

THE PROBLEMATIC OF THE COMMUNICATION IN THE MODERN LIBRARY

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Abstract: The study aims to address modern libraries from the perspective of their duties of information and communication. The XXI century brings an upheaval of the traditional patterns of information and communication and libraries, as institutions that have as mission the documents – the information and their processes of cataloguing, usage and communication are forced to permanently adapt to changes. The most significant changes regard computerization and technicality of activities, the change of the emphasis from documents to information and users, from the preservation-conservation function to the communication function, from the individual work paradigm to collective work. And, last but not least, libraries no longer perform only information and documentation activities. The library has a complementary or even competitive relationship with the Internet. The typology of users of the modern library users is becoming very heterogeneous and the forms and ways of communication are also diversifying, from the modernization of the traditional ways of communication allowing a relation between the documents, that is the information, and the users within the library spaces to the communication and transmission of the information anywhere via the Internet.

The study presents a theoretical approach of the chosen theme and also a case study carried out at the National Library of Romania.

Keywords: modern libraries, information, users, communication, National Library of Romania.

Introduction

The concept of *library* has become increasingly difficult to define. In its classical sense, libraries were defined by the concept of collection: a public or private library represented the collection of documents owned and managed by a person or an institution. Throughout history, libraries have been social institutions in different representations depending on the development level of the society, the flow of information, the education level of the population. Libraries in Antiquity were located near temples and royal palaces and were symbols of social recognition, as kingdoms or communities were particularly prized for the level and intellectual value of the documentary collections they held and for the prestige of their scholars. In medieval times, the scholarly traditions were kept and developed and libraries were mostly located in monasteries. Their role was not only to keep the documents – manuscripts were copied in the workshops – a large part of the legacy of Antiquity was saved this way. During the Renaissance and then the modern period libraries remained institutions that reflected society and community spaces. The twentieth century truly democratized the access to information and libraries were indispensable places in communities fulfilling economic, educational, scientific, and cultural functions. The 21st century brought an upheaval to the traditional patterns of information, documentation and communication: many changes have occurred in a short while, relatively difficult to understand by libraries and requiring that these institutions should continuously adapt to the challenges of a changing society in which information plays a prominent role.

Modern libraries – mutations, challenges, communication patterns

The modern library as an institution went through (and in some respects it is still going through) an identity crisis. Information paradigms have changed and resulted in profound

changes in all processes of production, processing, communication, and conservation of documentation and information resources. First, there is the shift in focus from the documents to information. Nowadays, libraries need to organize and manage documents and information and provide users with information, not only to indicate the document where to find it. Along with traditional collections, libraries are required to develop products and services that provide easy access to information resources. Another paradigm is the paradigm of conservation versus use. The usefulness of the library is given by the extent to which its collections are used, the extent to which it succeeds in meeting the information needs of users and thus it has an educational, formative and information role in the community it serves. The emphasis is moved from individual to collective work both for users and in the case of libraries. In performing their activities, libraries are no longer specifically individualized and relatively isolated entities. They are required to communicate, collaborate, be complementary in their information activities carried out together with other similar institutions, to facilitate access to information not necessarily found in their collections. An important paradigm is the technical paradigm according to which all the librarianship processes of organization, communication, use of information and documentation resources are subject to the use of ICT facilities (Information and Communication Technologies), and therefore, libraries are required to define their operating model in accordance with the ITC conditions. And last but not least, libraries no longer perform only information and documentation activities. The library has a complementary or competitive relationship with the Internet.

Analysing the evolution of the library over time and changes incurred by it, one can note that the established models of communication, specific to the activity of this institution are now interfered with and new communication models are required, that do not have a traditional equivalent or which are assimilated in different extents with traditional models.

Some features that define modern libraries both as an institution and in terms of the forms and patterns of communication can be highlighted:

- Modern libraries are hybrid libraries, that is information and documentation structures in which traditional printed documents coexist with audio-visual documents, multimedia documents, digital documents, and the possibility of accessing information resources via networks. Also, the tools of retrieving documentation and information resources are available to users electronically. Library users in an extremely heterogeneous typology have more and more complex information needs and their requests for information products and services are becoming more demanding. For users nowadays, the information must be the most accurate and the most appropriate to their needs, must be retrieved quickly and in a form as close as possible to the form that can be used. Therefore, the communication patterns used are specific to each user group in conjunction with its information needs. Along with the classic and established library documents delivery models there are delivery models based on ICT as well as the electronic reference services, online information and documentation services, etc., but also forms and patterns of social communication due to the cultural and educational activities developed by libraries.

- The Internet, a collaborator and competitor, with the associated ICTs and with their extraordinary dynamics, has a dramatic impact on the informational space often impossible to predict. Library services combine the physical and real space of the institution with the digital space and so there is a certain dematerialization of library services, an extension of these

services in the digital environment. In their effort to improve services for users, libraries assimilate the advantages offered by ICT, diversify their information offer, and become more open to communication, collaboration, cooperation in the digital environment – they redefine themselves as institutions. The library spaces have become "multi-user virtual-environments (MUVEs)". The Internet redefines the present information environment.

The widely used phrase "information explosion" expresses the great increase in the quantity of information resources in all fields of knowledge – but this does not necessarily have as a consequence a qualitative growth. The selectivity of useful and relevant resources becomes the main challenge of the information and research activities. "The information explosion" is due to the "explosion of digital content creators," everyone who has access to the digital environment and has a minimum of digital literacy can be both a user and a creator of information (even if much of the digital content in the web space belongs to the area of publicly available personal information). "The implosion of the communication time" is another feature of the digital information environment which expresses the possibility of almost instant access to the needed information resource, regardless of its location. The Internet globalizes information and brings it from the institutions devoted to its storage, administration and delivery such as libraries, museums, archives to the digital public space, forcing these institutions to expand their products and services to the digital environment through networks or through mobile technologies.

Libraries have made the Internet their ally and have taken advantage of this infrastructure. They provide access to information resources that are not in their collections but also have developed electronic information products and services available online such as collections and digital libraries, databases, platforms for shared or collective activities, such as e-learning, etc. The communication models used to relate users to online information products and services are subject to the advantages, limitations and restrictions imposed by the IT system and consider the easy access to information, protecting and securing the information systems and users and their personal information. The librarians can directly or indirectly help to facilitate the access to information.

- The users create (recreate) and use (reuse) the digital content due to the facilities offered by Web 2.0. The current characteristics of the Internet and especially of the Web allow users to interact either with information and information retrieval systems or, through them, with other users. The education, information and communication technologies contribute to the users' training and thus they acquire specific skills necessary for creating digital content and publishing it on the Web. Libraries have long passed the stage of passive information and documentation services and direct themselves more and more to applications of the Web 2.0 category, which should allow communication and collaborative work. E-learning platforms, interactive information platforms, and collaborative work platforms can be found in libraries (or libraries are involved together with other institutions in projects that develop these types of information and communication services); thus contexts, digital spaces for training, or educational activities either for individual or team work are created. Also, libraries have integrated social media into their work and into their user's work. Moreover, it is believed that libraries need to rethink themselves as Web 2.0 organizations, that is Library 2.0, in which the responsibilities and authority should be distributed, shared and all activities and procedures should be integrated, flexible and user-oriented thus defining and a new model

of institutional communication.

- The access to digital information has a number of limitations that take into account the financial and technical aspects, rights of access, the level of competence in using computer systems to access and use the digital resources. All these issues, in some cases, may limit, condition or even prohibit the access to digital information. From a financial standpoint, paradoxically, the information provided freely by libraries to the end users and other public institutions can be very expensive. Libraries invest in digital content creation starting from traditional resources and their own activities or in purchasing databases which are then made freely available to users. From a technical standpoint, all information and communication technologies, from which standards, rules, formats, etc. derive that enable the creation, processing, delivery, publishing, use, preservation, archiving of the digital content are limitations that may facilitate or limit access to digital information. Also, access to information should respect intellectual property rights and related rights. The patterns of communication and access to digital information are derived from the traditional models, but they have evolved independently due to the specific characteristics of the digital environment.

- Information management and information practices are considerably changing under the influence of ICT and the requirements of the served community. When analyzing the community they serve, libraries have noticed an extension thereof and also the existence of alternative sources of information – thus a competition occurs for the informational service to the community, there is a change in behaviour "classic" library user and also the "pressure" from users for the diversification of the types of products and services provided. To fulfil their mission, libraries need to be concerned with the development and implementation of new models of organizing information; to establish and provide criteria for information retrieval; to ensure selectivity during information retrieval (arising from establishing criteria, their customization based on the specific requests of the users resulting in selectivity patterns related to information contextual situations); to develop electronic information products and services available through the Internet. As far as information practices are concerned, libraries take part in user education programs and information literacy tutorials.

- The trend of globalization of communication and collaboration takes libraries out a state of relative isolation and forces them to work on joint projects to support each other, to develop information products and services by sharing efforts and sharing the information and documentation resources that they own. Inter-institutional communication models are developed that take into account the communication between institutions and the communication between the institutions and the targeted public that they share. Libraries seem to have understood that the individualistic approach is not a development solution and that the shared activities and common projects are the alternative.

- Changes in the information and communication sciences field professions are a key feature of modern libraries. In other words, libraries have been transformed under the influence of ICT in all their components including the development of specialized professions. While in classical libraries librarians had an image similar to that of archivists, in modern libraries, librarians are assimilated rather with information managers. Librarians play the role of information managers and trainers helping users to find and use information resources effectively. Unlike publishers and booksellers, librarians are not simple intermediaries of documents; together with documents, librarians also provide a range of data

on the information content of documents, in a form as consistent and complete as possible and, in addition, provide users with a number of traditional and electronic tools necessary for access to information.

The communication is becoming more complex for modern libraries depending on the social environment in which the institutions operate, the complexity of their activities, the partnerships they develop, the ICT limitations, and the ways and patterns of interaction with users.

The National Library of Romania – its users, the products and services it provides, its communication patterns

In line with its specific functions and tasks, we can identify a very diverse typology of users of the National Library which includes various types of institutions and organizations with a heritage-related role, with an educational and research mission, the libraries part of the National Library System, cultural and media institutions, and individual users. The communication models and procedures are adapted to each type of user.

Through its patrimonial function, the National Library of Romania serves society as a whole by ensuring the establishment, preservation and enhancement of the Romanian documentary and scientific heritage; it contributes to the integration of the Romanian component to the European and world documentary heritage; it supports the Romanian culture and civilization abroad. Derived from this patrimonial function, a special category of corporate users can be distinguished. Publishers and editors are beneficiaries of the services of assigning ISBN and ISSN codes and CIP (Cataloguing in Publication) description; Romanian cultural institutes abroad receive support by the National Library to complement their collections; research institutes that can be supported on request with the development of bibliographical works and providing documentary sources part of the owned collections or through internal or international loan; also, media institutions, companies, foundations, organizations, etc. appeal to the collections of the National Library for specialized information and documentation resources with retrospective value and for other specific products and services.

Through its methodological function National Library relates to libraries part of the national library system providing specialized guidance, developing standards, guidelines and informative materials, and specialised publications. It relates to county libraries for organizing the local legal deposit activity (which ensures the management of the local documentary heritage) and the development of local bibliographies, as part of Romanian National Bibliography.

Through its cultural function, the National Library is involved in projects that support and promote cultural events in various artistic forms of expression but which complete the cultural, educational and heritage message of the institution. The partnerships with performing arts institutions, creative unions of writers, visual artists, non-governmental associations and organizations, schools, individual artists, etc. represent an adequate form of collaboration to promote the cultural and educational message.

Through its information function, the National Library of Romania acts as a public library that addresses a heterogeneous public from the point of view of their typology and information needs. Individual users' expectations of the National Library consider the fast and

easy access to documents in its collection, the diversification of its offer of specific products and services and the use of the electronic environment for information and documentation, etc. The National Library of Romania is a hybrid library that tries to diversify its offer of information products and services according to each category of users and expand its activity in the digital environment. There are educational and cultural activities and services for children (preschool and school students) which complete the teaching communication; activities and services for young users mainly based on Internet, databases and ICT infrastructure; information products and services for students and researchers also mainly in digital form such as databases, electronic reference services; specialized information services and products offered by the Special Collections and the National Centre of Document Pathology and Restoration; information services for the general public; cultural products and services for the general public offered by the institution by itself or through partnership with other cultural institutions.

The concerns of the National Library of Romania are directed to fulfilling the mission that it has as a national library for its people, which is to gather and preserve the national intellectual heritage by organizing, processing, the access, availability, and preservation of the national documentary heritage on any media.

Conclusions

The complexity of communication issues in libraries is given by the very mission of such institutions: to communicate, to mediate the exchange of documents and information to different users with different information needs. Therefore we can not speak of general patterns of communication but of adapting communication according to the objectives and activities proposed by the respective library, the type of users (people or institution) and their requests, the type of product or service offered by each institution, the ICT development level of the institution; the availability of library to work in collaboration with other institutions; the level of professional training and communication skills of library staff. In fulfilling their mission, libraries, including the National Library of Romania, make considerable effort (organizational, human, technological, financial) to update their activities in order to become modern institutions that facilitate access to information and provide patrimonial, educational and cultural services to the communities they serve.

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