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today, the only main library of the city located in an old one storey building in the style of a house converted to a library. The storage room is underground. The library has a reading room, the director's office and one room for book processing and binding.

The spread of public libraries is a phenomenon of 1950-1965 when the Albanian Government took an interest in creating a network of public libraries in the country. They were all located in domestic properties requisitioned by the State after the Second World War and converted to libraries. These buildings were chosen from among the best in the centres of the country's cities. Apart from the work undertaken for their restoration, they have almost always been in poor repair and suffer from humidity and bad lighting. Storage rooms and reading rooms used to be very small, without central heating systems but with wood-burning stoves. Nevertheless, they could stand the test of time and some of them are still in the same buildings. But today another serious problem lies before them: with the new law for restoration of property, the original owners have reclaimed their houses. If the local governments of the districts do not find by the end of this year other buildings for the public libraries to be relocated in, they could all cease their services.

Between 1969-1980 the Albanian Government, in co-operation with the local governments in the districts, planned the building of some new public libraries in different cities of the country. These libraries, especially those of Korça, Berat and Shkodra, were designed as purpose-built libraries, with plentiful spaces: for example about 460m² for storing books, 390m² for reading rooms, 240m² free spaces (meeting rooms and card catalogue halls), 140m² for different offices. They are well-aired and lit and are the only public libraries with central heating systems. From the beginning they were built for closed-access use but some free spaces are being converted to open-access reading rooms, mainly for new acquisitions. During the same period, other public libraries have been built in about eight small cities. They do not occu-

py separate buildings but use part of each city's Palace of Culture. Although relatively new, these libraries have a lot of shortcomings, especially as far as humidity is concerned. The walls are constantly wet and, especially in the northern cities, the percentage of humidity in the stocks is very high.

Since 1986 two public libraries, in Peshkopi and Lezha (northern Albania), have been under construction but they have been postponed for lack of money. This year the Government is making some new investments to finish them, while the Soros Foundation in Albania is providing funds for library equipment and supplies (\$10,500 for the library of Peshkopi and \$3,000 for that of Lezha). From 1982 two new projects have been designed for the public libraries of Gjirokastra and Elbasan, but because of lack of funds they are still at the design stage.

There have been ten public libraries operating in Tirana since 1967. Nine of them are located on the ground floors of several-storey buildings that are actually domestic houses. Only one is located in a discrete, purpose-built library. It has a storage room and two reading rooms of ten to 20 seats. Like those in many other Albanian libraries, the reading rooms suffer from the same shortcomings: humidity, insufficient lighting, no central heating but wood-burning stoves, etc. These libraries also have closed-access systems.

Children's libraries usually operate together with the district public libraries; but in some cities, such as Durrës, Vlorë, Korça and Gjirokastra, they are located in separate buildings. These buildings are very old domestic houses and are not fit at all for children's entertainment. Children in Tirana can use the library of their Cultural Centre. It has a good collection of 20,000 books. The library is located in the building of the Children's Cultural Centre which dates back to the year 1935. Although not purpose-built as a library, it has a good storage room and a nice open-access reading room.

Running water and heating, however, remain big problems for all libraries in Albania.

Financial and personnel problems of research libraries in Poland

Artur Jazdon

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Abstract

Explains how managers of Polish research libraries face many problems provoked by the changes which have taken place both in these institutions and in their surroundings on the one hand, and by the obsolete rules which their operations regulate. Among the most serious financial obstacles are the following: a prolonged delay in the confirmation of a library's budget; too many financial sources; financial dependence of the majority of the libraries; restrictions on self-governing, profit-oriented activities; and criteria for the allocation of funds. Among the problems connected with the personnel the following are at the top of the list: disproportional employment in the various types of libraries; inappropriate educational background; lack of certain types of qualified professional (e.g. information scientists, computer technicians); very low earnings; and the degraded status of the librarian, which discourages candidates from this profession. The management and the structure of the organization of the library are also outdated and there are too few competent professionals to make the necessary transformations efficiently.

This article will introduce the reader to the main problems affecting the financial and personnel management of Polish research libraries at the academic level. In the complex arrangement of Polish libraries, the academic libraries form a significant part of the research libraries, and their book collections are unquestionably an essential component of the latter [1] in quantity as well as in quality.

This is why these libraries cope with a variety of problems pertaining to the subject under discussion, which outnumber those faced by the smaller libraries at the professional research institutions.

Financial issues

Directors of Polish libraries often finish their conversations with the ironic conclusion that any head of a British library would quickly withdraw from managing the finances of a Polish library if he or she were to understand the realities of the situation! Shakespeare claimed that there was method in madness. Unfortunately, just such a "method" of managing its finances is used in Polish libraries. Here are a few facts which justify such a strong claim.

The first relates to the delay in presenting the library directors with information on the financial year's (January-December) budget. Let us clarify the scale of this delay. I am writing this in the middle of May 1995 and I still do not know the budget for my library for this year. Many of my colleagues are in a similar situation. Only a few of them have received their budgets recently and they may consider themselves the lucky ones. Now they can begin thinking about how to spend their library funds. Normally, we cannot set about carrying out all the projects planned a year before – when we first apply for the financial resources – as the grant is usually smaller than we requested. In this situation our projects need modification. A question of finance arises around the first months of the year – from January until when the budget is allotted. At this time the library functions on so-called temporary funds which are sufficient only for its basic existence. Staff salaries are paid regularly from another, external source. Temporary financial supplies are insufficient, often to the extent that, for example, a few years ago our library could not afford to buy a single book for the first three months of the

year. A planned collection of books, then, is out of the question.

The fact that each year we receive less money than we had calculated and applied for results from the State policy of granting only a very small percentage of the State budget to education[2]. This deficiency is intensified by high inflation which actually rises faster each year than expected. Since last year the public is officially informed a year in advance about the planned price rises, for example, for electricity, postal services, etc. which we calculate in our budget. Nonetheless, other prices also rise and so our expenditure increases in a way that is not predictable.

Another serious problem appears as early as at the planning stage of the library budget and continues throughout the year. It is the scale of our financial resources and the unstable timing of their transfer to us. Our primary financial source is the State budget. Money coming from the State budget covers around 90 per cent of the library's expenses, although in 1994 Poznan University Library's other subventions formed as much as 18 per cent of the total incomings. These included funds from the Ministry of Science which are designed for so-called general technical activity (the purchase of databases, software, etc.). We usually receive this money at about the same time as we receive our subsidy from the State budget. The same ministry, in the second half of the year, transfers funds for the purchase of journals. Actually, every year we can also expect positive reactions (i.e. financial means) from both the university vice-chancellor and the Committee of Scientific Research, through our petitions to add to our budget from their reserves. Apart from these, though only irregularly, we also have funds from various Poland-based foundations as well as from our own activities. We can spend this money on actions supplementary to the basic plan of the year. So the fact that they come irregularly does not cause much inconvenience.

Academic libraries may use only a half of their own profits; the other half is designated for the university's general purposes. This is a drawback to our endeavours to gain additional income. These binding regulations are an even more severe disadvantage since they restrict the library's profits-oriented activities in certain departments. Extra finances can be obtained through the rent of rooms, the organization of exhibitions, advertising computer companies, and microfilm and Xerox

copying services. We cannot, however, earn on information services for industry, etc. And so, the University Library in Poznan spends 10 per cent of the funds designed for the purchase of books and journals on its 28 databases on CD-ROMs each year. These are used by people, not only from Poznan, but also from other parts of the country and we prepare the required sets of data free of charge. We would like to serve these external clients professionally and provide them regularly with the information they need for fixed payments. As is the case in many libraries around the world, for the execution of bigger plans we need additional finances. Thus, to start the computerization of the library, we obtained special funds from the A. Mellon Foundation and the Soros Foundation. The purchase and protection of our microfilming equipment is possible only because of certain German foundations. Numerous founders and sponsors can be named here, since practically all library directors constantly seek ways of gaining auxiliary funds. Nowadays these directors are less librarians and more and more business managers, since they are responsible for their library's basic existence and functioning.

Now that we have the money, another problem may arise – how to spend it. This problem derives from the fact that, apart from the National Library, the Silesian Library, and five libraries of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the other academic libraries are not independent units. They are legally and financially subject to the institutions within which they work. Henceforth, these libraries have to submit to the rigidly imposed budget policy. In this situation, the head of the library cannot freely operate with the finances because their use is strictly defined by the parameters of the budget. In addition, the employees' salaries are excluded from this budget. This is folly, since it is just the director who knows best how to handle weak finances in the most reasonable way. Often, certain spheres of activity at a certain point in time need additional support with the money designated by the budget to something else. In the following year special emphasis could be put on the realization of yet another goal. However, a shift between the parameters is not possible, so the money is spent according to its original design, and alas not always rationally.

The policy with regard to payments to personnel does not look much better. There

has been much talk about the irrational management of the personnel within the research libraries. But it is unthinkable that, if an employee resigns from his or her position, the director could take hold of the money (payment) designed for the vacant office and make advantageous use of it. This money, for example, could be shared by other employees. However, the payment is bound to the post and cannot be used otherwise than for the salary. So, the director usually employs a new person immediately after the post has been vacated. Hence his interest in rational employment has no sense. Unfortunately, nor can we employ and remunerate people with the funds coming from sources other than the budget, for instance, from the funds accumulated by the library. The situation presented above forces the directors of the big academic libraries to demand financial independence for their institutions.

Certainly, processing this claim by the authorities would eliminate a lot of limitations on our work, though it would also bring about new ones, as well. I refer here to the necessity to tighten financial discipline. It is no secret nowadays that when, at the end of the financial year, a library's financial resources run out, we have the authorities' consent to overrun the budget. This deficit, which does not influence the financial situation of the primary institution, somehow gets lost in its general expenditures.

Another problem would be independent financial management of the library. My list of expenditures for the year 1994 differed by over 10 per cent from the list supervised by the financial department of the university. This is because the aforementioned "dependent" libraries do not employ fully qualified staff: hence the frequent oversights. An exception is the University Library in Warsaw which employs, on a full-time basis, a representative of the university registry.

Still another financial problem which arises nowadays for the library directors originates from the fact that it is at the libraries that potential reserved funds are looked for. This is reflected in that, first, without prior reorganizing actions, library workers are dismissed from their jobs just at the time when the library is being equipped with computers and the majority of personnel are engaged in the computer courses. Second, our funds designed for the protection of books (binding) are curtailed which, in the long run,

results in the earlier destruction of books. Third, unfortunate financial limitations in our book collecting actions still compel us to call for book grants and conduct book exchanges. In this way we receive a lot of volumes. However, they do not always meet our readers' needs in all cases. To achieve this result we would have to have sufficient resources to buy the publications indicated by our clients. The worst situation is with the provision of journals, since 440 libraries buy 10,473 journal titles with a total of 31,458 copies (i.e. an average of 71.5 copies per library[3]) and in large libraries they consume up to 80 per cent of the funds designated for collections. Such an allotment of money for increasing their collections is also a big problem for the libraries.

To finish this part of the discussion, I would like to mention another big problem that is just arising for the library directors. It is the authorities' conviction that the computerization of libraries, now in full swing, does not imply their cost efficiency. They often start with the query of how much can be saved after the computerization of the personnel, book collection, etc. This raises another problem for the library directors and prompts them to new solutions.

Personnel

Equally important to the finances are the issues concerning personnel. Certain points have already been mentioned, but the matter requires further analysis.

The situation in this field is also complicated. It must be stated, first, that no norms are functioning here which would regulate the number of personnel to be employed in libraries with regard to the number of volumes, yearly influx, type of activities to serve the library's clients, etc. Hence, in many respects, differences between the staffing of the university libraries in Poznan, Warsaw, and Wroclaw reach 50 per cent. It is even difficult to state rationally that employment is definitely too low in Poznan or Torun and definitely too high in Warsaw. Investigations carried out in 1994[4] showed the following divergencies in the workload per employee in the following activities at academic libraries: 70 per cent in the registration of books; 100 per cent in the collecting of books; in books store service (the number of borrowings), over 300 per cent; in the direct lending

service, over 300 per cent; and in the number of clients served by one librarian, almost 65 per cent. These numbers testify not only to the lack of any policy in this field but, above all, to the lack of care.

At present, the situation has changed and the recovery process has been given impetus by the common intention to rationalize the costs of running a research institution. It is reflected in the reduction of personnel. For the last three years reductions have taken place in almost 60 per cent of the libraries investigated. They have affected 5-25 per cent of the existing staff. It is not the reductions themselves that are controversial but the fact that the process, in the overwhelming majority of libraries, was not preceded by staff analyses and structural changes. Hence the reductions proceeded in a somewhat mechanical way. Let us remind ourselves here once more that, as mentioned earlier, these reductions usually take place parallel to the computerization process, which requires a different approach from that adopted to the problem of staffing.

Staff reorganization should be preceded only by an analysis of the staff, especially of its structure and utility for carrying out the altered aims of the library. Today, a characteristic feature is a very high percentage of librarians with a higher degree (average 60 per cent) who hold posts for which lower qualifications would suffice. Their frustration obviously grows. Simultaneously, there is a need for people with certain specific qualifications such as, for example, information scientists, computer technicians, economists, and also representatives of the sciences such as biologists, and lawyers, whom we need in the book-collecting and registration processes. We have a surplus of humanities graduates and a deficiency of people with a good command of a foreign language. An obstacle here is the impossibility of hiring information scientists in the position of information scientist, and paper conservationists in the position of paper conservationist, etc. They have to be employed as librarians and with the salaries of librarians, which are considerably lower than those predicted for their own professions.

The present situation testifies to the many years of state policy control, which has systematically diminished both the prestige and remuneration of library professionals. Recruitment to the library profession has often proceeded on the basis of a negative selection which has resulted in considerable

fluctuation of staff – up to 25 per cent a year. This fluctuation slowed down after the introduction of serious economic reforms in 1990 and the following growth of unemployment. However, because of the very low salaries, it is difficult to attract good specialists to library work. In 1994, the average salary in the Poznan University Library reached only 60 per cent of the average Polish salary, and the salary of a custodian with 30 years' work experience reached only a little over 70 per cent of the average Polish salary. At the same time, it was only 40 per cent higher than the basic salary of an unqualified librarian. From the point of view of the status of the library staff, as far as earnings are concerned, among the other university employees (other than academic teachers) their situation is far from satisfactory. They are behind administrative workers, publishers, technicians and even transport employees. Without fundamental reforms and considerable pay rises, one cannot think about the competitiveness and attractiveness of the job.

The lack of prospects, lack of motivation to gain better qualifications and the poor financial conditions make the librarians look elsewhere for additional employment. In the past, active workers used to take up extra work for the library, both for extra pay and for an increase in their qualifications, which in return gave opportunities for better jobs. They could publish bibliographical collections, documentary elaborations, catalogues of collections, etc. Today, these activities are no longer profitable, so people take up better paid extra job opportunities outside the library.

A library provides a number of opportunities for additional activities, for example, computer work (work on databases), reader services (an increase in the number of borrowers and borrowings has been observed in recent years), and book selection (a problem which has not been touched on for many years and causes an overburden of work on the staff). If there are not enough library staff to work on these lines, and if there is not enough money to pay volunteers for this work on an agreement-order basis, and finally, if there are no library employees willing to do these tasks, the solutions must be sought somewhere else. Unfortunately, libraries in Poland are not allowed to employ students, which is widely practised abroad. Also library work as a substitution for military service is of no help,

since we cannot employ more than one or two voluntary men. Finally, we can only try to make shifts among the library workers.

Here arises another serious problem connected with the traditions in the majority of our libraries. There is no demand or even a custom to move younger librarians from one library department to another. An employee who is admitted to section "X" usually stays there until his or her retirement and is appointed to higher positions only within that hierarchy. This has very negative implications. First, he or she is not well informed about the functioning of the whole library and about the direct influence of his or her work on a colleague's work in another department. Second, the director's intention to move him or her is received exclusively as a negative reflection on his or her work. This obviously provokes protest and is not conducive to producing a positive atmosphere. It is one of the most urgent tasks for the library directors nowadays to alter this attitude, especially at the moment when mobility of staff and their adapting to new conditions are necessary.

Another issue which needs a lot of effort from the director is getting a wide circle of co-workers involved in the management of the library. The present managing group, a director and one or two vice-directors, is no longer able to make all the decisions and manage all the kinds of problems that arise. There is a need, then, to set up new teams led by heads of departments in order to carry the burden of responsibility for both their sections and the strategic decisions of the library. Unfortunately, a majority of the present staff are not prepared to fulfil such duties.

Nobody makes a mystery of the fact that the library personnel do not work to full

capacity. For the management of each library this obviously poses the task not only of reorganizing library procedures but also of applying a variety of new technological aids and working out new ways of giving advice to personnel to utilize these reserves. The latter process should probably start with the training of managerial staff. It may be equally important to introduce, parallel to the struggle with the old habits, some norms of working capacity, even on a temporary basis.

The outline presented here does not cover all the financial and personnel problems that trouble the managers of the Polish research libraries. The issues are numerous and new problems arise along with the inner transformation which follows the political, social and economic as well as quality (computers) transformations of the State.

Notes

- 1 According to the statistics there are 1,285 research libraries in Poland and their book collections contain 60 million volumes. The academic libraries contain 43.1 million volumes, which is 72 per cent of the book collections of all of the research libraries.
- 2 Indeed, in 1993, the State budget allocated 2.5 per cent of its total funds to higher education, and in 1994 this figure was reduced to 2.3 per cent, which in gross terms amounted to a mere 0.8 per cent and 0.79 per cent, respectively.
- 3 Compare this with: *The List of Scientific Journals and Other Information Science Materials Imported to Poland in 1994*, Polska Fundacja Upowszechniania Nauki, Warsaw, 1994.
- 4 Compare this with: Jazdon, A. and Jankowska, A., "On the problems of planning personnel structures in research libraries", in Jazdon, A. (Ed.), *Management and Organization of Research Libraries in the Computerization Process*, Stowarzyszenie Bibliotekarzy Polskich, Warsaw, 1995, pp. 226-39.