LIBRARIES FOR THE FUTURE: THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY MANAGER

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Abstract

The formulated aims and content of library activities in modern society stemming from their role of social institutions, have been closely linked to the current social attitudes. Respectively, the orientation towards development based on innovations has been one of the major factors for their function as a part of the contemporary social system. The nature of the innovative library activity is expressed in the holistic and systematic aptitude towards qualitative changes corresponding to the needs for realization of a new content.

The article looks at the role of the library manager in the application of contemporary approaches in libraries in order to achieve high efficiency in all spheres of the library activity but also to solve a number of practical issues related to the future of the library as a symbiosis between tradition and innovation in its services.

Keywords: library, modern society, social institutions, innovations, library manager.

1 INTRODUCTION

Modern society and its changes increasingly drive the need for the unique human ability to form ideas ahead of time, to impose original solutions with no analogue. Once something has to be created, built, modified or reorganized, the manager should have a clear vision of what the final result will look like.

Innovation processes are a milestone of the knowledge-based economy and have an impact both on the economic environment and on the social environment and politics. Consultants and specialists believe that innovation is a “key factor” for the survival of organizations, regardless of the nature of their activity.

Modern society is characterized by a qualitatively new attitude towards information. Information is recognized as the main resource for all areas – politics, economy, education, health, culture, etc. The change process covers the whole spectrum of social life; it is ubiquitous and irreversible. Changes in the environment have created the need to create modern information institutions that meet a variety of personal and community needs including the creation of communities [3]. For libraries as organizations striving to respond to modern changes, it is important for the library manager to be able to anticipate upcoming changes and design its activities so that it can bring positive results in time.

The library as an organization is specific to the functions it performs and the products it offers. Information is the foundation on which the library is built and the need for it to be adequately preserved and transmitted over time is fundamental.

2 METHODOLOGY

From its inception to the present the library goes through transformations, adopting different roles and functions. And if in the beginning its main function was the preservation of books and documents, so today its mission is more responsible. Opinions of the scientists about the library as a social institution are divergent, but in all of them highlight the need of identifying its various functions. As Ivanka Yankova [4] says as an a library accumulates, but mostly provides the knowledge to its customers, regardless of place and time. The headlong developing of information and communication technologies destroys its walls, but her fans increased. Consumer today is at the center. And this brings new challenges – information intermediation, protection of intellectual property and personal data, depending on market conditions and rules of the game. The mission of the library is now highly modified and dynamic, because it combines the need for a high public reputation with mobilizing the creative talent and motivation of all employees. The library concept combines the mission, the conceptual idea, objectives, priorities, tasks, pathways, mechanisms and responsibilities for public long term. For centuries, the concepts of library and learning have been practically complementary,
both serving to accumulate and transmit human knowledge and experience. At the current stage of their development, under the influence of factors related to the scientific and technological revolution, the rapidly changing information technologies for processing and storing information, there are significant transformations in the access to information and knowledge [7]. Libraries as cultural, information, educational and social institutions, are closely tied to ongoing changes in society. Respectively, orientation toward development based on innovation is one of the most important factors for their functioning as part of the modern public system.

The library today becomes a knowledge center, organized and aimed for use, according to the needs and dynamics of modern society. There is a symbiosis between traditional and new information services based on modern information and communication technologies. This is a new type of library that uses the latest technological advances to reorganize workflows and raise the level of patron satisfaction. The scientists Rumen Nikolov, Ivanka Yankova, Tania Todorova and Evgenia Kovatcheva [6] emphasize in their article that under the conditions of the contemporary information environment it is of paramount importance modern libraries are increasingly being redefined as places to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from many sources.

The role of the library manager for the implementation of innovation is key to the organization’s development. The application of library management approaches to modern libraries is driven by the desire to achieve high efficiency in all areas of library activity and the need to solve a number of socio-practical problems related to the future of the institution and of the whole society.

The dynamics of library development is related to solving many new tasks, implementing projects and programs at national and international level, developing new services based on electronic information, expanding target audiences, enhancing interactions with traditional partnerships and creating new ones, expanding cooperation with other similar organizations, and implementing external institutional projects, etc. This in turn requires the application of the modern concept of the modern library management.

The rapid advent of new information and communication technologies in all spheres of public and cultural life necessitates the availability of libraries more easily accessible to a larger circle of users at a convenient time and place. The scientists Elisaveta Tsvetkova, Irena Peteva, Ivanka Pavlova [1] emphasize in their article that as an inseparable part of the contemporary global society’s image, ICT create limitless opportunities for library and education institutions to provide unlimited access to information resources regardless of time and location. The advancement and advent of mobile wireless networks and sensor technologies contribute to creating a more convenient and efficient environment for accessing library resources.

The services they offer should become better, more diverse and based on the new technical means, undoubtedly this problem is nowadays extremely important for many libraries not only in Bulgaria.

Modern libraries in Bulgaria have a number of positive trends in their development, one of which is their social role, based on the combination of traditions and the introduction of new information technologies, as well as the increasingly skilled staff. In today’s dynamics, libraries should learn the process of exploring and reviewing their mission as well as setting clear goals that are feasible and achievable.

3 RESULTS

Today, there are a number of issues to solve facing the library manager related to the specifics of the institution they manage. In the current economic situation and the changed library policy, the main content of the management activity is complex. One of the major problems faced by any library today is the reduced interest in reading in society and the withdrawal of readers from libraries; another problem is the insufficient funding and hence the state of libraries’ funds and their material and technical base, the level of automation of library processes in different libraries, etc.

In order to be able to respond to the challenges of modern times and changes in the public and social spheres, it is necessary to reconsider the existing concepts for libraries. They should be managed by people who are ready to work towards transforming library institutions into a modern information and knowledge center.

In this respect, the problem of leadership and management styles in libraries has gained new dimensions in the context of the dynamic social and historical changes that have been established in recent decades and in which modern organizations work. The bureaucratic type of organization has to
be dismantled and this reinforces the need to cope with the crisis in adapting to the changing external environment.

Library management is rapidly developing and expanding the sphere of management and self-management creating a methodological basis for solving the new problems and issues caused by the dynamics of the contemporary information society. The use and integration of principles and methods of management for practical management in libraries contributes to systematic and effective development.

Each library is unique and through continuous and effective assessment of the needs of its users, it has to define its innovation policy. According to a number of definitions, innovation is the use of new ideas, processes, goods, services and practices in a more or less commercial way, based on a new application of science and/or technology. Thus, the library’s innovation processes should provoke the development of activities and opportunities to unleash their full potential in modern society.

Alongside the many possibilities for introducing new information technologies in the library, another possibility is the use of new approaches to services, working with readers, organizing the library space. The social function of libraries and their transformation into a community center, a place where the reader has access to information, a place to communicate, a place to integrate, which is increasingly tangible. As Ivanka Yankova [4] says as an the social functions of the library are based on the mission to keep social norms and cultural values of community and universal civilization. The library has signed the most common and ancient social contract to accumulate, preserve, protect, inform, educate, enrich, educate and even brightens the socium. It is the public trustee and civilization guarantee of intellect and imagination. The modern library is a navigator, manufacturer and mediator between the producers of information and its users. It is an important actor in the contemporary global communication.

One of the tasks of the library is to be accessible and at the same time ready to give its readers a comfortable environment for communication. In this respect, the possibility for libraries is to combine the traditional methods of working with new or not applied methodologies at this stage. Encouraging the use of existing knowledge and the creation of new ones will contribute to building a society that is well educated and qualified to create, share and use this knowledge [9].

The quest for knowledge and improvement today is more vivid and valuable than ever. Knowledge and information are a major resource for the development not only of the world economy but also of any other sphere of public life. Libraries are here, keeping and transmitting the world’s memory. And there is nothing more normal to do with their users, along with the environment in which they operate, than to develop and improve while preserving traditional values. Changing, they will be more adequate, more needed, much more sought after [2].

4 CONCLUSIONS

The main functions that are performed by modern library are system of mutual shading and complementary activities. Its main informative function is to ensure information and equitable service of socium with data and knowledge in any form and format and in most states, its right and obligation is legally recognized. Its educational function provides for each member of the public society of information, education, self-education, specialization, development and self-determination in the spirit of human values, democratic principles and intellectual freedom and expression. The library is the oldest democratic institution, alienated from discrimination and political commitment. And in the most difficult political times, it managed to preserve knowledge. Its cultural function provides free spiritual development and integration into the achievements of world culture. Today, modern library is an educational library. It offers not only information but also competency [4].

Today more than ever it is necessary to work towards becoming aware of the role and place of libraries as the most democratic institutions providing free access to information for all by working to promote and maximize the capacity of libraries [8].

The library manager should have a wide range of knowledge not only related to libraries but also to the mainstream science that has direct contact with the social system of society. Library managers are managers of a new type, they realize management, both through its basic functions and by economic methods. A balance of knowledge and skills should be achieved to enable the library manager to be flexible and have many management options.
According to colleagues, Bulgarian scientists [5] the libraries in accordance with the principle of wide and equal public access to library and information resources, and as a democratic social institutions contribute to social stability, preservation and development of the spiritual and scientific potential of society. The contemporary challenges facing the libraries, suggest the application of adequate library management. It evolves against the background of changing the overall management paradigm—a process characteristic of global management. The outdated management approaches to the concept of “Rational Management” shall be replaced by the Marketing Paradigm, characterized by adaptability and flexibility of management.

Library manager policy should be flexible and innovative to achieve high results and to fulfill all the tasks posed to libraries today. The successful management of the library institution is a huge responsibility and challenge. Knowing the capabilities of modern library management, enriched with marketing methodology, strategic planning, staff management, project management, and the pursuit of leading library practices creates a rich palette of opportunities for the library manager. Hence, the manager should use their flair and make choices for appropriate and effective management and decision-making. Society should perceive the library as a place for personal and professional development.

The formulated objectives and the content of the activities of the libraries in the contemporary society, resulting from their role of public institutions, are closely bound up with the ongoing society changes. Therefore, innovation-orientated development is one of the most important factors for their functioning as a part of the contemporary public system. The essence of the innovational library activities is expressed in the thorough systemic focus on the quality changes, that meet the needs of implementation of new content. For the management, based on predicted development of libraries, is of an importance to create theoretical methodological base, defining the nature, structure and targets, and it is constantly updated by the reported cause-and-effect relationship.

No less important is the consideration and analysis of external factors that affect library innovations. The library has always been an integral part of the human development and has responded to changes in society, even provoked them. It is very important for the changes to continue, but the majority of them should start from the inside and should be based on the accumulated experience and traditions. Changes should be part of the system and not to be entirely enforced by the environment. The challenges posed to libraries in today's informational society require on time amendments and an adequate solutions.

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REFERENCES


