

AUTOMATION AND MODERNISATION IN THE “LUCIAN BLAGA” CENTRAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, CLUJ

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BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE LIBRARY

The “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library is the greatest university library in Romania. It is not only an encyclopaedic, didactic but also a museum library. Its stock of 3.626.787 volumes (there are books from every field) shows the size as well as the value of its collections. It has medieval documents from the 16th century, manuscripts, incunabula, old Romanian books (1508-1830), books printed in Transylvania, rare books from famous European printing houses.

The “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library consists of a central library with 15 services and 23 branches. These services are provided by a group of 219 persons (editors, librarians with higher education degrees, librarians with high school qualifications, computer operators, economists, technical and administrative staff.)

AUTOMATION OF THE LIBRARY

In the era of worldwide automation of libraries an enthusiastic group of librarians founded the **Laboratory of Informatics** in 1992. It had trained staff and an At 386 computer as well as a borrowed PC Xt computer. This group tried to convince the management and the library staff of the efficiency of computerised activity. Their aim was to implement an integrated library system that could be adapted to the conditions of the library. The initiation was difficult but we were eager to succeed.

There is a favourable *psychological* attitude towards automation and modernisation in our institution and in the librarianship profession in general. However, we have real difficulties in persuading librarians that automation and modernisation implies a change in *mentality* and organisation as well. We have had financial problems too.

The staff of the Laboratory of Informatics are engaged in training library staff, to teach them to use computers in library activities and to build up the on-line catalogue.

Theoretically, the automation project consists of the following stages:

- automation of the process of cataloguing publications in the Central library; the access of readers to the on-line catalogue
- automation of branch libraries
- connecting the branches to the central unit
- completion of the on-line catalogue by retroconversion

The first stage was the analysis of library services followed by collecting information about library integrated systems. We had to take into account that our library has a traditional, branch system of organisation. Our options concerning the direct adaptability of software as well as the modification of the "inherited" system of organisation were limited. Therefore we had two parallel systems at the beginning: the traditional and the computerised one. We focussed on the following activities:

1. Acquisition of equipment

- specifying the necessary equipment
- drawing up lists of acquisition
- acquisition from companies
- testing and putting the equipment into action
- setting up the network: connecting the cataloguing, periodicals, acquisition, exchange, borrowing and bookkeeping services
- installing network cards
- installing computers in the different services

-configuring network cards with prom boot

The computer network of our library has a bus-type architecture, it uses Etherlink 3Com network cards and a coaxial cable of 10Mb/s. We use Ethernet protocol.

2. Software installations

3. Characteristics of the implemented library system

The implemented library system is VUBIS 3.2.

In order to introduce this system there were meetings with Dutch specialists. We studied the methods of using this system. We informed the purveyor of our needs and tried to repair deficiencies.

The installed modules are: acquisitions, cataloguing, periodical control, circulation, OPAC, control system - only the modules of cataloguing, circulation, OPAC and control system can be used.

The VUBIS program raises some problems which lead to functional disorders. The acquisition and installation of this system was done by the management of the library without asking the advice and the expertise of the specialists in our laboratory.

We paid special attention to the OPAC module: the system leads to a menu; all the options are shown on the screen whereas the data the readers must introduce are reduced to a minimum; there are also explanatory and guiding messages (help).

VUBIS is a multilingual system: the access to OPAC can be done in either English, French or Romanian.

The VUBIS program was also used in the automation of some operation that are considered belonging especially to the Public Relation Department of the still traditional structure of our library. These operations are the records of borrowed books and the circulation of collections (stock).

The main problem with the VUBIS integrated system are:

- lack of complete documentation
- Romanian diacritical signs cannot be used
- menus can be used only in English, French and Dutch

-there are options that do not work yet (they are still in a stage of processing)

-UNIMARC formats cannot be used for exchange of information between libraries with different software

Our library consists of a main library centre and several branches; the processing of information is done by the main library. The branches cannot be connected to the on-line catalogue (there is a lack of modems, computers and of more VUBIS users because of financial problems). Therefore traditional library cards must be kept in use. The program does not allow output on library cards of standard format.

4. The PRO-CITE 2.2 program has been installed to create bibliographical databases. Important works have been computerised:

-*Contributions to Botany 1931-1994* (1087 records)

-*Publications of the Hungarian-Jewish Literary Society (1895-1994)* (543 records)

-*Foreign Publications in the Central University Library, Cluj* (2600 records)

-*Scientific Works of Cluj University Professors 1987-1992* (approx. 10000 records)

-*Critical References in 1986 and 1987* (5594 records)

Indexes of periodicals:

-*Studies and Research in Biology. Zoology - Animal Biology (1948-1994)* (2061 records)

-*Studies and Research in Biology. Botany - Plant Biology (1948-1994)* (1757 records)

-*Revue roumaine de biologie. Series botanique - biologie vegetale (1956-1994)*

Besides these there are works still in processing stage and works that are being recorded:

-*Catalogue of Elzevirian Theses in Transylvania* (425 records)

Thematic Bibliographic Indexes of Periodicals:

-Studia. Biology (1957-1995)

-Revue roumaine de geologie (1957-1994)

-Studies and Research in Geology (1944-1994)

-Bibliography of Hungarian Studies and Books in Social Sciences published in Romania (1944-1994)

5. The **International Exchange Service** has also been automated (in FoxPro 2.6). In the present circumstances this department is very important as it assures a substantial “information income”. The following operations have been automated: compiling partners; records and the records of sent / received books and periodicals; drawing up lists for sending packets, lists sent along with packets, labels for packets; drawing up lists for the allocation of received publications; bringing databases up-to-date for allocation points (departments, branches) and the completion of this database (at the end of the year), by the staff of each branch, with inventory number, field and language; drawing up discount lists.

Because of the dysfunction of the VUBIS program our **Laboratory of Informatics** had to develop a program for the **Catalogue and Records of Acquisitions** which allowed to a certain extent the concept and development of a transparent policy of acquisition, even if there are still several obstacles (of mentality and competence) to structuring and conceiving such a policy.

The main resources of the automation process have been:

-The budget. The Cluj Central University Library belongs to the Ministry of Education in Romania; its budget depends solely on the sums allocated to it from the central budget.

Besides these there are resources coming from the following programs:

-Tempus Jep 3764: Upgrading the Library and Information Sciences in Romania, the Netherlands and Belgium - we entered this in the second year of its activity alongside the University Library in Bucharest. The University of Antwerp and University of Amsterdam were our foreign partners whereas the university libraries in Iași and Bucharest were our partners within the

country. Due to this program our library received new hardware (a Server, 4 computers, Vubis integrated software) and scholarships in the Netherlands and Belgium:

-Tempus Jep 9596: Restructuring University Libraries - Academic Libraries Management, France, 1996 - for three years; foreign partners: BIU, CNUSC, CRDP Montpellier, BU Barcelona; partners within the country: BCU and BUT Iași, BU Sibiu. We received equipment (modems and CD toner) and scholarships.

-The Soros Foundation for an Open Society

program - equipment for Internet (computers + modems) - for 2 years

program - equipment for the branches

program - the Librarianship College

-Phare (in cooperation with the University) - a project for connecting the branches, setting up open-access reading rooms, retroconversion

All these programs aim at supporting the renewal of institutions and of the profession of librarians. They help with equipment and, mainly, with “know-how” and “philosophy”. Concerning the compatibility and applicability of these mentalities and procedures, there are still many difficulties, partly financial, partly of mentality and competence.

In order to overcome these difficulties there must be a systematic cooperation between professionals in Romanian university libraries and the international community of librarians.

The Technical University in Cluj was connected to the **Internet** in 1996. This is very important since we are the only library in the country that has access to the CUSTOM DIALOG databases by Internet.

In order to judge the achievements and difficulties of automation correctly and realistically in a library like that of the Cluj University, we have to take into account that there was no systematic and specialised bibliological school in Romania before 1989, neither was there a forum for training professionals in the field of

informatics, a forum oriented towards the automation of library activities.

Naturally, these facts had to be synchronised with the whole process of training and orienting specialists. These facts determined the concept of new structures that aim at the training of specialists as well as the concept of Library Associations. They are also responsible for the fact that our Laboratory could not receive permanent *professional* support from the Association of University Libraries in Romania.

Therefore I think that professional relationships between libraries and librarians in Romania and other countries should be extended beyond the frames and structures of “great” Programs and Associations. They should be “personal” instead and should involve direct contact between different libraries.

The effective presentation of issues linked to the process of automation and modernisation of the greatest Romanian university library are extremely important in my opinion. It might contribute hopefully to a more detailed articulation of professional and institutional relations.