

Qualitative Transformation of the Libraries in Serbia

- developing information literacy as an imperative –

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ABSTRACT

The libraries of Serbia concentrate on developing information literacy of their focus groups. They adjust themselves to the needs and requirements of users as much as they can. At the same time these institutions tend also to follow the international standards in librarianship and information activity as well. In addition, the libraries of Serbia are mostly non-profit, cultural and educational organizations.

Contemporary librarians follow many tendencies in the world environment. Library 2.0 based on Web 2.0 is in the very core of the Information Society which is being permanently promoted. There are users and librarians as well who can create contents across Web by themselves. However, these results are very modest.

The libraries of Serbia went out of their walls. They are in the phase of development when catalogues become electronic or global, when electronic contents are being used carefully, when users become electronic ones. E-culture is being promoted intensively. The penetration of new technologies makes possible for experts to think of the way libraries would get included into cities 3.0 although that moment is not so close to us. The Virtual Library of Serbia (VLS) functions well. Users may search Internet under very favourable conditions. Serbian Consortium for Coordinated Acquisitions exists and works efficiently tending to meet the expectations of students, researchers, professors, scientists from diverse professional fields. Thanks to the Consortium they may access full-texts of academic e-journals, download them and print as well.

This paper will focus on the qualitative changes in the libraries. It will point out the advantages and problems in their work. Except this it will show how Total Quality Management (TQM) is being implemented in the libraries of Serbia.

Key words: libraries, Serbia, development, information literacy, qualitative transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Focusing on the end user is not just a business philosophy in profit institutions. It is also an orientation in contemporary libraries which are non-profit organizations. Key idea in the world of marketing is to concentrate on users. It is to be shown in the working process of economic and non-economic organizations. Planning, organization and control of library activities are to be carried out in accordance with the needs of users.

2. SERBIAN AGONY

Libraries in Serbia have always been dependant on the situation in economy. Financial means for the development of libraries depend on the height of budget. The vast majority of libraries in Serbia are budget institutions. Therefore they are interested in the prosperity of Serbian economy.

Economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro were introduced in 1992. They were very strong and lasted until 2000. Library collections became very poor, databases out of date and professional staff had no chance to improve their knowledge abroad with other colleagues from the same scientific field.

After the sanctions were abolished, Serbia was making intensified efforts to achieve European level in librarianship and informatics. Time will show whether it is attained. Contemporary tendencies have shown that Library 2.0 becomes the aim of librarians in Serbia although the results are very modest in this field. The Municipal Library in Belgrade made some first steps but it didn't invest much into promotive activities as far as its' technical or other advantages are concerned. Other libraries keep following the news in the world of science and technics. However they also have diverse problems trying to improve their activity and meet the expectation of different focus groups such as students, researchers, professors, business people, etc.

3. LIBRARY IN AN ELECTRONIC CITY

Library 2.0 is sometimes considered a concept for further development. However if there is a strong orientation towards such type of a library based on Web 2.0, then there should be a clear strategy of development within an institution. The strategy would include:

- indispensable programs of training for librarians
- space plan for further development as well as
- sustainable organization of work and
- adequate technical equipment inside the building having in mind contemporary tendencies in world librarianship and information sciences.

Today an electronic city includes communication infrastructure which is flexible and service oriented with a basic aim to meet the expectations of citizens, business people and the employees in budget organizations. Unavoidable question is: what's the place of libraries in such an environment? E-culture and e-education have a key role in the development of a Learned Society and the dynamics of intellectual life.

4. TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE LIBRARIES OF SERBIA

The Virtual Library of Serbia (VLS) functions from 1992 thanks to the cooperation between the Institute of Information Science IZUM in Maribor (Slovenia) on one side and the libraries of Serbia on the other one.

They use software equipment COBISS 2 by IZUM (www.izum.si). There are also some other softwares which are being used in Serbia. So, all the libraries in Serbia do not implement the same software equipment for cataloguing and classifying library materials.

No matter which software is being implemented, international standards for bibliographic description of library materials are being used. These are IFLA standards. Libraries in Croatia also implement different softwares for cataloguing and classifying library materials. CROLIST is just

one of them. Every library had to make choice of a software which would be used in everyday work.

Thanks to the technical basis of work, libraries of Serbia got integrated into one cooperative bibliographic and information system. Therefore, the collections of these cultural and educational or scientific organizations became visible for readers. They may search the collections on-line very efficiently. The level of automation allows users to access Internet under very favourable conditions, to search many electronic resources and complete their bibliographies for academic papers, projects or other professional and private purposes.

Users may access Internet in the libraries of Serbia under favourable conditions. As there are many users in public and central libraries in general, some restrictions have to exist because the number of seats and personal computers are limited. Financial limits always exists, so the libraries of Serbia still need laptops in order to equip electronic reading rooms in a technically more advanced way. Funding authorities should find sufficient means for the improvement of working conditions. It is important for users and librarians as well.

The libraries in Serbia do not use Web 2.0 space much in order to promote their professional work through the creation of usefull contents on Web. The Municipal Library of Belgrade makes efforts in order to create usefull contents and it implements Web 2.0 technology. However the results are still modest in comparison with libraries in developed countries (Sofronijević, 2008).

The libraries in Serbia have a Consortium for Coordinated Acquisition. Other European states also have that type of a consortium or a similar one in order to make the work with users more successful concerning the search of electronic resources. Furthermore a consortium may receive a discount when a subscription is to be paid to an electronic service. Nowadays, there is a wide range of electronic services offered on the world market of scientific or academic information. Full texts of electronic articles may be received thanks to searching the aggregates of databases. It doesn't mean that all states in Europe have a consortium for coordinated acquisition but the existence of such an organization would be a practical solution in a well organized society. Furthermore, libraries may search the aggregates of databases not just because of electronic articles in full text but also in order to receive electronic books with complete texts that may be downloaded in pdf format (www.nb.rs).

Cultural and professional integration of the libraries at the Balkans would probably be a good solution for a wider access to the world of business, scientific and academic information indispensable for the work of users particularly if it is known how high the subscriptions to electronic journals may be. User needn't be always a citizen. It may be an institution, for example an enterprise or some government organization, a bank, an institute etc. «Addressed one to another, regionally, librarians should contribute themselves to the development and prosperity of the South European space where common heritage exists. As if the development of an information system, e.g. a Connected World, follows the Democritus' idea of a universe where a centre is on every place, and there are no outskirts at all» (Risojević, 2001).

5. "TQM" ACCESS

TQM (*Total Quality Management*) is an access in the management

of library services quality. Although it doesn't offer nothing particularly new, this aspect is important as a very professional one. It is based on the fact that all departments in a library should achieve technical progress, should follow the development in librarianship and informatics and attain certain level in everyday activities but taking into account internationally accepted standards.

The implementation of library marketing as well as the introducing and use of library & information system is the right way to develop the organization in every of its' working segments. There is no department which should be privileged. Generally speaking, libraries of Serbia have noticed such an indispensability and they work having in mind these facts (Župan, 2001).

6. CONCLUSION

Information literacy is being developed in every library in Serbia. Under new technological conditions library staff expects permanent education, or at least good trainings which should be well organized. Librarians are often in the role of knowledge managers in all segments of librarianship.

Libraries in Serbia are on their way to the City 3.0. This way is very long and difficult taking into account historical circumstances. Gradually libraries in Serbia follow new tendencies in contemporary sciences with a particular attention. So they make efforts to reach the level of Library 2.0 which is the main aim nowadays.

Well prepared and organized library staff may invest time and knowledge in order to prepare users in all professional fields for the development of the Information Society. Libraries have a leading role in developing information literacy. In the future these institutions will also have a very important role in the development of intellectual freedom.

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