote on behalf of their libraries (and number of guests)

Representatives for twelve member libraries are attending. Each library has one vote.

3. Acceptance of the Agenda

The agenda is accepted unanimously.

4. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last virtual General Assembly on 15th December 2020

The minutes are accepted unanimously.

5. Report by the President and Board members on activities and plans

The most momentous decision in the past year was a direct result of Russia's unprovoked and completely unjustified war against Ukraine: as a direct consequence the Board unanimously decided to terminate the membership of its Russian and Belorussian member libraries. This decision was not taken easily but with much sadness considering the pitiful situation that has developed in Europe over the last year.

The Board felt, however, that terminating the membership of Russian and Belorussian member libraries was inevitable. In response to questions whether it had really been necessary to sever ties completely since there were still individual colleagues in Russia not supporting the war the Board had expressed its hope that in future cooperation might be possible again.

On an official level, however, professional ties with Russia had worsened considerably even before the invasion, not in the least because Russian librarians with personal ties to Europe had gradually been replaced by the Russian regime. Establishing contacts to the west has thus become more and more difficult and even risky, especially for junior colleagues.

The Board furthermore published a statement in support of Ukraine, which was sent to IFLA and other library associations. While many other library organizations took the same course, IFLA did not follow suit, which has resulted in a strong discussion within IFLA. Bibliotheca Baltica also issued an invitation to the Ukrainian Library Organization to become involved in the work of the association. This was received very warmly and the President of the

Ukrainian Library Organization, Ms Oksana Bruy, has been in quite close contact with the Board since.

The Bibliotheca Baltica Board also had the hope that many Ukrainian colleagues would be able to attend the Lübeck Symposium thanks to funding secured from the German organization Bibliothek & Information International.

In addition Bibliotheca Baltica's Boris Volodin Travel Grant, the name of which was retained to honour this open and internationally-minded Russian librarian, was awarded to Nataliia Kaliuzhna.

Tomasz Gruszkowski at this point drew attention to the fact that also other library organizations like EBLIDA, LIBER or CENL severed contacts with Russia following the expulsion of the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe.

The Bibliotheca Baltica President then explained that following the 2018 Rostock symposium a hiatus occurred, mainly due to the Covid pandemic. It is quite evident that Bibliotheca Baltica has very limited financial resources and that it must therefore focus on being a low-budget association, but with a high intrinsic motivation. In order to improve connectivity beyond the personal meetings possible at the symposia, digital communication should be used more intensely. Zoom or other comparable virtual meetings are quite easy to establish and make more joint activities possibility. To this end a mailing-list for members and the Board, hosted by Hamburg State and University Library, was (re-)established. Bibliotheca Baltica also aims at achieving higher visibility in the social media, especially but not exclusively during the run-up to the symposia.

One very desirable field of activity was identified as the facilitation of staff exchange beyond the level of directors. In addition Bibliotheca Baltica should analyse the possibilities of participating or even initiating joint projects between its member libraries.

Jussi-Pekka Hakkarainen then suggested maintaining the tradition of having biannual symposia with lower level webinars in the years in between. Proposals for the themes of such webinars should come from the member libraries. In his view good webinars are regularly offered in Finland for example, which has also resulted in a high level of proficiency in technical terms. Promoting such events is, however, a bigger problem since Bibliotheca Baltica has no dedicated personnel able to undertake this PR work on its behalf. So information is often only distributed within the individual countries but not across borders. In conclusion it is pointed out that Bibliotheca Baltica relies heavily on the activities of the Board members. New Board members will be elected at this General Assembly. The Board strives for a culture of great openness and candidates are invited to put themselves forward. In addition the future Board should offer invitations to join the Board meetings as guests.

6. Report by the Treasurer on the financial situation of Bibliotheca Baltica, Report by the Auditors

Jussi-Pekka Hakkarainen explains that the Board took a conscious decision not to stack up money in a year when Bibliotheca Baltica could not develop activities in favour of its members and that therefore the membership fee for 2021 was waived. In doing so the Board also hoped that this would help Bibliotheca Baltica in retaining the support of its member libraries under difficult circumstances.

In view of the fact that only Charlotte Hillergård submitted an auditor's report the General Assembly encourages the treasurer to try to still obtain the second report by Ave Sepik. It also decides unanimously that, if no second auditor's report can be obtained, it will put trust in the report by Charlotte Hillergård and its recommendation.

As a consequence the General Assembly votes unanimously to discharge all Board members from all the financial liabilities for the years 2020 and 2021.

7. Elections (President, Treasurer, Board members, Auditors);

The President of Bibliotheca Baltica, Robert Zepf, states that due to his commitments as Director of the Hamburg and State and University Library he has decided not to stand for re-election.

Since no secret ballot is requested the General Assembly votes for the following candidates for the open positions on the Board (President, Treasurer, two Board members) in an open vote:

President: Liisa Savolainen (unanimous vote)
Treasurer : Jussi-Pekka Hakkarainen (unanimous vote)
Board member: Karin Grönvall (unanimous vote)
Board member: Robert Zepf (unanimous vote)

All candidates present accept their election.

Following the election the newly elected Board decides to co-opt Renaldas Gudauskas as Board member.

The General Assembly also unanimously elects two auditors for the years 2022 and 2023: Viktorija Pisčikova and Kristina Pai. Kristina Pai is present and accepts her election, Viktorija Pisčikova had already expressed her acceptance in the case of an election.

8. Bibliotheca Baltica Symposium 2024

The members present gratefully accept the invitation of the National Library of Poland to hold the 2024 Bibliotheca Baltica symposium in its recently renovated premises in Warsaw. The symposium will probably take place in the end of September/beginning of October 2024 and might include a reception in the Historical Building.

9. Further activities of the Bibliotheca Baltica Working Group

Following a lively discussion the following possibilities to enhance the activities of Bibliotheca Baltica are identified:

- The Board could hold open virtual Board meetings, thus involving more members
- An attempt should be undertaken to increase interest in Bibliotheca Baltica among the libraries of museums (e.g. the Association of Maritime Museums) or archives
- State-of-the-art events like the Kuopio Conference could serve as an example for Bibliotheca Baltica's activities
- Shared archiving initiatives like shared/cooperative print archiving (e.g. in Sweden) could be introduced to the member libraries
- Reaching out to other libraries and other library types could be a worthwhile way of increasing the number of participants in the symposia and even the number of member libraries but might make the marketing for the symposia more challenging
- Bibliotheca Baltica's traditional focus on the cultural heritage of the Baltic Sea region should be maintained
- A greater involvement of public libraries should be aimed at
- Bibliotheca Baltica's activities of connecting with other organizations should be maintained or even intensified

In conclusion and following questions by the participants it is pointed out that the main contact point for Bibliotheca Baltica is the Secretary (juergen.warmbrunn@herder-institut.de), but that the mailing list can of course also be used.

Bibliotheca Baltica does not intend to be a regional IFLA but a platform for networking and a sponsor for the exchange of ideas, people and knowledge, thus bringing people together in the hope that they will connect and maintain these contacts for longer periods of time.

Liisa Savolainen as the new President of Bibliotheca Baltica points out that one of the main advantages of Bibliotheca Baltica is the possibility to get to know different libraries and

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librarians from European countries. In this way Bibliotheca Baltica differs from IFLA, where the Anglo-American world and its view-points are very strongly represented. Christophe Didier adds that his interesting work on the Board, where he also tries to represent a French point of view, has helped him to make new contacts, especially in Eastern Europe, thus creating and developing links with other libraries that can function on a long-term basis. He hopes that it will be possible to continue this practical networking after the hiatus of four years since the 2018 Rostock symposium and to that the General Assembly and the Lübeck symposium will mark the beginning of a restart for Bibliotheca Baltica.

10. AOB
None

The outgoing Bibliotheca Baltica President Robert Zepf thanks all the participants for their attendance at the General Assembly.

Prof. Robert Zepf
Bibliotheca Baltica President

Dr. Jürgen Warmbrunn
Bibliotheca Baltica Secretary
(for the Minutes)