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RUSSIAN SOLDIERS MOVE LIBRARY!

Lois L. Luesing

How does one make plans to move a library from one building, across town, and into a new site when that site is thousands of miles away from where you are in Michigan? One evening I was trying to come up with an idea of how to proceed. Suddenly there flashed into my mind a plan that I quickly wrote down. It was that very plan that we used at St. Petersburg Christian University in Russia. Surely the Lord gave it.

I arrived in St. Petersburg on a Thursday evening expecting there would be a week or ten days to plan the library move. At once I was told that the move was scheduled to begin the next Tuesday morning. No time to think of jet lag or sleep: get to work!

On Friday the new site was toured. Shelving was still being installed but it was possible to count the shelves in each area and sketch the floor plan.

Saturday was spent measuring the actual footage of each collection in the SPCU library. Seven collections had to be considered. Russian books, foreign books (non-Russian), reference collections in both languages, media, periodicals and children's books. Using the sketched floor plan, decisions were made where each collection would best fit. With the number of feet of shelving available and the actual number of feet of books in each collection, it wasn't too difficult to calculate the number of inches of space to leave empty on each shelf.

Monday the boxing of books began. Each box was filled with books in Dewey order, numbered and coded to match an area in the new library. By Tuesday morning enough books were packed to fill the vans for their first loads. One startling moment occurred when a nine foot section of reference

shelves still loaded on one side fell over. There was hardly a minute lost — books were picked up, boxed and moved out. That one section required some work in getting the books back in order. Thanks, Esther Matteson, for that straightening job.

Tuesday morning moving time had come. Richard Matteson (Esther's husband) had organized vans and trucks for the move. Each run from one library to the other took about forty-five minutes each way. Then the news came that twelve Russian soldiers would be helping to carry the boxes of books down the three flights of stairs, load them, unload at the new site, carry those same boxes (in order by the number on the box) up to the second floor new library. What a blessing these young men were. There books were unpacked under the leadership of Esther.

Meanwhile back at the old library we were packing books, marking boxes, lining them up, ready for the next van load.

Amazingly, by six o'clock the entire collection was moved and most of the books were on the shelves in the new library. Amazing also, most of the books were in good "Dewey order." Surely God had gone before us and smoothed the way.

One of the missionary wives commented with tears in her eyes, "Just think. Russian soldiers carrying religious books into the library of a Christian university! It wouldn't have been possible a few years ago."

The new library with all new steel shelving was ready for student use at the beginning of the fall term. The rector (president) of SPCU said, "It is a miracle." Whether it was a miracle or not, it was a time when we could recognize that God had indeed been with us. Praise Him. *