

Present-Day Situation Of Library Statistics In Romania (Central University Libraries)

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Previous considerations

After almost 12 years of development of the Romanian information society, we have found ourselves in the stage of conceptual clarifications and delimitations in the matter of library statistics. Each library in the past elaborated its own statistics regarding the size of its collections and their usage rate, by recording the frequency of the volumes consulted; the number of registered readers and the frequency they attend the library; the rate of reading-room usage and home loan, etc.

Statistics were – and probably are – usually carried out on a daily, quarterly, and yearly basis, out of inertia and (job) obligation, without the conviction that these statistics, provided they were elaborated in a unitary and correct way, may serve as a basis in the decisive process of any library. Practically, nobody understood the reason these statistics were elaborated – they can be used for the comparison of results obtained and objectives established –, nor who their internal or external beneficiaries were (the National Statistics Committee – for the Statistics Annual; the Ministry of National Education – as a form of control, external communication, and evaluation of library activities; UNESCO – for the connection of Romanian libraries to international information systems, etc.).

Over the past years, there was an attempt to use statistical data unofficially for different comparisons, horizontal (between similar libraries) and vertical (e.g., within results of one library in the last two years).

The need for the evaluation of development in time, of the periodic comparison of interior results, as well as the comparison with libraries of the same category has determined university libraries to propose collaboration with the initiating team of the AROPL-2000 project.

The **AROPL-2000** national program (Achievements in Romanian Public Libraries), initiated by the NALPLR (National Association of Librarians and Public Libraries of Romania) and sustained by the

Ministry of Culture has solved a problem extremely important: the evaluation of library activities by specific means.

The program has monitored library activity, has established the statistical data that needs to be collected manually or by an automated system, has analyzed tendencies, has proposed standards or regulations which are possible to be achieved in Romania, etc.

The research had at its basis two international standards: **ISO 2789** – for library statistics, and **ISO 11620** – for library performance indicators.

Another objective of the program was to carry out a model of NATIONAL STATISTICS, which would contribute to:

- Evaluation of library activity as related to European management;
- Justification of necessary resources (human, information, material, financial);
- Estimation of tendencies;
- Facilitation of comparisons;
- Calculation of performance indicators;
- Harmonization of Romanian standards and regulations with European ones, etc.

The fact that Romanian libraries of any type had to be confronted with an acute lack of relevant statistical data, as well as with incoherent collecting, processing, analysis and interpretation of the statistical data elaborated on the level of individual libraries, has determined, amongst others, the need to apply also the **LIBECON 2000 Program** in our country. This program was initiated by the European Union through Committee DG XIII and it intends to carry out a statistical evidence of the monitored countries (currently 38) in order to better inform decisive factors in politics and administration and to create a virtual community (**Webstate**), which uses library statistics from European countries.

Romania is included in the LIBECON program with all six types of libraries (national, academic, university, specialized, public, and school). The ROAPL 2000 Committee became involved on the level of public libraries, and since 2001, through the Statistics Commission of the F.A.L.R. (Federation of the Associations of Librarians from Romania), the annual statistics reports have been completed according to the same model in university libraries and the Romanian National Library.

Library statistics – between conceptual and processing clarifications, and presentation modalities in university libraries

In fact, university libraries also had to define, collect, analyze, interpret, and use according to standards statistical data, in the interest of management and efficient library activities.

Before being included in the LIBECON program, librarians from university libraries elaborated statistics in the traditional (manual) and automated way, both for reading-rooms with service from closed deposits, and free shelf access rooms. They were also concerned with factors that influence the statistics of reader-related activity: opening hours, reading-room capacity, relevance of book collections, number of available copies per reader; as well as the analysis and relevance of the information obtained from the library forms used in reader-related activity: request forms, loan forms, reader registry, annual statistics reports (for the Department of Statistics) etc.

Convinced of the importance of national and international library statistics comparison for recording and evaluation of progress or its absence, the application of a unified statistics form was adopted (proposed by the F.A.L.R. Statistics Commission) in university libraries, based on a protocol.

Aiming to obtain current information on the condition of university libraries, the ASLR (Association of School Librarians in Romania) decided, through the proposal of its Cluj branch, on the 12th National Conference in October 25-27, 2001, to collect and process statistical data and information referring to the activity of university libraries. The decision is in concordance with Governmental Ordinance no. 9/August 7, 1992 (modified and completed by Governmental Ordinance no. 83/1999) referring to the organization of public statistics, art. 13, par. 1(c).

Through the protocol of collaboration signed with the state university libraries of Romania, the confidentiality of transmitted statistical data and information is assured, and these are used for completing general information about the situation of university libraries at the end of each year. The material prepared will serve as a support for the evaluation of library activity, for making comparisons, and for the participation in European programs of library statistics.

The obligations of the parties have clearly been stated in a ***Protocol of Collaboration***.

Still, the results obtained in the first year of the application of the unified statistics form (2001) were not completely satisfactory. Some problems faced in the course of research:

- The return of statistics forms was only 50 % (out of 51 libraries, only 26 answered), although around 31 indicated their intent to answer (through telephone/fax, or emails sent in request for explanations);
- Not all the fields were completed, or were incorrectly completed, for several reasons: terms wrongly understood (e.g., active/registered users); the relation of some libraries with the financial services of the Universities which they are subordinated to were not quite cordial, and therefore the financial data of these libraries was unable to be obtained; the ambiguity of certain fields (e.g., target population – from some libraries only the number of registered students was reported, the faculty and academics were omitted)
- The completion of essential fields was omitted (e.g., the frequency of loaned documents), partly because of internal regulations (e.g., the financial fields in the case of the Military Academy).

In order to facilitate the accomplishment of statistical comparisons, university libraries were grouped into categories:

- a. Central university libraries
- b. Technical university libraries
- c. Medical university libraries
- d. Arts/Sports/Music university libraries
- e. Military university libraries
- f. Agriculture university libraries

Since only central university library data was completed for the year 2001, a comparative analysis of these was performed.

The comparative statistical situation of central university libraries for the year 2001: conclusions and prospects.

The analysis of the statistical reports of central university libraries in Romania for the year 2001 allowed comparisons of the context of libraries, as well as the staff, collections, and users of the libraries. Performance indicators were calculated, applicable in public libraries as well, and the results obtained were expressed graphically, through histograms and circular diagrams.

The comparative statistics of the data reported by the four libraries of Bucharest, Iași, Timișoara, and Cluj-Napoca focused on the following aspects:

- I. Active users / Frequency of users
- II. Collections, total / Documents on loan
- III. Acquisitions, total / Acquisition expenses, total
- IV. Institutional financing / Budget financed current expenses, total
- V. Staff, total / Staff expenses

The possible “hierarchies” made on the basis of these aspects are relative, nevertheless they have the possibility of delineating an image over university libraries for the year 2001 (attachment #1: comparative graphics).

The graphic presentation of the data extracted from the statistical reports of the year 2001 has highlighted for example:

- Central University Library Bucharest records the largest number of documents on loan, in proportion with the number of collections;
- Central University Library Timișoara has allocated the largest funds for document acquisitions;
- Central University Library Cluj-Napoca holds the largest number of publications and of active users, etc.

Of the 17 performance indicators calculated for university libraries, there were indicators comparatively presented, showing:

1. The context of the library:
 - Current expenses *per capita*
 - Staff expenses
 - Acquisition expenses
 - Fund expenses *per capita*
2. The staff
 - % of specialized staff
3. The library collections
 - Documents in stacks *per capita*
 - Stacks renewal rate
4. Users and library usage
 - Documents on loan per active user
 - Expense per active user

Although all the 17 (respectively, 26) performance indicators were calculated, only 9 of these were considered relevant for graphic presentation. The results of the other indicators were presented in table form (attachment #2).

As this is the first year that this set of indicators has been calculated for central university libraries, we do not pretend that these indicators are relevant for this type of libraries. We propose, in future, to establish an additional set of indicators, applicable for specific situations of university libraries (e.g., institutional financing, use of electronic information, media, etc.).

An element extremely important in the calculation of indicators is the “target population”, which in the case of university libraries is largely made up of the students, faculty, and academics of the given university center. This element is present in the calculation of 14 of the 17 indicators.

Conclusions

- The statistical data provides relevant indicators regarding the organization and usage of library resources;
- Statistical indicators offer comparison possibilities for different aspects;
- The comparisons based on the use of statistical data leads to the identification of positive tendencies, but also of certain malfunctions in library activities;
- The performance of libraries cannot be evaluated based on simple statistics. A set of indicators defined according to professional standards requires to be adapted to the personal requests and conditions of Romanian libraries.

Proposals for future considerations

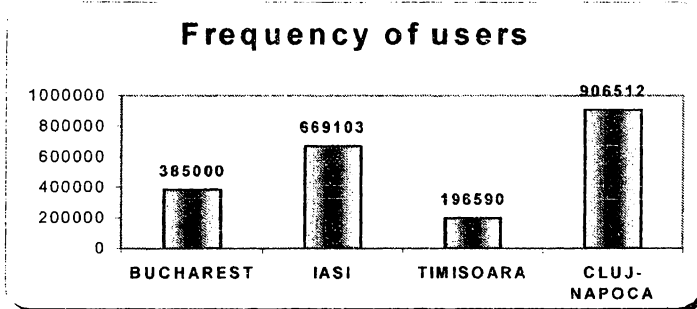
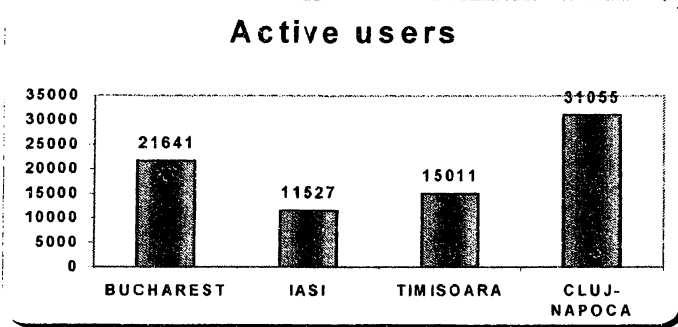
In order to improve statistics elaborated in Romanian university libraries, the following should be imposed:

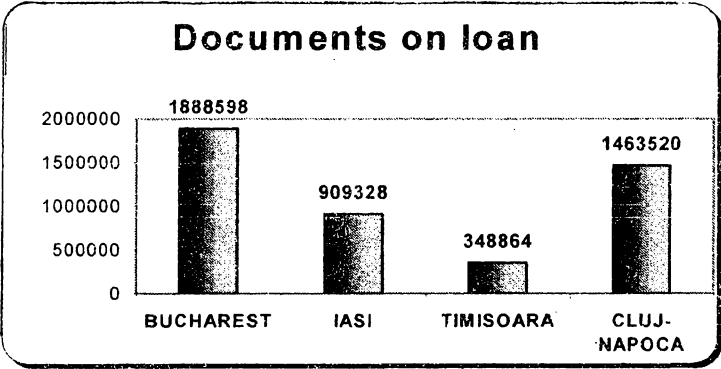
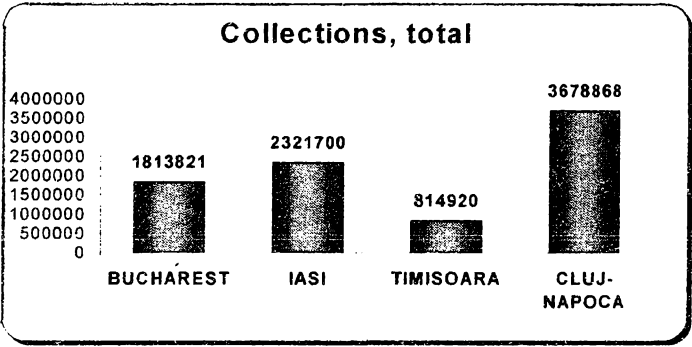
- Review and completion of the list of state and private university libraries;
- Modification and clarification of the fields of the unified statistics form, reported by each library;

- The establishment of a set of indicators relevant for university libraries, according to (revised) professional standards;
- The periodic analysis of indicators for correct decision-taking in library management.

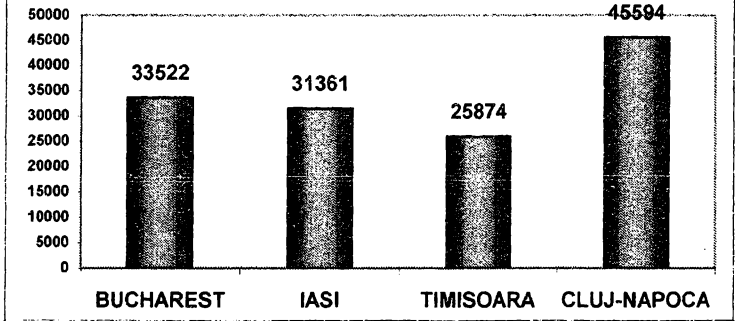
Attachment #1

**Comparative statistics
Central University Libraries in 2001**



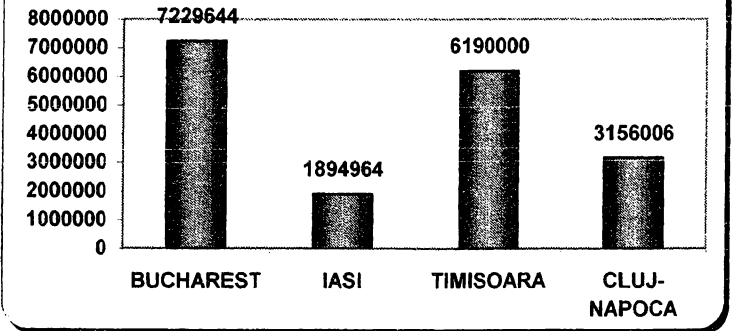


Acquisitions, total

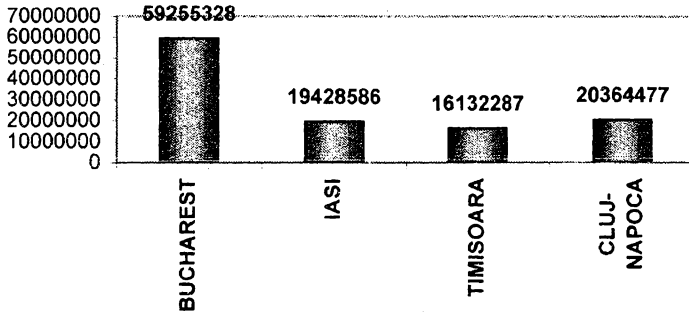


Thousand lei

Acquisition expenses, total

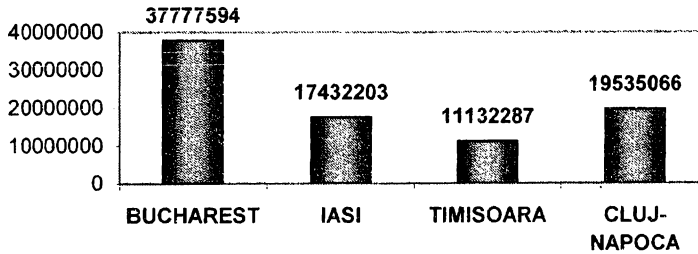


Institutional financing

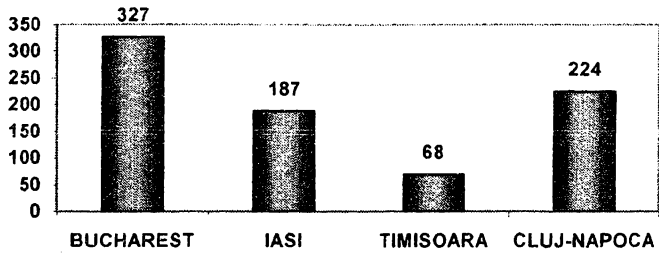


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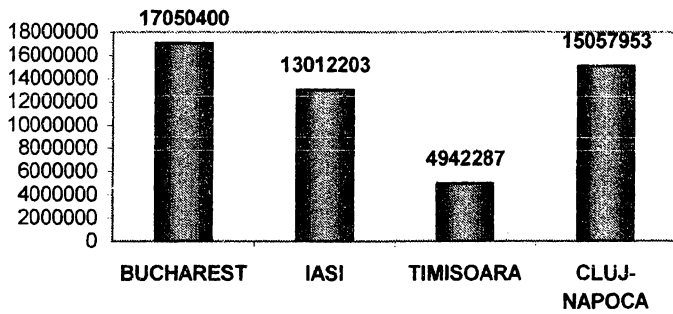
Budget financed current expenses, total



Staff, total



Staff expenses



Thousand lei

Attachment #2

**Performance indicators for central university libraries in Romania
for the year 2001**

No crt	Performance indicator	Central University Libraries			
		Bucharest	Iasi	Timisoara	Cluj- Napoca
1.	Current expenses <i>per capita</i>	151110	290530	202405	195350
2.	Staff expenses				
	a. <i>per capita</i>	68202	216870	89860	150580
	b. % of staff expenses	45.13	74.64	44.39	77.08
3.	Acquisition expenses				
	a. <i>per capita</i>	28918	31582	112545	31560
	b. % of acquisition ex- penses	19.13	10.87	55.6	16.15
4.	Fund expenses <i>per capita</i>	85911	33273	90909	1612
5.	Automation/facility expenses				
	a. <i>per capita</i>	0	0	0	1612
	b. % of automation/ facility expenses	0	0	0	100
6.	a. Staff per 1000 inhabitants	1.3	3.11	1.23	2.24
	b. % of specialized staff	79.82	68.98	77.94	78.12
7.	Documents in stacks <i>per capita</i>	7.25	38.7	14.8	36.7
8.	Documents added to stacks				
	a. <i>per capita</i>	0.13	0.52	0.47	0.45
	b. per 1000 inhabitants	130	520	470	450
9.	Titles added to stacks <i>per capita</i>	0.03	0.39	0.09	0.16
10.	Additional copies per additional titles	3.63	1.35	4.84	2.8
11.	Stacks renewal rate	54.1	74.03	31.5	80.68
12.	Registered users as % of population	0	37.5	0	65.02

13.	Active users as % of population	8.66	19.21	27.29	31.05
14.	Expense per active user	1745.64	1512.29	741.6	629.04
15.	Documents on loan				
	a. <i>per capita</i>	7.55	15.15	6.34	14.63
	b. per active user	87.26	78.88	23.24	47.12
	c. per employee	5776	4863	5130	6534
16.	Library attendance (frequency)				
	a. <i>per capita</i>	1.54	11.15	3.57	9.06
	b. per active user	17.79	58.04	13.09	29.19
	c. per day	1510*	2624	771	3555
17.	Expense per visit	98124	26053	56627	21550