

**ROMANIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN TEMPUS
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE
COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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The extraordinary evolution of information and communication technology is synonymous with profound social and economic mutations called "the third industrial revolution" within the vision of the European Union. It has had a direct impact on society which has evolved into an information society. The context of this product - information - has affected a great number of professions, principally those which are "information" suppliers.

**EAST-EUROPEAN COUNTRIES MUST NOT DEPEND ON
WESTERN INFORMATION-DISTRIBUTORS**

By undertaking major pilot projects the European Union has set itself an aim whereby Europe is fulfilling its important role of supplying information on an international level.

The technological deficiencies of East-European countries have determined the unequal change of information in both directions; the new European 'architecture' and politics aim at eliminating this deficiency. Preparing Europeans for the information society is a priority; professional improvement and the pursuit of information have a central role in this process. The development of the information society must be considered globally for the whole of Europe. The European Commission of the European Union (EU) coordinates and supports, since 1990, the creation of necessary structures which work towards the efficient transfer and administration of scientific, juridical, economic and cultural information and documents. At debates on the level of the European

Commission, Presidents of states and governments of the European Union (formerly the European Community) laid the foundations for financing projects of computerising information structures, including East-European states which remained strongly dependent on foreign information-distributors, North-American especially, which are very expensive.

Computerising the documentary structures of these countries requires local specialists of information, competent librarians capable of locating, obtaining and processing information pertinently, thereafter enriching and disseminating it again in universities, research laboratories and institutions.

The Commission of the European Union, former Commission of the European Community, with its headquarters in Brussels, plans, coordinates and evaluates the PHARE programs of assistance for economic reconstruction in Eastern and Central European countries. Within these programs, the TEMPUS programs (Trans European Mobility Scheme for University Projects) deal with Higher Education and University restructuring. These were initiated to help Eastern-European universities with their "Westernisation", the creation of European-level institutional and administrative structures. Brussels asks those that participate in international programs to define their European strategy, recommending that they also be supported by outside finance. University Libraries' participation in CE-TEMPUS I and then TEMPUS II programs is part of the European strategy of Universities which has objectives such as:

- modernisation of libraries - automation
- modernisation of the functions of information and documentation
- rendering efficient institutional structures
- promoting the attitude of participation of the staff, professional improvement fitting new standards
- developing the European spirit

This strategy can be pursued by already existing structures (informatics laboratories, Colleges of Librarianship, partnership in

university projects of the CUE) and other necessary ways (task force groups, inter-institutional collaboration teams, research teams).

TEMPUS programs are an excellent framework for the international gateway for university libraries. Beyond their beneficial effects on technology they further social and professional cohesion and strengthen relations between libraries.

TEMPUS I allowed certain Romanian libraries to gain information technology and significant experience which has positively affected their development. Alongside the libraries' policy of development this experience contributed to the initiation of the automation of university libraries.

These programs initiated contacts between libraries and professionals which have established the basis of further relations and programs. Librarians have now the opportunity to form a completely different view of their profession and to assess their real role in society.

THE TEMPUS II PROGRAM FOR LIBRARIES WAS LAUNCHED UNDER THE BADGE OF EVOLUTION

The last three years have led to an opening in libraries which is indispensable for their development. It has become imperative to continue the development, to use the new equipment to the utmost, to rethink our activities and subordinate them to the principal aim, to use our collections in the best way possible and also to satisfy users' needs. This can only be done by reorganising the departments of the library, training the staff for a new administration, using materials to their maximum and acquiring new skills and knowledge for the benefit of our colleagues. The new requirements that appeared compelled us to propose a second project entitled "Re-structuring the Administration of University Libraries. Training the trainers" which is in line with the second objective of Tempus programs, "Re-structuring and Improving University Administration: ...University

Infrastructure (e.g. Libraries)”; this objective was considered a priority in Romanian university strategies.

The project was conceived under the badge of evolution: we were conscious that our libraries had to change the direction of their development and that our profession is in a process of transformation. Indeed, the new technological equipment shed a new light on our role and we must advance alongside it.

The project comprises four libraries: the Central University Library, Cluj, the Central University Library, Iași, the Technical University Library, Iași, and the University Library, Sibiu. The foreign partners are as follows: Paul Valéry University, Montpellier and BIU (Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire) as coordinators, Centre National Sud de Calcul, Centre Régionale de Documentation Pédagogique and the University Library, Barcelona. There were two variants of projects conceived beginning with 1993, adapted and improved after the study tour of an expert, Mrs M. Pezeril, director of BIU Montpellier, but they were rejected. The third proposal for a project had the following precise objectives:

- the functional reorganisation of the circulation of documents; organisational and spatial restructuring; training the staff to use the techniques of organising libraries; the reorganisation of management
- training the staff for a modern administration, the use of new technologies and the spread of new abilities and knowledge
- setting up the link between the central library and its branches, completing automation, purchasing complementary equipment
- initiating automation in the University Library, Sibiu

INSERTING THE TASK FORCE IN THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES AND DOCUMENTATION IN SERVICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INTO THE GLOBAL APPROACH OF UNIVERSITIES IS A STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Beyond the automation and modernisation of university libraries the project aims at creating genuine structures in the dissemination of information. The achievement of this aim in those four Romanian libraries is important in initiating a new epoch of transformation. This is not only about supporting the development of higher education and research in universities in Romania but mastering the information produced by our intellectual and researcher's potential and processed by librarians, profiting from the autochthonous editorial potential. Our libraries preserve extremely important scientific patrimonial collections which have not been capitalised as they should be. In addition there is a risk of considering that universities, education and research depend on external information (databases and on-line catalogues). There should be synergies with other documentation centres, universities or research institutes in the country, a coherent policy of cataloguing and access to information and, if possible, a concerted policy of foreign document acquisition. Only in this way can we reach the superior level of present evolution in Western libraries. This is a strategic objective, therefore libraries require the moral and material support of universities in their process of Europeanisation. *To exclude university libraries which are the nuclei of disseminating strategical information in this period of reformation and evolution is a gap in the organisation of university modernisation.* If university leaders would accept the American expression whereby "a university is a library", they would be more committed and effective in their efforts to create modern libraries with a high level of function. University libraries are not developed for themselves, modernised for the sake of modernisation, but in order to become effective documentary

structures for the assistance of their users and the whole network of education and research.

Once the objectives were defined and the new requirements pointed out, the course of the project was organised, including the definition of the contents of activities and the structure of groups involved. Thus the whole process acquired a certain dynamism.

In major libraries (Central University Library Cluj, Central University Library Iași) as well as in small libraries (Technical University Library Iași, University Library Sibiu) the project aims at progress in the profession, more efficacy, a better adaption to users and a better organisation of libraries.

A coordinating group was created, consisting of the representatives of the foreign and Romanian partners, in order to assure maximum coherence, a correct preliminary thinking and a better adaption to users. This group will prepare and follow the course of programs and evaluate them in stages and as a whole. This way of organisation is considered to be very efficient.

The effort of promoting those four Romanian libraries (from 1995 onwards) is in full swing: equipment has been bought and 34 librarians have been trained in France and Spain, the period of training totalling 154 weeks. The selection for participation was done according to well-defined criteria and subordinated to the best attainment of the objectives of the project. Teams of professionals were organised in libraries; they perform different types of specific activities, have gained new qualities and are able to ensure the evolutions that devolve from the project.

The programs of the four-stage training contained modules that enabled the participants to gain competence in organising or re-organising activities in order to use the collections more efficiently and provide better services for the users. A certain subtleness of planning led to flexibility of activities: participants could take part in activities other than their principal one. All participants tried, in accordance with their competence, ability and personal preoccupations, to memorise as many details as possible, to note the

interesting facts, to compare solutions to the various problems in the same type of libraries as those visited and were able to profit from them in their professional career and the development of their libraries.

Facing experiences others than ours, brought about by the presentation of organisations different from ours, proved to be useful: it became immediately clear that in spite of different situations we have certain problems in common, namely, users' needs, to rationalise and prioritise problems, the need for drawing up projects, to control the strategies of more efficient use of resources (human and material ones), to utilise the competence of the staff and others' experience, to improve public relations (folders, signal publications, user training), to continue the development of the profession - and all these were doubled by the evolution of mentalities. However, the treatment of these problems is different. These differences place our institutions on different levels.

THE DIRECTOR OF THE LIBRARY IS THE TOP OF THE HIERARCHY OF MANAGERIAL COMPETENCE. HE MUST DIRECT PROCESSES IN A POSITIVE WAY

It is a utopia that we can eliminate evolutionary loops by profiting from the experience of developed libraries and place our problems on their level of development. We often blame legislative limits, tight budgets and other circumstances when we do not feel like working or consider the efforts too great. Naturally, these cannot be ignored and indeed they limit our initiatives and energy. But it is similarly true that drawing up a long-term plan, concentrating a great number of minds around the projects, instilling a profound perspective on the possibilities of achieving them might lead to concrete results, possibly far-reaching. These will require the drawing up of other lesser projects, in several stages, according to our actualities and limits (financial, legislative or other) presented in terms of time, energies, reserves, group or individual faculties. We call them "open discussions". They are conceived by a so-called task

force group which is the platform of thinking about library development. The agreement, commitment and support of the director are indispensable in this process. He is the summit of the hierarchy of managerial and professional competence; he must always be willing to listen to problems, analyse, clear up and direct processes in a positive way. Losing control of problems and the non-observance of hierarchies leads to the formation of cliques which are the opponents of working groups, being contraproductive. Avoiding or eliminating them requires cooperation and a very thoughtful attitude towards the staff, creating a *team spirit* instead of *cliques*.

The open discussions are a good occasion for this attitude; they start with many inner meetings in order to define ideas subordinated to the far-reaching general project, set up project teams and individual responsibilities within them, estimate the time necessary for their accomplishment as well as the constraints and the possible ways of eliminating them and reflect on other spheres (services, people). Correct, continuous communication on two levels - that of the categories and of individuals within the categories - helps us to get to know the professional potential of the library and therefore its judicious use and the individual features of the staff which is a point of reference in evaluating them. The worth of a library are the people who work in it; their qualifications, motivation and their capacity to express all their abilities by work are the best guarantee of their efficiency. From this point of view it is clear that the policy of managing the staff is very important and these services have to function by the influence and prestige justified by the importance of their mission.

On the one hand, such projects are subordinated to the major project of development, on the other, they generate others, such as the need for formation - this can already be felt.

Consensus of opinion is necessary in every activity. It is fragile and precarious, it means accepting, not imposing and therefore it is difficult to achieve. A group project cannot be viable without consensus. However, a decision voted by the administrative

commission often appears as a direct application of official instructions and it is more like a formal action than an inner wish.

Any project of organisation risks oscillating between two extremes. If the will to achieve is very strong, it appears hasty, it shows a lack of suppleness in going over the stages or even the elimination of some stages which results in projects imposed on subgroups: the project is “limited”, it risks being rejected by the staff who will not identify themselves with it. The gap between hopes and reality will probably provoke frustration, aggression, indifference or rejection. If the wish to stick to a rigorous and minute method of analysis and cooperation in conceiving a collective project has the upper hand, there is a risk of prolonged debates, the expression of all opinions and of not accomplishing it at once. An equilibrium is required, because a project, no matter how good it is, will not be really successful if it is not rooted in the medium which asks for it: first of all the managers of the institution should be convinced of the necessity of the project, then the “climate” must be favourable. The external factors are also important - who are the beneficiaries of the project; how will they benefit from it. The success of renewing services has three conditions: respect towards the users, respect towards the decisive factors and respect towards librarians, the actors of this renewal. It is our fault if we are unable to recognise this and it is even more serious if we disregard it.

WE CAN ACCELERATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES - WE MUST GIVE OUR INSTITUTIONS THIS CHANCE

On account of the analyses based on the findings of French visitors in our libraries and the new experiences of Romanian librarians trained in French and Catalan libraries the idea of change was unanimously accepted: change from the point of view of requirements and not from the personal point of view. Thus our libraries become part of the actual flux of “reforms”. We had already discredited the idea of fundamental change for the sake of change; we

want change now because we wish progress and we are conscious of the fact that anyway there will be developments and we cannot avoid it, therefore we do not want to be left behind. The reform cannot be done by a few people or people who oppose it; the institution has to do it. First of all we must accept the idea of re-organisation. Then we have to choose the people who are able and willing to work towards it under the constraint of time and everyday stress. Change is inevitable; individuals must *mentally* accept it. We require individual participation, not a collective and imposed one. We must take into account the fact that stagnation and traditionalism has its adepts in all libraries and there are the partisans of “profession for profession’s sake” who lay blame on the diminution of rigour. These are difficulties that must be surmounted. Conservative behaviours can be important factors if they ensure the continuity of positive realities and respect local specificities. Their reabsorption increases efficiency. It is not enough to register ideas; clearly formulated ideas which promote reform must be presented and discussed. Long-term analyses including costs, professionals and mentalities, are required. The cooperation of the whole staff with their competences is necessary. The situation is favourable now for accelerating this stage: we can profit from the experiences of the partner-libraries visited by eliminating expensive intermediary stages. We can profit from their results. However, we should hold the option to reject the transfer of foreign experiences if they are not pertinent to our structure or incompatible with it. We should bear in mind that an institution can hope for a better organisation if there is action, quality, rigour, perseverance, performance and... people.

We must offer this chance to our institutions and our profession, leaning on competitiveness and working for it.

We must not be satisfied sitting at our desk and doing our “inherited” task meticulously and conscientiously; we must allow anybody to shake us in our faith that we do our work perfectly, no matter if it is useful or efficient. The idea that working with precision is professionalism and defends us from change is an illusion, an element of stagnation. Let us promote the discussion of innovative

ideas, their analysis and motivation, their selection and application. Let us not be afraid of the new; if we have an iota of truth to tell, let us transform it into a big truth. Let us proceed even if we are convinced that only a part of it will be accomplished.

We have learned to be open, lucid, to know in which century we live, to have high standards, to judge what else can we do, how can we do it better, relying on communication and the correct understanding of relations. This is the Western spirit we brought home and wish to disseminate around us.

These ideas probably seem too “revolutionary”. However, the fact that they exist and liberate spirits, initiate discussions, incite “mise B niveau” wishes in the profession, is positive. It is a component of “change”, a step towards directing re-organisation, pointing out “stoppages” and accelerating the process of clearing-away the cobwebs.

COLLABORATION / COMMUNICATION, NOT HARMFUL PROTOCOL - THIS IS AN IMPERATIVE FOR EVOLUTION

There is a growing consensus on the need for collaboration between library services, central services and branches, choosing and employing competent, cooperative people who are eager to build up far-reaching “files” stage by stage and detaching every little step. When these steps are pointed out, the ideas are lost in their “revolutionary” nature. They become more feasible and we hope that they will be more widely accepted.

Moral satisfaction and the socialisation of actions motivate people and make them more available.

Although libraries are essentially institutions for communication, there is a serious lack of collaboration between them. Lack of communication leads to the waste of initiatives and constructive enthusiasm. Alongside our French and Spanish colleagues we felt that hierarchal differentiation and the underlining

of the need for communication is itself of value. To save and use this value is a means of establishing our development, if not a duty. However, it is not enough to speak eloquently about values; we must also enter these values.

We thought that modernisation meant isolation or the individualisation of activities, but we found out that on the contrary, it compelled us to cooperate and even humanise. Beyond the need for collaboration there was a wish to cooperate with our colleagues. Our success depends on positive action and thinking and the competent utilisation of professionalism.

Communication changes the relations between individuals and those between individuals and the organisation. It is a way to know the potential of the institution; it allows us to assume a consistent attitude towards these values and adopt a communication strategy. The latter can be concreted in the dynamics between the communication of a project and the project of communication, exteriorly and interiorly. They become parts of the general communication policy of the institution.

WE MUST BE A “TEAM”, NOT THE SUM OF “N PEOPLE”

At the end of the training the trainees as well as the coordinators and foreign partners made global and individual evaluations. Every trainee obtained a competence certificate in the field of his activities. This proves the efficiency of the mobility chapter of the Program and makes our libraries fortunate enough to have a compact, active, able nucleus willing to direct the progress in work and organisation and to create a common dynamism in the world of information.

This nucleus is called “a task force and action group” in librarianship terminology: “a number of people gathered for a special objective proposed by the organisation, who have the ability to organise and have professional commitment, willing and able to propel inner relations and to determine the success of the proposed action.”

It is necessary to organise such teams because libraries became very complex institutions. They are more than mere technical services of acquisition, processing and making available documents; they are living organisations which change permanently and adapt themselves to the requirements of the information society. This multitude of complex problems can no more be solved by a single individual. The group is that which lives the inner life of the institution. It deals with attitudes and behaviours, collects, arranges, evaluates and uses simple, real and practical ideas and relieves its members from responsibility and tempers aggressivity. It ensures cohesion and motivation because it has a special view of people and situations; it encourages the wish to enrich the spirit of the freedom of thinking and action and the wish for knowledge and professional satisfaction.

A well-organised, balanced and dynamic group will be able to promote analysis, development and the recognition - sooner or later - of the need for formation.

INITIAL FORMATION - PERMANENT FORMATION

The concepts of “initial formation - permanent formation” are no longer a novelty in the professional language of librarians. The framework, the structure of organisation, their consequence and content and the motivation of the staff to meet the needs of formation is not yet satisfying.

We know from our experiences that this type of activity has the precedence, because any success is based on performance and professionalism.

Information on the latest news is more succesful if it has a simple, friendly form (as compared to a sophisticated, academic course). Every library must have a permanently updated “centre of information”, a “training hall”, a pleasant place for professional discussions. A librarian who has the responsibility to follow these activities is the guarantor of the creation and preservation of an adequate professional atmosphere.

Although we must not avoid the question of costs (note the financial efforts of multiplying documents, the time necessary for preparing these documents, freight rate, etc.) they should not be a reason for the rejection of training. The advantages cannot be measured in quantities; the notion of profit (by rejecting or avoiding formation) is false even or mainly because of the existing constraints. When we invest in modernisation we must form and maintain competence which will capitalise modernisation. By getting used to “learn” we will adapt to the needs and professional life.

CONCLUSIONS

We have synthetised the aspects, content and the professional benefits of the Tempus II program and we are convinced that we have the approval of our colleagues who participated in this program. Thanks to the participants and the efforts of those who organised our reception and programs, it was successful. The environment, the reception, the hospitality, the accomodation, the grouping of activities to avoid dispersion and distances, the written handouts, the friendly atmosphere of the places we visited and the thoughtfulness of the hosts all made our stays very pleasant. The content of activities, the high professionalism of the staff who led the training, the general and particular interest of the participants and the dynamic dialogue enriched our knowledge and abilities. We hope that these will become known, acknowledged and applied to concrete situations.