

## ROMANIAN LIBRARIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION?

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I had the honour of receiving a visiting scholarship in the period May-June 1999 for Karlsruhe University Library and the Art and Technology Media Centre Karlsruhe. I also participated in the 89<sup>th</sup> Congress of the German Librarians in Freiburg in Breisgau, visited the Freiburg University Library and the “Baden” Library of Baden-Württemberg.

I think that the knowledge and experience gained during this visit is valuable for the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library and other libraries in Romania.

### **I.Regional cooperation**

The 89<sup>th</sup> Congress of German Librarians on 25-28 May with the motto “No barriers in the future” called upon regional cooperation which is an absolute necessary stage in the process of European integration. It is based on the existence of a global infrastructure of information on a national and international level. University libraries must fulfil certain institutional, professional and technical criteria in order to be included in this network. The relations between the Association of Romanian Education Librarians (ABIR), the National Association of Librarians in Romanian Public Libraries (ANBBPR), IFLA and library organisations in other countries as well as the active participation in international manifestations in the field could become a valuable experience for libraries in Romania. Professional training, the purchase of new software and modern electronic equipment together with quality management are compulsory. This paper should give rise to at least one question: when will Romanian libraries become part of the European Union?

## **II. The University Library in Karlsruhe** **(<http://www.ubka.uni-karlsruhe.de>)**

The University Library in Karlsruhe was founded in 1840, together with the oldest German polytechnic. In 1944 in an airraid it lost half of its collections, approx. 330,000 volumes.

At present the library has a collection of 880,000 volumes of scientific literature and 3229 periodicals, an important collection of state standards, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, bibliographies. 17% of its collections are on open shelves.

It has two branch libraries and coordinates the activity of 150 institute, faculty and department libraries, which doubles the number of its publications. Its new building, a 13-storey "tower of books" completed in 1966, with 7 levels of storage place is one of the most imposing buildings in the university campus.

16,000 students and 2,000 professors and researchers use the library services which is also open to the EUCOR universities in France and Switzerland and every inhabitant of Germany.

The University Library in Karlsruhe is a state institute subordinated to the Karlsruhe University. It has to come up to the standards of the university and has to be content with a limited annual budget, justifying the efficiency of its spending. It supplements its own funds by fines, photocopying and printing services, microfilm copying and enlargement, inter-library lending.

BU Ka is one of the top German university libraries, being one of the electronically most developed libraries in the country. It has thematic online databanks and CD-roms, a wide range of electronic services of data processing (EDV) and Internet.

The internal projects and regional cooperation are the strong points of the library. The Karlsruher Virtueller Katalog KVK is an exceptional accomplishment: it has a metainterface capable of searching the webpages of libraries and bookshops all over the world, containing more than 60 millions of volumes.

The Fernleiheprojekt is a new, unique project in Germany initiated by the BU Ka. It is a long-distance loan project which involves scientific libraries in Baden-Württemberg, Bayern and Sachsen. This project links the on-line loan systems of each library

so that users can quickly get information about the availability of books.

The BU Ka participates in EUCOR, a regional cooperation project with wonderful results: the users of eight libraries in Germany, France and Switzerland, situated in the Upper Rhine zone, have equal rights in EUCOR member libraries. The BU Ka also cooperates with the Informatics Faculty which has study projects and diploma works with topics closely connected to library activities. The library maintains close relations with the administration of the Karlsruhe University, the local and county councils.

It has members in national and international library organisations and participates in all important manifestations in the library world, including offers from certain companies that specialize in librarianship and agents of electronic products. BU Ka strives to become an elite library. Professionalism, initiative, creativity, the wish of librarians to be very good, internal and international cooperation and the modern management are the keys to their success. The library is trying to obtain funds in order to extend its buildings: it hopes for architecture and equipment which would be worthy of the third millenium.

On its 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary the library surprised its readers by introducing the 'non-stop Library'. This service is based on the use of a security and registering system with self-operated book-loan and return, connected to the EDV system.

### **III. Parallels between the BU Ka and the "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library**

BU Ka is a well-organized library which uses its human and material resources efficiently. Without benefiting from spectacular investments it proves that "if you really want, you can". It successfully fulfills its main function which is the purchase of literature and information for the users and it is an example to be followed in internal and international cooperation.

The "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library is the largest university library in South-Eastern Europe (it has 3.5 mil-

lion volumes) and resembles German county libraries in that it holds a legal deposit right, it has a documentary service, valuable special collections, a Book Preservation Laboratory and a Photo Laboratory. Librarians' works published in various speciality publications, the journal of the library (*Philobiblon*) and the studies made within the Sociology Cabinet show the creative and research potentials of this library. The Central University Library provides readers with databases on CD-ROMs, an online OPAC catalogue beginning with 1996, InfoTrac, Engineering, electronic periodicals, Internet services with e-mail access and document delivery. Beginning with 1999, it has used the Aleph 500 integrated software. However, there is still a lot to be done in terms of regional cooperation, acquisition policy, information for library users as well as purchasing equipment. The increase of efficiency in using human and material resources by modernizing the organization charter of the institution, the creation of a powerful group of electronic specialists, the continuing computerization of the library, further training for librarians, professional cooperation on a high level between university libraries and library associations in Romania and Europe and participation in cooperation programs are the priorities.

A year after my return from Germany is a good time to evaluate what could be accomplished commencing from the ideas gained during my visit to German libraries. Taking into account the lack of important methods of information in our library, information dissemination that should be on the list of services of any university library, I was thinking about an overall project which would include collaboration and cooperation on the level of libraries and regions. The aim of this project is the European integration of the "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library and of other Romanian university libraries.

The International Exchange and Loan Department of the library where I work, was equipped with the help of a donation from Germany. We initiated the Leonardo exchange project of the EU: "Levelling up the services of Romanian university libraries" until March 2001. The work-group formed of librarians in the Central University Library worked passionately, even in extra

time. It was difficult to find a suitable external partner and to receive information about the requirements of the Leonardo da Vinci program. We decided to cooperate with the University Library in Siena (Italy) which is an electronically well-equipped library and also promptly answered our request for cooperation. The beneficiaries of the project are the University Library in Timișoara and the Technical University Library in Bucharest. A group of 7 librarians is going to visit the University Library in Siena. The objectives of the project are: the training of document delivery specialists and the development of skills in using the Aleph 500. These objectives are in line with the new requirements of the Document-Delivery Department of the library and the purchase of the Aleph 500 software.

On a local level, a work-group has been formed of representatives of the important libraries in Cluj (the Library of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy, the Cluj County Library, the Technical University Library) to participate in the *Libraries in Cluj Webpage* project. In the first stage the participants aim at attaining the following objectives, without any financial support other than the help of the “Babeș-Bolyai” University and other important institutions in the town:

- the index of libraries in Cluj with links to their own webpages
- the index of catalogues of Cluj libraries with direct access on OPACs
- the map of Cluj showing the libraries in the town
- links to the webpages of certain important institutions in the town
- complementary actions – levelling up libraries and their staff from a technical and professional point of view

This stage is in progress, and we hope that it will be accomplished at the end of this year. The second stage deals with the creation of an interface of searching the webpages of Cluj libraries with parallel enquiry of OPACs and the common (shared) display of results, a partitioned catalogue of Cluj libraries and the map of Cluj with keyword search. This involves important financial means for the creation of the search interface and the

purchase of a linking software as libraries in Cluj work with different softwares (Aleph, TINLIB, ALICE). We contacted foundations interested in offering financial support for this project until 2002.

On a national level, encouraged by the Leonardo National Agency, we decided to run a 3-year pilot project. At present we are in search for three external partners. Five Romanian university libraries, users of the Aleph software will be the beneficiaries of this project. The objectives of the project are: the creation of a common and a partitioned catalogue of Romanian university libraries. This is technically possible because Romanian university libraries are already connected by the ROEDUNET network.

On a regional level, we would like to create a Romanian-Hungarian catalogue containing the catalogue of the Cluj Central University Library, other Romanian university libraries and a Hungarian university library, a user of the Aleph software. We would like to extend cooperation to other services such as inter-library loan, improving the exchange of publications, etc. We are presently looking for Hungarian partners.

We also rely on the active participation of the “Babeş-Bolyai” University in cooperation agreements with other European universities, such as those in the Danube region. We are going to apply for funds within EU programs.

This overall project is closely connected to the main purpose of Romanian university libraries, namely, the supply of literature and information for higher education and research. It is a step towards European and world integration.