

The Romanian Library System in modern society

(System bibliotek rumuńskich w nowoczesnym społeczeństwie)

Słowa kluczowe: biblioteki rumuńskie, innowacje, społeczeństwo

Abstrakt: W artykule opisano współczesne rumuńskie społeczeństwo, które w ostatnich latach doświadczyło wielu zmian i uległo szeregowi przeobrażeń. Proces ten zapoczątkowało pojawienie się wielu przekształceń w zakresie systemu i struktury społeczeństwa rumuńskiego. W wyniku szybkiego postępu technologicznego rumuńskie społeczeństwo stanęło przed wyzwaniem wykształcenia zdolności elastyczności oraz adaptacji, które postrzegane są jako istotne wskaźniki służące przetrwaniu i integracji we współczesnym świecie. Stare struktury, systemy i instytucje zostały zastąpione nowoczesnymi, lepiej odpowiadającymi potrzebom współczesnego społeczeństwa. Zmianom tym podlegają także biblioteki. W artykule omówiono proces wdrażania trendów bibliotecznych opartych na świadczeniu nowoczesnych usług dla potrzeb współczesnego społeczeństwa.

Keywords: Romanian libraries, innovations, society

Abstract: The paper is concerned with the Romanian modern society which has significantly and rapidly changed during the last few years. This process has caused a large number of changes according to the system and structure of Romanian society. As a result of fast technological development the Romanian society faced the challenge of implementing the flexibility and adaptability perceived as two essential indicators of survival and integration in the modern world. It is observed that old structures, systems and institutions have been replaced by new units based on the society needs. The libraries have also faced some similar changes. The article describes the adaptation of new library trends based on modern services, which were created according to the community needs.

The library of the Romanian modern society has significantly and rapidly changed during the last few years. The evolution of the technology had a major impact upon the Romanian library system and upon the community it serves, generating new tendencies, new needs and new ways of thinking, learning and communicating which have determined the shape and the mission that the library and the librarian had to adopt nowadays.

The development of the information society implies the redefinition of the purpose and the objectives of the library as an institution that deals with information, continuously thriving to find ways to facilitate the access to knowledge, information and culture in a fast and efficient way.

Taking into consideration the process of lifelong learning, the role of the library has been gradually emphasized lately, being a place where the community can find the necessary information to support them during this continuous educational process.

Therefore, we naturally may jump to the obvious conclusion regarding the essential role of the library as a part of the national education system, being identified as a cultural actor, gradually becoming visible as an indispensable partner in the vast program of alphabetization, education and literacy.

The traditional function of the library, namely of acquiring, organizing, preserving and loaning of any material irrespective of the physical support and form has considerably changed lately, becoming a place of socializing and communicating, learning and spending the time in a pleasant and useful manner.

Nowadays, library is more about conveying, learning and feeling good, than acquiring, collecting, organizing and preserving.

Moreover, the librarians have come to realize that their mission has changed and continuously changes, becoming a part of the community by identifying with its needs and constantly thriving to satisfy them.

Considering the aforementioned context, the Romanian library system as the libraries and the librarians themselves have changed and continuously change in order to meet the new trends and needs of the community they serve.

The Romanian library system is organized in compliance with the provisions of the Law no. 334 from May 31, 2002, republished with further amendments. According to the aforementioned law, the library is the institution, the compartment or the specialized structure whose main attributions are: to acquire, organize, process, develop and preserve collections of books, serials, other documents and databases in order to facilitate their use with the purpose of information, research, education and re-creation as well as the design, organization and development of cultural projects and programs, including the partnerships with the public authorities and institutions or with other similar institutions or through public-private partnerships.

The Romanian library system comprises:

- National libraries (4) such as: The National Library of Romania, The Library of the Academy of Romania, The National Pedagogical Library, The National Military Library;
- University libraries (100);
- School libraries (8300);
- Specialized libraries (589);
- Public libraries (2876).

The National Public Library of Romania is a public library with legal personality under the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, being integrally financed from the state budget. The main functions of the national library are: to preserve, research, develop and valorize the documents that are to be found in its collections; organizes the Legal Deposit, identifies, collects, organizes, preserves and valorizes the *Romanica* Collection which comprises publications and other documents published abroad with a connection to Romania, to the Romanian people and to the Romanian culture, or publications of the Romanian authors which were published abroad in any language, documents in Romanian language

of foreign authors which were published abroad. The Romanian National Library organizes the National Reserve of Publications, designs and issues instructions and methodological norms for the public libraries and carries out researches in the field of librarianship and other cultural fields, designs and issues norms and methodologies for the preservation and restauration of publications in accordance with the international laws in force, coordinates the project of the National Collective Catalogue of Romanian and Foreign Publications as well as other projects of national interest in the field, elaborates the National Bibliography of Romania, coordinates the development of the Virtual National Library.

The Library of the Academy of Romania is a public library with legal personality and with the status of a national library under the Romanian Academy having as main functions: the acquisition, collection, organization and valorization of specific national collections, elaborates and publishes the Retrospective National Bibliography for all the categories of documents, carries out the international exchange of publications with the publications of the Romanian Academy, coordinates from a methodological point of view the activity of the other libraries that belong to the network of the Romanian Academy, benefits of the provisions regarding the Legal Deposit.

The university libraries are public libraries or private libraries having as main users the students, the teachers and the researchers from the institutions of higher education under the Ministry of Education and Research. The university libraries participate in the process of training and education as well as in the activity of research carried out by the institutions of higher education, offer methodological and professional assistance to other university libraries from the geographical area established by the Ministry of Education and Research.

The specialized libraries can be organized by the academic and research institutions, the authorities of the central and local administrations, public institutions, military units, economical agents and other public or private legal persons being financed by the authorities, institutions or other legal under whose tutelage they function.

The public libraries are public or private libraries organized for all the members of a local community, which ensure the equality of the access to information and the documents necessary for information, lifelong education and personal development of the users disregarding the social or economic status, age, sex, political affiliation, religion or nationality. The public libraries can be classified into the following: The Metropolitan Library of Bucharest, county libraries, city libraries, communal libraries. All these public libraries have legal personalities and are financed by the Local or the County Councils as the case may be. The main responsibilities are to acquire, preserve and loan all categories of documents; the county libraries must organize the local Legal Deposit, to coordinate the activity of the public libraries that are to be found throughout that particular county, to elaborate and publish the local bibliography, methodological materials and other publications, they contribute to the process of lifelong learning.

The school libraries represent an integral part of the process of training and education, functioning under the Ministry of Education and Research, mainly in schools and other educational units.

The National Commission of Libraries represents the national scientific authority with the following main responsibilities: to elaborate strategies and programs for the national library system, to coordinate the activity of information and documentation of the national library system, elaborates programs and methodologies for the computerization of the national library system, elaborates the norms and methodologies for the preservation of the cultural heritage assets, proposes research programs in the librarianship and information science field.

The development of the Romanian library system is constantly supported by The National Association of Librarians and Public Libraries of Romania and by The Romanian Library Association. These two organizations play an essential role to the modernization of the Romanian libraries, designing and implementing various projects and programs, both on a national and international level.

The National Association of Librarians and Public Libraries of Romania (ANBPR) was founded in 1990 with the mission of defending and expressing the professional interests and of supporting the evolution and the development of the Romanian libraries. The Association has about 3300 members and county branches. The activity of the Association is mainly based on objectives connected to the training and professional development of the librarians and the development of the library network on a national and international level. The main objectives of the Association are: the protection and promotion of the social status and of the prestige of the librarian profession, the elaboration of a strategy of development and of projects for public policies and programs in the cultural, educational and informational field, the establishment of an infrastructure of communication which has the purpose of ensuring the free access to and the circulation of information among the professionals and the users, researches in the field of librarianship and information science, the promotion of the norms, criteria and modern techniques of management and of the specific library activities, the promotion of the programs of training in the field of librarianship and information science and the connected fields, the creation and maintenance of a professional network, both on a national and international level, the analysis of the needs of the community and the elaboration of efficient public policies for the library services, development of efficient strategies of community engagement.

Among the most important programs implemented by ANBPR we mention Biblio-net, a five-year program was launched in 2009 and implemented in partnership between Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, IREX, ANBPR, the Ministry of Culture, local and national authorities and libraries whose main purpose is to develop a modern library system in Romania so that the libraries would better serve their communities through continuous learning, training, technology. The program is an initiative of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with a total value of 26,9 million dollars which facilitates the access to information by bringing the modern technology into the public libraries. The Biblio-net program has equipped more than 2300 local libraries with more than 9790 computers and other related equipment in order to offer free access to Internet and it trained about 3000 librarians. There have been created training centers in 41 counties of Romania, each center having at least two librarian trainers (90 trainers) who trained the local librarians from their county.

More than 9000 persons have found a place to work using the internet in the library and by participating to trainings of human resources organized in the same place and more than 500000 Romanians have accessed the internet for the first time in a public library. The director of the Biblionet program, Paul Andre Baran, has won the title of Digital Champion of Romania at the European Commission. The interest for technology constantly grows, year by year, and the community becomes increasingly aware of the importance of the library in the information society.

Another important goal of the Biblionet program was to develop the Association (ANBPR), to improve the communication system with its members and with external partners, to assess the need of its members, to provide opportunities of development for librarians through training, study tours, conferences. At a governmental level, Biblionet tried to raise the profile of the library and to demonstrate the essential role of the library in a modern society.

The National Association of Librarians and Public Libraries of Romania (ANBPR) has a **Center of Professional Training and Development** that offers accredited programs of qualification and professional development in librarianship and information sciences, training courses in the field of management and information technologies, marketing of library services and products, the development of library services, advocacy and public policies, organizational communication, assertive communication, public speaking, computer literacy, cultural heritage and the community, leadership, negotiation skills, career counselling, human resources, workshops for the dissemination of good practices for the librarians from the public library system, university and school libraries, unemployed and other categories etc.

Other important professional groups that support the Romanian library system and that are permanently thriving to develop efficient and modern library services, to assess the impact that those services have upon the community and to continuously develop the skills of the librarians who offer those service are the impact group and the group of library trainers.

The **Impact Group** is a professional group formed of voluntary librarians who work together to design articles, procedures, guides and other relevant materials in order to be used by the public librarians in their current tasks. Moreover, the group promotes modern library services based on the needs of the community, helps the library in the relationship with the public administration and other partners, advocates for the improvement and amendment of the library legislation and assesses the impact that the public library and its services have in the community. Among the main activities of this group we mention: to create new library products, to collect and disseminate the examples of good practices, to elaborate procedures for the implementation of those good practices, to find new sources of financing, to design and implement projects, to assess the needs of the community, to create partnerships for the implementation of the projects and programs, to propose norms and methodologies to ensure the good functioning of the libraries etc.

The other important professional group focused on the training and professional development of the librarians is **The Group of Librarian Trainers (GLT)**, formed

of 14 librarians from the 7th regions of Romania, who assess the needs of training and professional development of the librarians and of the community and design and develop training courses in order to address these needs. The mission of this professional group is to facilitate the creation of a portfolio of training courses, to ensure the proper functioning of the national network of trainers, to contribute to the identification of financing sources for training, to create standards for the training activity, to promote the good practices in the field of training in the public libraries of Romania.

Therefore, the Romanian library system has considerably been improved by the Biblionet program and the activities that the professional organizations and groups have carried out during the last 6 years, this representing a great and essential step towards the development of the community itself.

Comparing to the traditional definition of the mission of the library, new meanings and connotations sprung lately since the activities and the services of the libraries have been considerably diversified. In addition to the traditional description of the mission of the library we clearly have to mention that of supporting and encouraging the individual learning and self-education, to offer various opportunities for the development of personal creativity, to stimulate the imagination and the creativity of children and youth, to promote the importance of the preservation and appreciation of the cultural heritage, art, scientific achievements and innovations, to encourage the intercultural dialogues and the cultural diversity, to support the oral tradition, to promote and support computer literacy, to ensure a place for socialization, exchange of ideas, re-creation and creation etc.

Another important aspect that must be taken into consideration when trying to reach the community and catch its attention is the marketing strategies and policies. No matter how good a library service is, it values nothing if the community knows nothing about it. Therefore, the Romanian libraries have developed during the last years strong and dynamic marketing policies using new media, social media, prints, direct communication and any other instruments, being them modern or traditional, necessary to make sure that the community finds out what really happens inside the walls of the library or outside the library, as the case may be. Along with the development, diversification and modernization of the library services, the library has really gained a voice and the community responds to it in a very positive manner.

However, the best way of promoting and selling the library products and services is the quality of that particular service, the impact it has upon the community on short and long term and its capacity of addressing the need of that particular community.

Hopefully, the libraries are more and more oriented towards the community and its needs developing services such as: creative workshops (graphics, painting, music, theatre, photography and dance), public readings, auditions, training courses on foreign languages, computer literacy, employment and jobs, human resources, marketing, public speaking, communication, services for persons with special needs, health, hygiene, agriculture, tourism, local memory etc.

As a consequence, the community's response to the efforts of the library to address its needs is a very positive one, and the awareness of the essential role that the library plays in

the actual context of modern society is constantly and rapidly growing. This represents the best instrument to measure the results of the efforts that the library continuously make to fulfill its mission of information, communication, socialization, creation and recreation.

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