

## From Russia to Ohio | Collection came via D.C.



Gannett News Service/JEFF FRANKO

Sen. George Volnovich and Dana Bearer help load books Wednesday at the Library of Congress in Washington.

# Miami U awaits book gift

## Library will be treasure trove for scholars

By Tom O'Neill

*The Cincinnati Enquirer*

**OXFORD** — The rapture will be in the unwrapping.

Such is Miami University's anticipation of the delivery — possible as early as today — of about 10,000 highly coveted books on Russian history and culture, donated with the help of the Library of Congress.

Miami officials know the books from the Kamkin collection in Rockville, Md., are from the largest depository of Russian books in the United States. They just don't know the actual titles.

"We're very excited to get what they are, a Christmas present," Judith Sessions, Miami dean of libraries, said Wednesday.

"I can't wait to see them. There's no junk. This isn't faculty members cleaning out their desks."

The collection, which ultimately will bring 14,000 volumes to the Miami library system, was made available to only one other U.S. university, Texas A&M in College Station.

The two were selected, in part, because of their exist-

See **BOOKS**, Page B11



Mr. Volnovich says students of Russian studies will be grateful to have the books. They'll be housed at Miami U.

## Unique trove

■ Top two university recipients: Miami University and Texas A&M.

■ Kamkin bookstore opened in Washington, D.C., in 1952, and became the biggest U.S. Russian book source.

■ Collector Victor Kamkin (1910-74) left Russia at age 8, migrated to Shanghai, fled Chinese revolution in 1949, settled in Tennessee before moving to Washington.

■ During the Cold War, store sold Soviet-supported publications to U.S. government agencies and research libraries.

# Books: Collection travels to new home at Miami

From Page **B1**

ing collection of Russian academia. Eventually, Miami's trove will be available to all universities in Ohio. It also will be available to the public.

Miami's fortune began with Igor Kalageorgi's misfortune. A collector of Russian-language books since the Cold War, Mr. Kalageorgi was embroiled in a warehouse eviction dispute this year, and the more than 1 million books (many duplicates) were set to be destroyed.

Then-librarian of Congress, James Billington, read an article in *Washington Post* on the dispute.

"I found a large number of encyclopedias and dictionaries in obscure languages, some modern Islamic literature, works on Russian science, and more post-Soviet material than I had expected," Mr. Billington said.

On Wednesday, U.S. Sen. George Voinovich, R-Ohio, and his staff members assisted in packing up the trucks. The books are expected to arrive at Miami today or Friday.

Mr. Voinovich's interest was twofold:

■ He took three years of courses on Russian studies at Ohio University.

■ His staff has nearly a half-dozen Miami graduates.

"The interesting thing is, the books are on history, geography, sociology, anthropology, math and science," Mr. Voinovich said. "I just thought back to my days at Ohio U, to have this kind of treasure available to me."

He was particularly interested in whether the collection included the writings of exiled Russian satirist Vladimir Voinovich. He was told that it likely does.

Miami's reputation in Russian scholarship goes back decades, to faculty member Andre DeSanterat, who collected hundreds of books not available in the then-Soviet Union.

The school's Havighurst Special Collections Library now houses these books, some of which are from the library of Czar Alexander.

E-mail [toneill@enquirer.com](mailto:toneill@enquirer.com)