

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT AS AN INNOVATIVE FORM OF ACTIVITY OF A MODERN LIBRARY

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Modernization of modern libraries at the present stage becomes not a whim, not a desire to follow the fashion, but a necessity for the libraries survival and development.

How do we fit into the modern picture of the world and where is our place? How can we succeed in the process of the libraries modernization, and what aspects of the library's activity do they relate to? In our opinion, it is necessary to modernize the library as a system. A systematic approach allows us to take into account all the relationships in the library activity.

Thirty years ago, the founder of a systematic approach in the library sphere, Y. N. Stolyarov put forward the concept of an essential model of a library as a system consisting of four main elements: *the library fund, a contingent of users, material and technical base and library personnel, each of which fulfills the same essential role or function*¹.

Today, there are a number of opinions considering the symbiosis of two interpenetrating systems: the socio-economic system and the "library" system.

For example, Bobrov considers modern large libraries and information centers to be complex socio-economic and industrial-technical systems that operate in a constantly changing environment.²

Elements of this system - people (man-group-society) and nature can be comparable with elements of a socio-economic system.

¹ Столяров, Ю. Н. Справочно-библиографический аппарат в структуре библиотеки как системы. В: НТБ. 2007. №3. С. 21

² Бобров, Л. К. Организация стратегического управления информационной деятельностью библиотек и информационных центров в условиях рынка: дис.д-ра техн. наук: 05.25.05.Новосибирск, 2004. С.37

The nature of the relationship in the socio-economic system is determined by the nature of the relationship in the library system, but the cause-effect relationships in these interactions are quite complex. According to Eric Trist, in modern conditions, the library should be considered as a complex, open, nonequilibrium, self-organizing socio-technical system that continuously adapts to changes in the external environment (Researchers about organizations).

Thus, to the modernization of libraries had a significant effect, it should be applied to the entire library system, covering such aspects of its activities, such as: the development of staff on the basis of well thought-out motivational system, its competencies and facilities, library management optimization, modernization and diversification of library services, infrastructure and resource base development, repositioning the library in the eyes of users and senior administrators, lobbying the library interests, project activities.

At the same time, the library is a subsystem of the social and cultural system of the country, and its activity is greatly affected by the different categories of users, organizations, political-legal and scientific environment, contact audiences and others, i.e., the external environment (Fig.1).



Fig. 1: Library as a system

Modern university libraries are trying to actively interact with the external microenvironment and adapt to the macro environment, realizing that only this active interaction contributes to the prosperity of any organization. The development of mechanisms of influence on the external and internal environment, the search and finding of this toolkit becomes a key competitive advantage of any library.

Thus, project activity becomes that competitive advantage, an innovative form of activity that contributes to the modernization and development of university libraries. Therefore, the libraries of the country tend to be involved in the project activities, despite the difficulties in the implementation of the project and additional workloads.

Project activities of university libraries in the country contributes greatly to the development of libraries provides new knowledge, new experiences, and help in the process of modernization and adaptation to the environment. Projects often affect only some specific points in the work of the library, positively influencing its development, but contribute little to the development of the entire system. So, for example, the first project experience of the 90s - some small projects - were more often focused on technical equipment, the purchase of books. The results of such projects gave a short-term effect, that is, they were fragmented: print media and technology quickly became outdated and slightly influenced the development of the entire system.

The exception are large, multi-year projects, which significantly influenced the development of the entire university library system of the country.

These projects during the implementation process affected various aspects of library activities and contributed to the development of the library as a system.

One of such projects was the project “Modernization of academic library services in Moldova” (2016-2019), which became a logical continuation of cooperation between the Eurasia Foundation, and experts and specialists of library science from Norway, Romania and Moldova.

Cooperation began in 2012 with the project “Development of New Information Services for Moldovan Higher Economic Education”, which was implemented in partnership with the Moldavian Academy of Economics, Moldova, the University of Bergen, Norway and the University of Transylvania from Brasov, Romania. The project was based on consultations of international experts, study visits, training, exchange of experience, studying the features of library activities in the field.

The project « Modernization of academic library services in Moldova » (2016-2019) became global, unparalleled project that brought together 18 university libraries of Moldova, headed by Scientific Library AESM.

The aim of the project was the cooperation, training and spreading of advanced knowledge about library activities, modernization and new services of advanced libraries in Europe. An important task was to erase the differences between the training of library specialists in metropolitan and regional universities, equalizing technical and other opportunities in the development of scientific libraries of universities.

Within four years, the project activities systematically developed the various subsystems and the direction in partner libraries activity:

- ✓ Library staff,
- ✓ Library Resources,
- ✓ Material and technical base,
- ✓ Users of the library.

So, for the development of library personnel, within the framework of the project, 9 workshops were implemented, which concerned various areas and competencies in the field of library business: Information Literacy, marketing, strategic planning, scientometrics, etc. The material was presented creatively, using gaming techniques. There were strengthened and developed language skills in the field of English acquired in the framework of the previous project.

As part of the project, 3 summer schools were planned and conducted:

- „Open Access and Open Sources for Librarians”,
- „Information Literacy”,
- „The Reference Librarian in the Digital Age”.

Due to the implemented measures, the professionalism of library specialists has increased and updated. Through seminars, trainings and summer schools, a single space was created for professional discussions; professional relations of librarians from different universities were formed and strengthened.

All activities of the personnel development project were based on deep sociological research in order to identify the problems and needs of libraries and personnel. For example, the questionnaire **”Studying the professional needs of university librarians”** was implemented in 2016.

The combined knowledge gained in the project formed the basis of 18 **strategies** of university libraries for a five-year period, approved by the senates of universities - participants of the project and accepted for implementation.

Thus, the project was built on a systematically organized cognitive activity aimed at continuing the education of library specialists in general cultural and professional aspects.

A lot of attention in the framework of the project was paid to various categories of **users**: students, masters, doctoral students and teachers.

In order to optimize library services for users, the project carried out sociological studies of the information needs and competencies of masters, doctoral students and university professors in the field of Information Literacy; there were identified opinions and suggestions in the field of information support for the educational and scientific process in universities. (Project Results “Modernization of academic library services in Moldova”, Project number CPEA-2015/10014. Project period: 2016-2019.³

The results of these studies formed the basis for university library strategies, user service plans, and library service promotion programs.

The material and technical base of university libraries was noticeably strengthened. Within the framework of the project, for participating libraries there were bought 9 computers, 11 laptops, 3 projectors and 3 screens.⁴

Library **resources** were significantly enriched throughout the project. So, for three years, from 2018 to 2020, university libraries equally had and still have the access to well-known scientific licensed databases, such as EBSCO Publishing Database, Sage Research Methods, Cambridge University Press, Web of Science, Taylor & Francis. The access to world-class scientific resources has enabled students and local scientists to have equal opportunities with scientists from the world’s largest research centers.

The uniqueness of the project - is in a single data center, in close cooperation led by the Academy of Economic Studies. Under the leadership of Sylvia Ginkulova, director and project coordinator from Moldova, taking into account the risks of non-information, an extensive information system was created linking 18 participating universities of the project (Fig 2.). Clearly organized and well organized, it contributed to the close coordination of the activities of all participants, solving problems and removing barriers to project implementation.

³ Project “Modernization of academic library services in Moldova”, Project number CPEA-2015/10014. Project period: 2016-2019. Access: <https://newinformationservices.wordpress.com/publications/>

⁴ Project “Modernization of academic library services in Moldova”, Project number CPEA-2015/10014. Project period: 2016-2019. Reports. Access: <https://newinformationservices.wordpress.com/reports/>.

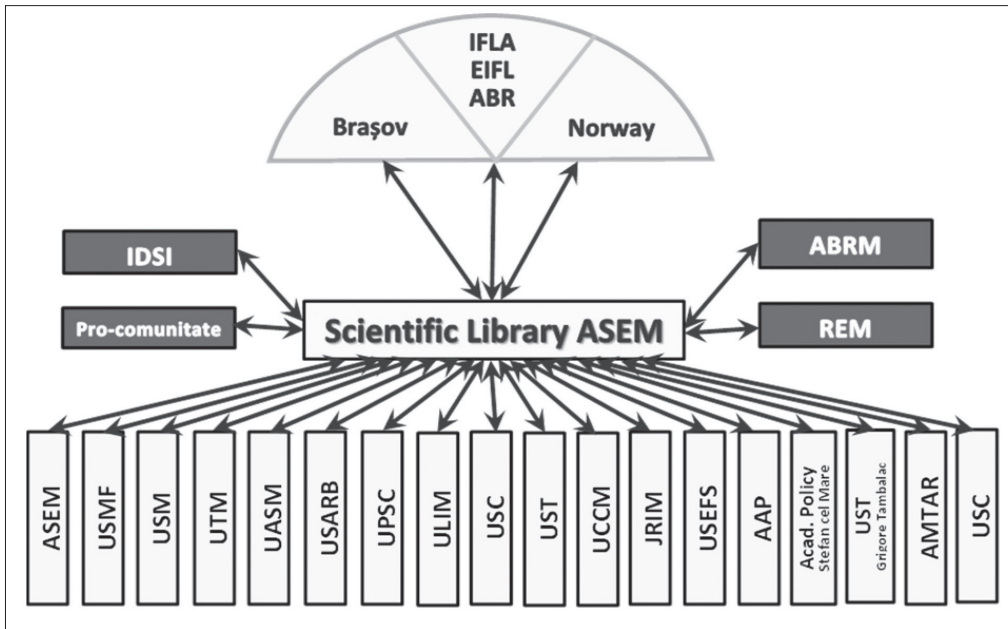


Fig. 2: Project Information System

The informing was carried out both in the traditional format, and in the online environment. The key tool in informing about the project that enriched and raised the project to a high level was the electronic page of the project, developed on the AESM Scientific Library website. The advantages of the page are the completeness of information, timely replenishment, ease of access, visibility and clear structure of information.

At the same time, the spreading of information on the activities of the project “Modernization of academic library services in Moldova” was carried out at all levels: international, regional and local. A wide range of formats for disseminating information about projects was used: international conferences, study tours to university libraries of partner countries, trainings, publications, electronic page. IDSI became an information partner in the project and provided an online broadcast of project activities.

Thus, the wide spreading of information about the activities of the project contributed to its popularization, both on the territory of Moldova and internationally.

Attracting the attention of the university administration to the project, to the problems of university libraries was a well-thought-out, balanced step along the path of promoting the project. The library system cannot function effectively without the support and close cooperation with the university administration, higher establishments, and authorities. So, the study visit of the rectors of the participating universities to Norway became an important point in improving the image of university libraries, recognizing their importance in ensuring the educational and scientific process of the university, drawing attention to their problems.

The participation of 18 university libraries in the project “Modernization of academic library services in Moldova” marked the beginning of their close cooperation: the libraries signed a Cooperation Agreement until 2013, which will continue outside the project.

Success in the implementation of this project is expressed in a better preparedness of staff for the implementation of modern library services, in the creation and testing of 18 strategies for the development of university libraries, in providing access to world scientific information resources, technical support, etc.

With the help of the project, the libraries were able to better adapt to environmental changes and increase awareness among users about their significance.

Thus, project activity in the libraries of Moldova is necessary, it is developing, combines the knowledge gained during educational and self-educational processes. The activities in the project are aimed at developing research skills, since it involves in solving urgent problems, includes their search, experimental work, testing, analysis of the results.

At the same time, project activity requires goal setting, objectivity, initiative, originality in resolving issues, innovative approaches, the intensity of mental work, research experience and self-education experience from its participants.

Thus, international project activities in libraries ensure their advancement, become the basis of their development, the effective format that helps them not only survive, but also to meet modern requirements for libraries and smooth out the inequality of opportunities of different libraries, both at the country level and internationally.

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