



## The Educational Function of the Library

**Sabina Eftimova**

State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (SULSIT) (Bulgaria)

[eftimova@mail.bg](mailto:eftimova@mail.bg)

### Abstract

*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 diverse, but all of them highlight the need of identifying its various functions. The purpose of this paper is to present the main features of the library.*

*Educational function is accomplished by supporting the educational process providing an opportunity for helping the readers to deepen and broaden their knowledge (to increase their educational level, forms of lifelong learning or self-study). At several studies the educational function "training for development of information skills" is marked as the third most important component, right after the resource functions of the institutional mission and the providing of access to information.*

*Libraries should provide access to information and materials to ensure the needs of formal and informal education. They offer educational services to all its target groups: children, youth, students, adults, families, and also for teachers and educators. Their task is to generate an idea of the integrity of the historical process, to form a spiritual and social identity of the individual and to prepare young people for their adaptation and realization in modern democratic society in the context of globalization and cultural diversity.*

*The usage of new forms for building competencies and continuing education, the exchange of ideas and creative collaboration between education and library practice are a milestone in "reinventing the library" in accordance with the changes in the information environment. The consideration of issues of the need for active use of modern technologies in libraries, in connection with the processes of implementation and integration of modern educational technologies, convincingly shows that the creation of optimal conditions for satisfying the information needs in education is not possible without changes in the libraries.*

### 1. Introduction

Growing influence of globalization and the information society development places new requirements in all spheres of social life, including libraries. Information and technological revolution, unfolding in front our eyes, determine the development of an entirely new type of society - the information, or as it is also called, knowledge society. As summarizes in her monograph T. Trencheva "in the contemporary information society we have witnessed the rapid development of human intellectual activity, through which are created unique creative goods, product of the personal creativity and innovativeness of the human mind" [1]. And here is the location of the library as a center for the preservation and dissemination of these results. Libraries are still an important component of education, science and culture and play a major role in building civil society and information. According to K. Mincheva "during the development of the information society, the requirements towards the library are becoming larger, but in parallel increases their social importance as public institutions and they are beginning to act the role of a knowledge organizer available via the global network" [2]. Acceleration of the process of information processing and learning, causes deep qualitative changes in all spheres of life. In the contemporary dynamic world, there is something, but tomorrow will be created otherwise, much better, much faster and more efficient. So perhaps one of the most important features of the modern world are the intensity of its development, the globalization, the dynamics of the processes and continuous emergence of the new technologies and discoveries. And right here it is important to work to "regain the libraries' prestige and make them more attractive places, transforming them into modern information centers seeking modern approaches to attract new patrons" [3].

The freedom of choice and quick access to services outlined the new ways of finding, keeping and organizing large amount of information. In these conditions before library institutions have the task to develop and adopt its strategy for sustainable development by forming and improving its structure, organization and management, enabling them to respond adequately to the globalization demands,



while complying with the available material and financial resources, which in the most cases are very limited. It must be worked on one of the “main library functions for public access and the right to free access to information for all citizens, and the promotion and facilitation of children, young people and disadvantaged people’s access to information” [4].

In its development the society has changed our perception for libraries without changing their positive attitude towards them. To date, the growing role of libraries in the social life, causes discussion about the problems related to the development of such institutions as the main active unit in the information chain. The library has always been an integral part of human development and has responded to the society changes, even if it is challenged. It is very important to keep the changes, but most of them start from the inside and are based on historical experience and traditions. “In the modern preservation of social orientation and universality of library institutions is impossible to implement, without applying modern management mechanisms for adapting the complex economic, political and social events to the challenges of the digital age” [5]. The library aspires more and more to be dynamic structure responsible to the society challenges, where the knowledge dominates today as a factor over social development. Because libraries will never be as they were in the distant or recent past, the metamorphosis of the libraries’ mission is now available and the new realities and challenges in the world around us require a new way of thinking. Preserving their traditional functions - procurement and protection of the Bulgarian literary heritage, acquisition of valuable multisectoral funds and providing the information needs of many readers, the library developed its educational function as a priority. “In its confession, the library has the opportunity to become a leader in the efforts of the Bulgarian society to build the skills and tools, which are necessary for its development and prosperity in contemporary information age” [6]. And as the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Rosen Plevneliev stated in his address to the participants in the Tenth Anniversary National Conference with International Participation “Knowledge and Humanism of the Twenty-first Century”, organized by the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies in 2012: “Precisely human potential change the world, not the technology.”

Time requires a conscious shift of the emphasis from the library as a repository to the library as educational and communicational environment. Modern society gradually impose a change in the mission of the library institution. Traditional functions change and complement the new requirements associated with opening to the problems of civil society and its role as a cultural, educational, social and information center.

## 2. Main Functions of the Library Institutions

According to various scientific justification, we can distinguish several basic formulations of library functions: first of all is its **social function**, followed by its **archival function**, and **information function**, **educational function**, function of a **public defender and distributor of knowledge and information** (which partly overlaps with the informational and educational function), **cultural function** and extremely interesting and less often in the Bulgarian libraries - **therapeutic function**. Now we’ll make a short characteristic of all library functions as follows:

- **educational function** - to create basic reading habits and support processes related to the promotion of reading, the formation of information literacy in these processes include all age groups. In contemporary world of modern technology, information resources are growing enormously and is becoming more difficult for people to navigate in them, therefore the availability of information literacy and its teaching are essential;
- **social function** - libraries are the most democratic institutions for access to information resources and services. As such, they have the task to help overcoming faster the digital divide. Libraries provide access to this information, through its funds, and through Internet access, which in turn allows for the full provision of the needs of different categories of users. Because libraries and their services have to comply with those with special needs, disadvantaged, minority groups, the elderly and etc.;
- **cultural function** - one of the traditional functions of the library's commitment and its contribution to cultural development validation and promotion of national cultural values. Through the collection, preservation and access to issues related to the history and culture of Bulgaria and promotion of these resources, libraries create and support processes associated with the development of national cultural identity. Libraries have a key role in creating attitudes and behavior towards our cultural heritage, the development of intercultural dialogue, the perception of different fields of science and art and etc.;



- **educational functions** – this function implements through assistance of the educational process, provides an opportunity to support the reader to deepen and broaden their knowledge (to increase their educational level, forms of lifelong learning or self-study). At several definitions the educational function "training for development of information skills" is deduced as the third most important component, following the resources' functions of the institutional mission and the providing of information access. Libraries should provide access to information and materials to ensure the needs of formal and informal education. Libraries offer educational services to all its target groups: children, youth, students, adults, families, and also for teachers and educators. Their task is to generate an idea of the integrity of the historical process to form a spiritual and civil identity of the individual and to prepare young people for their adaptation and implementation in modern democratic society in the context of globalization and cultural diversity. Application of new forms of building competencies and continuing education and the exchange of ideas and creative collaboration between education and library routines are a key point in "reinventing the library " in accordance with the changes in the information environment [5]. For addressing issues of the need for active use of modern technologies in libraries, in connection with the processes of implementation and use of modern educational technologies convincingly shows that the creation of optimal conditions for satisfying the information needs in education is not possible without changes in libraries.

### 3. Conclusion

Here comes the crucial role of library education, whose main task is to take seriously into account the needs and interests of all target groups and to initiate, support and relevant learning processes. This includes promotion of speaking and reading in early childhood and brokering the acquisition of information literacy to students or provide special assistance to immigrants. The implementation of this function is related to the activities of continuing education and intersects with the application of enlightenment features.

In the era of electronic information, the change of the paradigm of education, reorientation to the model of continuing education priority continuous personal development, increases the role of libraries and educational institutions. In today's fast developing world is no longer the man goes to the information itself and the information sought goes to those who need it. The role of libraries in this new trend is to be information centers, coordinating information resources and at the same time and learning centers where information seeking users learn how to use it most effectively. Educational function is an integral part of library activities, they are one of the key institutions are now dealing with the formation of information culture of the society. Back in January 2002 Shrayberg in its report "Libraries, computer technology and the information society" highlights several key educational objectives: development and implementation of programs supporting the long-term learning process, obtaining the library , appropriate information resources and ensuring the needs of today's educational institutions, active cooperation and coordination with educational institutions at all levels of education , security, and free access to information, secure the required level of technology and others.

Libraries as basic social institutions that organize the collection, storage and use of information resources are an integral part of the process of informatization. Dynamics of socio-economic life informatization of society, increasing scientific and cultural level of the users and their information needs require and the need for transformation in the work of libraries. It must be in accordance with national traditions and the willingness of librarians and information society. This is a condition for the successful implementation of innovative library projects and programs to support and strengthen the position of public libraries as information centers in modern society.

### 4. Acknowledgments

This publication has been realized under the project "Development of an information environment to motivate and stimulate young researchers in SULSIT" by Contract: BG051PO001-3.3.06-0055. The project is funded by the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" scheme grants BG051PO001-3.3.06 "Support for the development of PhD students, post graduate students and young scientists" funded by the European Social Fund of the European Union.

### References



- [1] Trencheva, T. (2013). Open Access to Scientific Information. *Za bukвите – O pismeneh*, Sofia, p. 204 [Language: BG]
- [2] Mincheva, K. (2012). Contemporary information resources for research and training in the library of the Institute for Art Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In: *Proceedings of the National Scientific Conference, X: Library-Reading-Communication*, St. St. Cyril and Methodius Univ. Press, V. Turnovo, pp. 263-271 [Language: BG]
- [3] Parijkova, L. (2013). Research of the contemporary trends in the field of books and reading. In: *Proceedings of the Scientific conference: Digital present and digital future: economic, cultural, educational, legal and technological impacts*. 9-10 April 2013, Avangard Press, Sofia, pp. 109-117 [Language: BG].
- [4] Altay, A., T. Todorova et all. (2013). The creative information services for children and youth in public libraries: A case of the Turkey. In: *Gençlik Araştırmaları Dergisi*. Yıl: 1, Cilt: 1, Sayı: 2, 2013-2, pp. 186–201.
- [5] Todorova, T. (2010). Library policies. *Avangard Prima*, Sofia, p.192 [Language: BG]
- [6] Yankova, I. (2004) *The Modern Library*, St. Kl. Ohridski, Sofia, p.137. [Language: BG]