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CONTEMPORARY ACADEMIC LIBRARIES VS. DISTANCE TEACHING

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The article provides the characteristics of the specificity of modern University library. It is stated that changes in academic libraries are caused by the changes in the education system, the environment and the development of new methods of studying. It is topical indeed, since we shift from traditional books to integral library systems and computer networks. The author is of the opinion that University libraries should meet new challenges and use distant studies methods in their work.

Key words: information, University library, electronic library, distant studies.

An university library constitutes a foundation of the library and information system of its university, fulfilling the basic service, didactic and scientific tasks. It fulfils the functions of a scientific library and a scientific information centre.

An university library is not an independent unit. It is connected with the structure of its mother unit – university. An academic library is also referred to as an integral part of the educational, scientific and research space of a university.

As a unit functioning within the structure of a university, it participates in the implementation of service, didactic and scientific tasks, in compliance with tasks of the library and information system. The fundamental tasks of a library and information system comprise, among others, the support for the educational process and scientific research conducted within the mother unit. The implementation of specific tasks focuses on the areas of library and information services, education, scientific research, as well as support for the education process and scientific research.

The library and information services comprise the following issues:

– collecting and developing library materials and rendering them accessible via a common on-line catalogue;

– rendering accessible the library's own materials;

– creating digital information resources;

– organizing and integrating access to remote information resources, both the ones belonging to the library and dispersed within the network;

– creating and developing a digital library with the application of the state-of-the-art information and communication technologies – integrated with the didactic and scientific structures;

– rendering information services for users of the library and information system in a conventional as well as a remote way, integrating various types of services for specified categories of users and adapting the offer to users' preferences.

The area of education comprises: educating students in a form of didactic classes devoted to library and information services and information literacy (i.e. how to find information, how to evaluate and use it effectively), as well as conducting seminars and training sessions for postgraduates and academics, conducting professional practices in the scope of scientific information and library science, training other groups of users in the scope of library and information services, as well as moulding the searching skills and ability to use remote scientific information services.

The area of scientific research includes the following issues: documentation and storing the written and published output of academics in archives, creating on this basis appropriate databases and university repositories, as well as conducting the library's own, or in cooperation with other libraries, research, design, evaluation works and case studies for the needs of educating and conducting research in the direction of library science and scientific information.

The area supporting the process of education and scientific research comprises: promoting the library and information system, e.g. by publishing information materials, organizing exhibitions and participating in scientific festivals and other university and external ventures; as well as cooperation with domestic and foreign scientific libraries, scientific information centres and other organizations, in creating the common library and information space. Services and support for didactics and scientific research take place by collecting and rendering accessible of studies, handbooks, as well as other materials and sources (e.g. databases), necessary in the process of education, in their conventional and digital format. University libraries, since the beginnings of their existence and operation within the structures of universities, have been adjusting to the changing tasks and circumstances of the environment – from functioning in the world of print, through databases and library catalogues accessible locally, integrated library systems, extensive computer networks, to the digital reality.

The utmost objective of all innovations in the scope of services, management methods, organization structures, is improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the operation of a library.

Not only have the immediate surroundings of libraries changed, but also a catalogue of objectives and tasks for which libraries exist.

Changes in academic libraries to a great extent correspond with changes in the academic education. Manners and methods of education are evolving. During the didactic process the latest achievements of computer and information technology are being applied. The approach to teaching changes, as well: from instructive teaching, to active learning of students, searching answers to questions troubling them; also distance teaching has become more and more common.

The state-of-the-art achievements of the communication and information technology applied in the process of teaching have influenced the very communication process between participants of a didactic process; they have changed the teaching style, the methods of finding information, of sharing knowledge, and the increase in the amount of information in the network has caused an information chaos, absolutely insoluble by participants of a didactic process. It must be remembered that they also constitute a considerate part of users of university libraries.

Numerous studies have been prepared on the subject of distance teaching; it has been, and still is, a theme of many conferences, books, articles in periodicals – in a conventional as well as in a digital form. The methods of e-learning, the types of distance teaching, the work organization, the platforms used have been discussed, the behaviours of participants

of contemporary teaching, practical realizations in specific centres have been described, together with their advantages and disadvantages.

It is a similar case with *a contemporary library*. It seems that all areas of functioning of contemporary libraries have been already characterised and examined. Nevertheless, materials combining these two aspects of modern education environment on a higher level, have been scarce. Therefore, determination of a new role and new tasks of contemporary university libraries in the context of distance teaching has become very significant during the last few years.

The results of research conducted among participants of distance teaching indicate that students are willing to use materials published on websites; however, finding and evaluating them, that is appropriate selection of these materials is difficult and time-consuming. Extramural students appreciate the significance of digital access to resources, as well as indicate the necessity to launch an additional communication channels.

Educators conducting e-learning classes point out that there is too little information on correct manners of conducting courses and preparing didactic materials used in the process of remote education. This information is significant as a person deciding to conduct remote classes must acquire appropriate literacy connected with designing, administering an on-line course, as well as preparation of contents and materials rendered accessible and knowledge on other possibilities offered by an educational platform applied.

As it has been pointed out before, the basic tasks of university libraries comprise supporting the didactic process (teaching) conducted by a mother university.

Therefore, since for the benefit of good quality of courses conducted in a conventional way libraries equipped with conventional and digital materials and using appropriate means and methods of operation are maintained, comparable resources should be provided for "remote" students. The duties of a university engaged in distance teaching should include building of a virtual library, whose resources will exceed the notes and class materials, a library which will collect rich accessory materials, verified in terms of their quality and up-to-dateness, prepared in an appropriate manner and rendered accessible in a suitable form. In order to understand and isolate new tasks for libraries, it is necessary to analyze their characteristic features, their specificity, and materials used in the process of distance teaching.

The e-learning didactics uses most of all digital materials – provided by a teacher and dispersed in the network. Subsequent IT, communication and information applications allowed to isolate e-learning 1, e-learning 2 (second life)[*].

E-learning 1 uses e.g. voiced instructions, audio instructions, text files, photographs, presentations, slide shows, tests published on websites, links to internet resources referring to a specified subject matter, tools to communicate with other participants of a course and sending data (e-mail addresses, discussion forums, chat rooms). The access to a digital library, its resources, database (i.e. the so-called Internet's hidden resources) is also significant.

E-learning 2 uses all elements of e-learning 1; however, it has changed the teacher-student relations to a great extent. A student is able to create knowledge on his own, using such dissemination tools as blog, wiki, RSS, discussion lists (added value). New resources of education contents are appearing – blogs, contents aggregated in the RSS readers. The access to sources of knowledge and contents co-created by many authors is being facilitated.

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[*] There are many typologies of distance teaching, taking into account various distinction criteria; however, discussing them in detail exceeds the scope of the subject matter of this study. This article focuses on the means used to find and share knowledge.

A quality of e-learning 2 is the network resources integration – referring to various sources, expert studies, Internet-base free courses and trainings, databases and thematic portals. Some role is played by community websites – contacts, participation, i.e. sharing and exchanging information. The issue of folksonomy, i.e. categorizing contents with the application of selected key words (tags), is becoming more and more significant, similarly to the access to open resources dispersed in the network (also Open Access).

This variety of materials used determines new tasks for university libraries, which must focus on the development (extending the offer) of digital resources, as well as organizing the access to the resources dispersed in the network.

On the websites of contemporary university libraries one is able to find various tags, under which links to network resources are grouped. There are most often: e-resources, e-collections, e-books, e-periodicals, e-sources, not so frequently Open Access. Libraries creating or co-creating a digital library place a link to this library: digital library.

Most frequently university libraries organize access to:
– a digital library (comprising: the library's collections, special collections, studies and handbooks coming from the mother university, materials of academics to be used during didactic classes, post graduate dissertations),
– licensing digital resources,
– dispersed digital resources,
– databases (of the library and rendered accessible by other centres),
– library catalogues,
– central catalogues.

The application of communication and information technologies has had its impact also on the change of the manner of communicating with users, e.g. by using communicators, skype, e-mails (ask your librarian, suggest a book), etc. Some university libraries provide the so-called didactic packages (e.g. lectures in an audio and video format).

Nevertheless, the information for distance teaching and about distance teaching is missing.

The information pool *For e-learning* comprises all the information and sources which are already organized and rendered accessible (such as digital libraries, databases, including central catalogues, library catalogues, virtual bookshops), as well as:
– websites of academics;
– thematic websites;
– links to other Internet resources;
– discussion groups;
– open Access resources;
– knowledge repositories created in a university or by a university library;
– packages of didactic programmes supporting courses realized in a university;
– e-handbooks dispersed in the network and created in a mother university;
– links to external repositories, providing reliable knowledge;
– experts' blogs;
– websites of sharing and exchanging files;
– websites of Internet communities;
– contact with experts (including a librarian);
– web3 – finding information in a purposeful manner and in compliance with a user's expectations – concept of a semantic network).

Information *On e-learning* comprises the following elements:
– thematic blogs;
– thematic wiki;
– e-periodicals;
– e-books;
– information on websites of distance teaching centres;
– publications on author websites;
– publication of conference materials;
– list of courses and majors of studies – recommended list of good projects;
– list of distance teaching centres;
– legal information;
– standards and norms;
– links to wiki tools, blogs and other elements;
– links to guidebooks – how to prepare a good on-line handbook and other e-learning materials;
– links to institutions conducting R&D programmes;
– information on e-learning courses conducted by a mother university;
– information on courses and majors of studies conducted in the e-learning system by other public and non-public universities.

Realization of new tasks imposed by more and more commonly encountered changes in the teaching methods requires changes in the operation of libraries themselves (of the methods used, organization and management, including financing of libraries and ventures undertaken). It seems that the basis for a success in this respect is:
– close cooperation between libraries and university computer centres, distance teaching centres, distance teaching platforms (websites of such centres should include links to a university library as a unit supporting distance teaching);
– close cooperation with participants of the distance teaching (examining the needs of students, of authors of courses);
– organizing a unit (a position) to administer the process of distance teaching, i.e. which will be preparing materials necessary for participants of courses conducted in the distance learning mode;
– isolating places for independent work with access to a computer and the Internet;
– creating positions of thematic information experts who will be obliged to know information sources in a conventional and digital format;
– providing broader access to global information resources in a digital format.

Summing up this brief analysis of a problem concerning the position of a library in a system of distance teaching, one should answer a question why university libraries should be engaged in the new task resulting from applying the distance teaching process. The answer seems to be simple. Librarians are not afraid of new challenges and they are well-prepared to face them. Contemporary libraries even now use e-learning platforms in their work (e.g. e-library trainings). For librarians and scientific information workers it is the quality of information that mattered, not its quantity. They are able to select and suitably evaluate the information found, they have natural skills and knowledge necessary to describe, classify, select and render accessible information in various formats. Information "leaving" a library has got a quality guarantee. And most of all, libraries are the only institutions able to provide access to global digital resources (including the commercial ones), thanks to their cooperation within the structures of consortia.

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СУЧАСНІ АКАДЕМІЧНІ БІБЛІОТЕКИ VERSUS ДИСТАНЦІЙНЕ НАВЧАННЯ

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У статті охарактеризовано завдання сучасної університетської бібліотеки, вказано, що зміни в академічних бібліотеках викликані передусім змінами в освіті та навколишньому середовищі, розвитком нових методів навчання. Це стає актуальним в умовах переходу від світу друкованого слова до інтегрованих бібліотечних систем та комп'ютерних мереж. На думку автора, університетські бібліотеки повинні приймати нові виклики і застосовувати у своїй роботі методи дистанційного навчання.

Ключові слова: інформація, університетська бібліотека, електронна бібліотека, дистанційне навчання.

СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКИЕ БИБЛИОТЕКИ VERSUS ДИСТАНЦИОННОЕ ОБУЧЕНИЕ

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В статье характеризируются задания современной университетской библиотеки, указано, что изменения в академических библиотеках вызваны, прежде всего, изменениями в образовании и окружающей среде, развитием новых методов обучения. Это становится актуальным в условиях перехода от мира печатного слова к интегрированным библиотечным системам и компьютерным сетям. По мнению автора, университетские библиотеки должны принимать новые вызовы и применять в своей работе методы дистанционного обучения.

Ключевые слова: информация, университетская библиотека, электронная библиотека, дистанционное обучение.