

## **e-services and e-books in Estonia**

*Meeli Veskus - adviser on libraries*

*Indrek Eensaar – head of the IT division*

*Ministry of Culture*

*Estonia*

There are currently two private enterprises in Estonia that develop electronic books (primarily in Estonian) - Digira ([www.digira.ee](http://www.digira.ee)) and Estonian Center for EBooks ([www.edrk.ee](http://www.edrk.ee)).

There are more and more companies selling electronic books, many of which have previously engaged in web sales of regular books or currently own retail stores. In addition to aforementioned Digira and Estonian Center for Ebooks, there are other companies that sell electronic books, such as Apollo ([www.apollo.ee](http://www.apollo.ee)), Delfi Digiraamat ([digiraamat.delfi.ee](http://digiraamat.delfi.ee)), Elion's digital collection ([www.digikogu.ee](http://www.digikogu.ee)), Krisostomus ([www.kriso.ee](http://www.kriso.ee)), Raamatumaailm ([www.raamatumaailm.ee](http://www.raamatumaailm.ee)), and Rahva Raamat ([www.rahvaraamat.ee](http://www.rahvaraamat.ee)).

Electronic books in Estonian are also accessible to Apple users via iTunes.

At the moment, the market is still in the development phase and the consumers are yet to discover e-books. At the same time, there are also many young people who have been reading e-books in English for years.

At first, Estonian publishers and authors were doubtful about e-books. Now, even the public sector institutions like the Estonian Health Insurance Fund and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (eg. the journal Diplomacy) have begun to discover the potential of e-books. The National Library has also chosen the e-book format for issuing its publications. Furthermore, the first pilot project to digitize out-of-copyright books and make them accessible via e-pub has been carried out by Tartu City Library

In order to promote the distribution of electronic books, the Estonian Ministry of Culture has planned several activities:

- 1) Continuing the digitization of out-of-copyright books and making those accessible free of charge in the format of e-books.
- 2) Digitization of out-of-copyright books, written by foreign authors that still maintain translators' and editors' rights. The rights of translators and editors will be bought and the books will be made available free of charge.

- 3) The authors or the owners of rights can also voluntarily give up their rights and allow for the digitization and free accessibility of their works.
- 4) Translation of Estonian children's literature to Russian and making translated books available free of charge. The first pilot project to achieve this is currently in progress.
- 5) The biggest challenge is to make contemporary literature accessible. It is also related to supporting Estonian literature. Estonian is a language spoken by a small number of people and it is therefore difficult for writers and poets to manage on commercial basis. At the same time, a considerable part of funding profits publishers and printing houses, whereas only a very small part actually reaches the writers themselves.

There are several ways to improve the current situation:

Firstly, the state could purchase an e-book for a single license fee and then distribute it for free. Initially, it is not advisable to implement this mechanism on a large scale because it will not motivate publishers to issue e-books themselves and it is complicated to define the fair license fee for books purchased by the state.

The second option would be creating an infrastructure for digital rights management (DRM) (eg. on the basis of the National Library). Essentially, this would mean creating a lending software for e-books, the only difference would be in the lending period.

In the first case, the state would purchase the license content from the authors for distribution in a limited time period (for 1 or 2 years) and will pay license fee for this (eg. annual license fee that would allow for more even distribution of the amounts). The DRM control added to the files would allow for "bringing the files back" (in case the state runs out of resources or the author changes his/her mind). The files could be downloaded without limit; however, all files would include a reading permit for a certain time period (eg. 60 days).

In the second case, the state would purchase licenses with limited lending rights (eg. 100-200 readers at once) for a larger amount of books (similarly to the traditional library equivalent in the online environment). In this case, the lending right for the state could either be limited (eg. the lending rights have been purchased for 2 years) or unlimited like in the case of traditional libraries.

In selecting the books, priority should be given to award-winning works of Estonian literature. Works from schools' recommended reading lists should also be emphasized because they are often difficult to access in the libraries in printed form and it doesn't make sense for publishers to re-print them.

Online-lending solution requires a thorough analysis of technologies and software and the implementation takes time – the plan is to finance the project through the European Union structural funds of the next multiannual financial period.

## **Other Developments**

## Downloading and Streaming DAISY Service

[Veebiraamatukogu](#) or 'Web library' is the system for downloading and streaming DAISY audio books, newspapers and journals created by the [Estonian Library for the Blind](#) in cooperation with the Estonian information technology company, [IceIt Teenused](#) (IceIt Services).

Development of *Veebiraamatukogu* started in September 2010. In 2011 the system was tested and improved. Inserting book data and uploading audio files started at the end of the year. Since April 2012 *Veebiraamatukogu* has been available for the patrons of the Estonian Library for the Blind.

More than 1700 audio titles in Estonian and foreign languages are accessible via *Veebiraamatukogu*. This Web Service includes materials largely produced by the Estonian Library for the Blind, but also includes materials by other producers who have given the library permission to add their books to the system.

*Veebiraamatukogu* enables users to:

- browse and search for books based on different characteristics
- view detailed book data (title, author, narrator, publisher etc.)
- register as a *Veebiraamatukogu* user
- download and stream DAISY audio books, newspapers and journals

Everyone who visits *Veebiraamatukogu* can browse, search for books and view book data, however downloading and streaming are available only for those who are registered users of the service. To register for *Veebiraamatukogu* people have to be or become users of the Estonian Library for the Blind.

In cooperation with the National Library, it is planned to develop the service further and to create software that would allow people with visual impairment to access documents digitized by the National Library or works received as electronic deposit copies.

## Digar

The National Library has launched a depository of print files, where publishers can voluntarily donate print files. Hopefully the amended Legal Deposit Copy Act, which obliges publishers to turn the print files over to the National Library, will take effect shortly. Depending on its publisher, a book can also be available on the Digar reading environment free of charge. In case the publisher is unwilling to make the work available for the general public free of charge, it could be accessed through authorized workstations in four libraries that receive deposit copies. The advantage of Digar for the publishers and authors is the preservation of their printed work in an electronic format so they can re-use the work and carry out a reprint if needed.

## E-lending system ELLU

ELLU, the first Estonian lending environment for e-books was launched in the beginning of this year by Tallinn Central Library. It is an e-lending system, which allows for the readers of the Central Library to access books online. Any Estonian who wishes to use the services of ELLU

has to first register as a reader of Tallinn Central Library. Due to the opposition of publishers and authors as well as the lack of funding, ELLU became an online reading environment. This means that the books are available for reading online but the files can't be downloaded to a computer, a mobile phone or an e-reader. Despite technical limitations, ELLU has received a positive welcome from the readers and most e-books are constantly lent out.