Access to East European and Eurasian culture: publishing, acquisitions, digitization, metadata

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The papers collected in Access to East European and Eurasian culture were originally presented at a 2006 conference ‘Book arts, culture and media in Russia, Eastern Europe and Eurasia: from print to digital’, an event focusing on information access issues and advances in the region. The editor Miranda Remnek, Head, Slavic and East European Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is a leading authority in Russian book studies. In compiling this unique resource her priority was to illustrate and discuss the present condition of scholarly publishing and communication regarding Slavic and Eurasian resources.

This collection of papers comprises four sections: Publishing, Acquisitions, Digitisation and Metadata. The five digitisation papers are of most interest as they are concerned with efforts to capture and preserve cultural history and represent similar challenges faced by libraries globally as they approach or undertake digitisation. For example, one paper discusses the digitisation of the Brumfield architecture collection at the University of Washington, which consists of approximately 100,000 photographs and slides of Russian architectural monuments. Also discussed is a smaller scale project at the University of Illinois, which involves digitising the Stanley B. Winters collection of twentieth century Czech and Slovak posters. These papers are highlights, as are others from the United States of America discussing initiatives and partnerships for information access and collection development in this specialisation. Unfortunately, the papers originating from East Europe and Eurasia are not as polished or fluid. In these papers, the authors are more concerned with giving historical account rather than with providing new meanings or introducing fresh understanding in information access issues.

Remnek has succeeded in demonstrating both the flexibility and the adaptive nature of Slavic librarians prepared to embrace technological change in the midst of publishing and regional turmoil, forming partnerships to advance acquisition and access to Slavic and Eurasian publications. However due to the specificity of the subject matter this book’s appeal outside of the minority population of Slavic and East European specialist librarians and academics will likely be small.

Zaana Howard
CPA Australia