

# INFORMATION, BETWEEN CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION IN INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION STRUCTURES

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## **Abstract**

The statement “Information is power” is frequently heard. The dynamics of present-day life stems from the technical possibilities of global internet communication, while the power of information is felt both in key fields - politics, economics, or military, i.e. at the interest level of big groups, with major socio-economic influences, and at an individual level, used strictly for personal purposes, such as education and professional training. Due to its traditional role and function, nowadays undergoing changes led by technology and a new management, the library is the entity at the fore-front of modern society, as a storing agent and information supplier for its users.

Keywords: library, information, documentation, culture, users

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## **1 Premise: Information Marketing and Management**

The information needed by individuals, for their own use, comes from various publishing and broadcasting sources, and can be organized, processed, and rendered by entities specialised in obtaining, organising, and disseminating information. One such entity is the library, a space devoted to storing and circulating human knowledge and creations, as well as information in general. The library has had to adapt its offer to accommodate the public’s new needs, while keeping its more conservatory audience, with the same habit of a long-term information. Nevertheless, it has enlarged its offer, using modern technology to diversify its services; to this end, following the example of practice-validated economic theories.

Marketing is an economic concept which has, in time, entered almost all fields of human activity. Having started from the idea of offering an organizational formula to increase the efficiency of a/several certain economic structures, marketing has over

time been adopted by organizations that are not necessarily economic - such as cultural-educational organizations, as it developed and proved that its rules are applicable to any organizational structure. So that, it was only natural for libraries to take on and use the concept of marketing as a solution, in the context of the permanent challenges posed by society to these institutions and their managers.

As in any organizational activity, theory preceded practice, granting solutions, opening perspectives, and, when necessary, supporting change models. New concepts emerged, which, in its capacity of information-documentation institution, the library had to apply. Nowadays, people talk about the possibility (and the necessity) of lifelong learning, about the information society, and about a global view on this, which entails an organizational culture and an information literacy. Thus, just like the economy - mostly productive within the space of practical activities - is present in the information and cultural field, through the concepts of management or marketing - once used only in the highly theoretical social-humanistic domains -, which are used in the organizational space, gaining practical nuances. Libraries take on a solution from the economic sphere, in order to better structure their activity and, consequently, to serve their increasing number of users more efficiently, as society - always adapting its internal resources to permanently streamline joint human efforts - takes on concepts from sociology and philosophy to name its objectives, talking about culture and knowledge, as well as information and informing.

Just as the seeming paradox of the virtual reality has become possible - there is no longer a 'dialectics between these two notions' (real and virtual), since the virtual has nowadays 'replaced the real, ... becoming the final solution of the real to the extent that, at the same time, it fulfils, completes the final reality of the world'<sup>1</sup>, the dialectics civilization-culture fades when compared to the information or the organizational culture. Naturally, although, from a conceptual point of view, the terms **civilization and culture** could interfere, they are clearly different when analysed from the broad perspective of human activity. Civilization includes a series of material realities, of mainly technical means, in their entirety, which human beings use to adapt to the natural environment where they live, so as to achieve the highest degree of comfort and a most efficient practical activity. From the same viewpoint of observing a series of human actions, culture is the spiritual creation, the final motivation of cultural acts related to the spirit and the mind, 'finding oneself, discovering the unknown, explaining mystery and taking pleasure in beauty', with a view to 'establish not practical, material, or utilitarian relations, but of communicating, searching, and finding oneself in the other.'<sup>2</sup> These days, when referring to **information literacy**, we realise that, while also supported by the cultural efficiency of communication, it makes full use of the material benefits of technology, since the necessary devices - a computer connected to the internet, in any form they may take, whether a desktop, laptop/notebook, tablet, or smartphone - and the programmes (software) enable us to access information of (almost) any kind.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Cuvinte de acces*, Buc., Ed. Art, 2008, p. 46

<sup>2</sup> O. Drimba, *Istoria culturii și civilizației*, vol. 1, Buc., Ed. Saeculum I. O., Ed. Vestala, 1998, p. 6

## 2 Modern library management

Within the mentioned context, of major socio-technological changes, the library organizes its services depending on its objectives, with the manager having key responsibilities in this sense: to identify the necessary changes and implement them at the level of the organization, to support and promote organizational learning, to stimulate communication, as well as efficient interrelations between the members of the organization, to create and develop the necessary infrastructure, 'to identify, purchase, organize, protect, distribute, and share knowledge resources.'<sup>3</sup> In the school sector, management and marketing (necessary to promote information and documentation offers - Fig.1) can be successfully applied within Documentation and Information Centres.

The screenshot shows the website for the University Library of Sibiu (ULBS). The header features the library logo and a word cloud with terms like 'Open Access', 'journals', 'articles', 'publishing', 'agreements', 'self-archiving', 'DVA', 'articles', 'journal', 'publishers', 'authors', 'open', 'access', 'self-archiving', 'agreements', 'DVA', 'articles', 'journal', 'publishers', 'authors', 'open', 'access'. The navigation menu on the left includes: 'Despre bibliotecă', 'Evenimente, știri', 'Cataloge online', 'Structura bibliotecii', 'Editura ULBS', 'Proiecte digitale', 'Europeana.eu', 'Resurse electronice', 'Conferința I.S.&I.L.-2018'. The main content area is titled 'Bine ați venit ! - Știrile anului 2018:' and contains several news items. The right sidebar features the 'Europeana think culture' logo and contact information for the 'Biblioteca Universității "Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu'. The contact information includes: 'Adresa de corespondență: B-dul Victoriei, nr. 10, 550024, Sibiu', 'Adresa fizică: str. Lucian Blaga nr. 2A, Sibiu', 'E-mail: bcu@ulbsibiu.ro', 'Telefon: 0040-269-446077 și 211056', 'Fax: 0040-269-441010', 'Director: Lect.Dr. Rodica VOLOVICI rodica.volovici@ulbsibiu.ro', 'Informații și sugestii la adresa de E-mail: bcu@ulbsibiu.ro'. The footer of the page reads: '2014: - Proiectul Europeana 1914-1918 la Biblioteca ULBS (promovare) / Proiect - rezultate'.

Fig.1 The Library information web site

The above-mentioned social dynamics and information literacy, which has become an essential part of human activity, in the context of globalization, of communication efficiency, and of the need to connect people as quickly as possible, regardless of the geographic coordinates of this connection, have changed the paradigm of librarians' activity. Documenting professors have given up their traditional passivity, becoming active promoters of the documentation and information act. Their mentality evolved from mere documentation to wanting to use information (thus, the relation librarian-reader developed according to current necessities, which are fluid and ultimately dependent on the speed at which information travels and changes, and the fact that it

<sup>3</sup> Octavia-Luciana Madge, *Cadru pentru crearea unei culturi a învățării și a partajării cunoașterii în biblioteci și servicii de informare*, în *Studii de Biblioteconomie și Știința Informării*, Nr. 16 / 2012, p. 67

is abundant and constantly renewed)<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, from the need to efficiently organize the activity of the information and documentation centre (IDC), with a positive impact on the pedagogical, as well as on the information and cultural process within the community, marketing and management were called in at the level of information and documentation structures (too).

Marketing comprises a series of measures and methods aimed at optimising the services of the IDC within the community, and, especially, at integrating the Information and Documentation Centre in the educational system as efficiently as possible. In the context of permanent adaptation to the needs of society and to the way in which its members react to all kinds of external stimuli, the Documentation and Information Centre must permanently adapt the methods through which it promotes its services<sup>5</sup>. The multiple ways used by the IDC to make its offer known among the members of the community, as well as the manner in which the documenting professors manage to attract as many pupils and, why not, teachers to participate at the educational process<sup>6</sup> in the IDC, is a marketing activity. Another marketing activity is that through which the documenting professor engages parents in the activities unfolded within the Information and Documentation Centre, with a view to strengthen the empathic connection between children, parents, and teachers, and to highlight the information and cultural resources from which both children and adults can benefit. A proper marketing research shows the results of the activities of the IDC, both in the pedagogical, and in the information, documentation, and cultural domain.

As far as management is concerned, it defines the ways in which the activity of the Information and Documentation Centre is organized, so that the documenting professor merges competences of a cultural and informational guide, a pedagogical project manager (the functioning of the IDC in the educational process), a resource manager (considering the space of the IDC as a whole and the location of the resources within it, as the library is a place where collections - which can be borrowed by readers - are organized, as well as the internet room, the multimedia room, the reading hall) (Fig.2).

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<sup>4</sup> Gh. Buluță, S. Craia, V. Petrescu, *Biblioteca în societatea informației*, Buc., Ed. Do-MinoR, 2007, pp. 60-62

<sup>5</sup> Gh. Buluță, S. Craia, V. Petrescu, *Biblioteca azi. Informare și comunicare*, Târgoviște, Ed. *Bibliotheca*, 2004, pp. 69-75

<sup>6</sup> Gh. Buluță, V. Petrescu, O. Sachelarie, *Biblioteca XXI. Management & Marketing*, Târgoviște, Ed. *Bibliotheca*, 2012, pp. 176-180

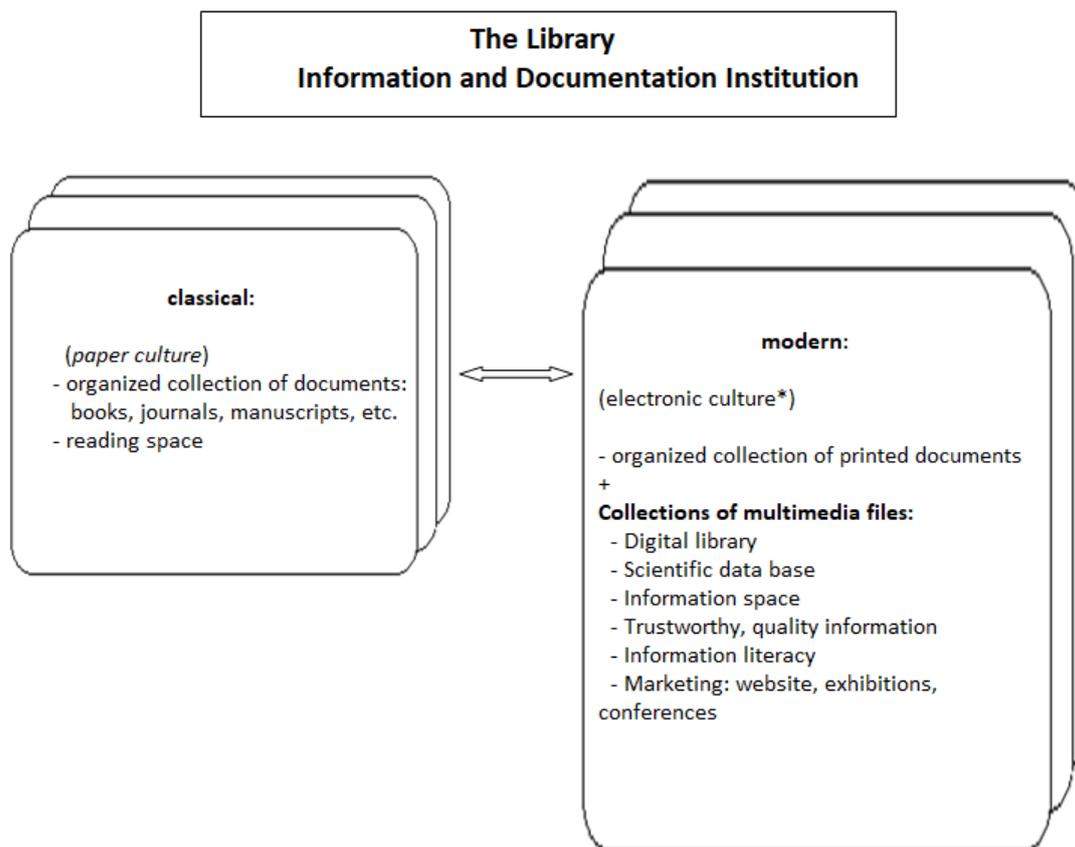


Fig.2 The classical versus modern library activities

The managing organization consists of at least two important aspects:

- the structural organization of the IDC, so that it best assist the school and the community which it serves; the organization of the space is taken into account (the library itself, including the proper organization of the collections, so that they are presented as attractively as possible, to encourage reading, starting with the visual impact; the internet room, the multimedia room, the reading hall, the work station of the documenting professor),

- the functional organization of the IDC, which includes the way in which the documenting professor plans and unfolds activities within the IDC, according to the curriculum, to the needs of pupils, teachers, and the community, as well as to other information and cultural parameters, which the documenting professor considers important (events celebrating writers, historical or cultural events, etc.; school festivities, short performances - all these uphold pupils' creativity and imagination, at the same time serving as means to evaluate the skills developed in certain fields).



Fig.3 Modern information techniques in libraries

Other elements of information and documentation marketing and management include scheduling, designing, and planning the activities of the IDC, whether they focus on the pedagogical, or rather on the cultural component. Scheduling the activity of the IDC offers a general overview of the functioning of the IDC over a set period of time (usually, a school year); based on this, the educational, cultural, informational, and scientific endeavour that will unfold within the IDC is designed, taking into account aspects regarding the information and documentation marketing. Then, the IDC activity is planned to fit the intended operational objectives, establishing the activities to unfold based on (pedagogical, cultural and informational, extracurricular, etc.) necessities, the period of time assigned to each activity, the efficiency indicators of each activity, the expected results and the methods used to monitor and evaluate the performance of each participant. Emphasis falls on pupils acquiring practical competences and skills, as well as on increasing their capacity to collaborate and adapt to the variability of the challenges they face.

### 3 Conclusions

Information literacy is a goal towards which the organizing efforts of public libraries or of libraries within the educational system (university libraries, school libraries, information and documentation centres) converge. In order to better adapt to social realities, to the technological potential and the diversity of users and services, libraries have turned to management, a means to structure the organization which mainly aims at streamlining the library's services, regardless of the social and technological changes that may influence the activity of this fundamental institution.

An example of management implementation is to be found at the Library of the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu: starting from the preparation of the new space and from moving in the new space, which merges traditional and modern techniques, followed by involvement in important European digitization projects (<http://www.europeana.eu>), organizing an international conference on "Information Science and Information Literacy" (<http://bcu.ulbsibiu.ro/conference>), the development of the LBUS Digital Library (<http://digital-library.ulbsibiu.ro>), whose content is extremely valuable from a cultural and historical viewpoint, and which can be accessed by the public no matter where they are.

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