

Problems of Preservation and Accessibility of Cartographic Publications in the National Libraries of Russia

by LUDMILLA KILDUSHEVSKAYA

INTRODUCTION

The preservation of cartographic publications are considered in the context of the National Program of Preservation of the Library Collections of the Russian Federation approved by the government of the Russian Federation in 2000. This Program is the first goal-oriented national library programme in the history of the country. The Program is planned for ten years and includes a number of subprogrammes:

1. Collection conservation.
2. Creation of the insurance stock of library documents and information preservation.
3. Book Monuments of the Russian Federation.
4. Library collection safety.
5. Collection preservation through specifying usage conditions.
6. Registration of library stocks.
7. Personnel ensuring the collection preservation processes.

It is impossible to describe in one report all the ranges of work reflected in this extensive programme. Therefore, I will dwell on the special measures carried out by the divisions of cartography within the first three subprogrammes and the fifth one.

COLLECTION CONSERVATION

The Federal Document Conservation Centre at the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg has extensive experience in the field of work with cartographic publications and is the base organisation ensuring development of the first three subprogrammes. At present, there are various approaches to the problems of conservation and restoration of ancient valuable publications and the newest ones that are in keen demand by readers.

First of all, the conservation programme has inspected illuminated engraved 16th and 17th century atlases damaged by green paint. Specialists carried out the inspection and reported on the condition of the collection of about five hundred volumes of atlases.

Information on the condition of the publication was added to a database, and the choice of restoration is made on the basis of this inspection. The technology for conserving the above-mentioned, complex damage to atlases was developed at the National Library of Russia¹. This technology gives good results, but it is laborious and takes much time and manual labour. Correspondingly, the resources of restorers are restricted and this creates the problem of temporary conservation activities. Phase conservation (i.e., provisional location of atlases in containers made of special acid-free cardboard) is introduced for these purposes. A case for each atlas is manufactured individually. Publications in the greatest demand include topographic and tourist maps. Lamination is used for their conservation.

CREATION OF DOCUMENT INSURANCE WORK

Microfilming is the oldest library method for making insurance copies. However, our experience of microfilming even of small size atlases showed that readers do not like working with microfilms. The high reduction of images during copying publications of large size creates difficulties in getting high-quality, legible copies.

At present, the programme of electronic copy making is being developed. The Federal Document Conservation Centre will scan the engraved maps of the first quarter of the 18th century (the period of mass publication of Russian maps) and the maps of St. Petersburg from the time of its foundation.

BOOK MONUMENTS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The first stage of this subprogramme intends to create a union list of Russian maps and atlases published before 1830. It will be the united data bank containing bibliographical descriptions of the collections dispersed over the whole country. The Division of Rare Books of the Russian State Library is responsible for the completion of this subprogramme. In the field of cartographic publications, the creation of the union list will be based upon the system of the joint catalogues of Russian maps and atlases, on which the divisions of cartography in Moscow and St. Petersburg have been working since 1990.

COLLECTION PRESERVATION THROUGH SPECIFYING USAGE CONDITIONS

Although any library deals with replicated documents and facsimiles, they are not the

same in their value as the original. Two characteristics are picked out as differentiating parameters: uniqueness and physical condition. The range of characteristics for the first parameter is from a unique copy, the replacement of which is impossible, to a modern mass publication, the replacement of which through a new copy is more sensible than its restoration. The second parameter allows the recording of those items requiring special attention, such as publications made on acid-paper (i.e., the vast majority of maps and atlases of the 19th and 20th centuries), or publications vulnerable to damage by virtue of printing features, and this group includes all the maps published on single sheets. Thus, three classes of document usage conditions were developed:

- The first class includes the maps and atlases of the 16-18th centuries. The special use conditions are established for them: they are lent out to readers only for research work, which is confirmed by the proper documents. Lending of the publication and work with it are performed under the supervision of the responsible keeper of the collection. These publications are usually not copied.
- The second class includes the majority of cartographic publications. There are no limitations in lending them out to the readers, but limitations in copying remain (for technical reasons).
- The third class of preservation includes the publications of mass type. There are no additional use limitations for the publications of this class.

Together with the task of ensuring the preservation of cartographic publications, the problem of ensuring the accessibility of unique cartographic collections is urgent, remote users too having requirements. There are several possibilities here.

The divisions of cartography have some experience in publishing facsimile editions of rare atlases. Thus, the facsimile publication of the unique monument of Russian cartography of the 17th century – the hand-written atlas of *Drawing Book of Siberia* by Semen Remezov with scientific comments prepared by the specialists of the Russian State Library – is being prepared for printing in Moscow. The Spanish Publishing House of M.Moleiro has published the facsimile reproduction of the hand-written Portuguese atlas of the world of Diego Homem, which is kept and described in St. Petersburg.

However, the creation of electronic catalogues and electronic libraries is of paramount importance for ensuring the accessibility of cartographic publications. The web-sites of libraries allow access to the databases of new arrivals of maps and atlases. Plans for the retro-conversion of old catalogues at the initial stage propose the scanning of the card catalogue to allow images of the cards to be viewed. The joint electronic retrospective catalogues of Russian maps and atlases of the 18th and 19th centuries are in development.

Building electronic libraries can develop in several ways. As stated above, systematic scanning of certain parts of collections is carried out. Furthermore, several subject

projects are developed. For instance, we can mention the Meeting the Frontiers Russian-American project, the first stage of which we already told at the previous conference. This is devoted to the Russian exploration of Siberia and western coast of America as well as American exploration of western areas of America. At present, the Russian part presents over 60 maps and atlases on the web-site. We in the National Library of Russia plan to open the site of *Multi-faceted St. Petersburg* devoted to the forthcoming anniversary of the city. We will also publish the CD-ROM of "St. Petersburg: 300 years on maps."

Naturally, the completion of the programme and the specific actions arising out of it requires considerable financial expenditure. It should be noted with satisfaction that for the first time the government financially supports a number of actions of this programme. Certainly, this support does not always seem to be sufficient, but we hope for the best.

NOTES

1. Blank, M., S.Dobrusina & N.Lebedeva .A Search for procedures for Restoration and Stabilisations of 16th and 17th centuries Netherlands atlases damaged by green paint. Restaurator 6, 1984, pp.127-138

WEB SITES REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT

Meeting of Frontiers: <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/>

National Library of Russia: <http://www.nlr.ru:8101/eng/>