

The Community Information Center (C.I.C.)
Or
The Library – Beyond Education And Entertainment

Georgeta DODU
“Octavian Goga” County Library, Cluj-Napoca

“The present is a period of great
entrepreneurial ferment, where old
and staid institutions suddenly have
to become very limber.”

Peter F. Drucker¹

The unprecedented changes of the last decades have forced organizations to face decisional dilemmas that are hard to surmount. The survival, marginalization, or disappearance of an organization as a system is determined in the end by the speed of reactions to external stimuli and the capacity of adaptation.

The representation of a basic model of an open system illustrates the fact that it receives inputs from its environment, converts them into outputs, and then frees them back into the external surroundings.² The evolution of this model emphasizes the effects of freeing outputs into the exterior,³ distinguishing thus the active role that open systems play in the interaction with the environment.

The library – essentially an open system – receives “information from the exterior, transforms it and places it at the disposal of the social environment wherein it functions.”⁴ This definition of library brings into relief its role of recipient, catalyzer and information transmitter. Other valences of the roles taken up by a library result from the analysis of the inter-dependence of functional models within the framework of an

¹ Drucker, Peter F. *The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to Our Changing Society*. New York: Harper & Row, 1979: 177.

² Cole, G. A. *Management: Theory and Practice*. London: DP Publications Ltd., 1990: 69.

³ Brophy, Peter, and Kate Coulling. *Quality Management for Information and Library Managers*. Hampshire: Aldershot, Aslib Gower, [1996]: 140.

⁴ Stueart, Robert D. and Barbara E. Moran. *Management pentru biblioteci și centre de informare* (Original Title: *Management for Libraries and Information Centers*). Bucharest: Romanian National Library, Romanian Librarians and Public Libraries Association (ABBPR), 1998: 241.

information and documentation system: establishment of the information requirements, identification, collection, and processing of information sources, organization of informational funds, and client service.¹

Libraries are going through an acute identity crisis at present, inadequately reacting to the changes that occur in a rhythm more and more lively around them, and putting up with a role specific for other times and expectancies.² Analysts share different opinions about the ways to overcome this crisis, extreme theories – according to which libraries are about to disappear – being accompanied by views saying that libraries have to radically change into virtual libraries in order to survive.

Information society permanently generates a series of provocations and opportunities never seen before. Today, "... knowledge, the source of the highest quality power of all, gains more importance with every fugitive nano-second"³, and libraries – the *par excellence* guardians and transmitters of knowledge – could be expected to use this reality, refusing to be marginalized by competing organizations.

The last decades which brought permanent change in all fields did not indulge libraries or librarians, when finding them unprepared. The decades to come, in case libraries may fail to adopt a more flexible and alert, or even – at the superior management level – entrepreneurial attitude, will leave them no hope for the future. ...

"Libraries are enterprises that have to function well and efficiently"⁴, have to adapt to the competitive situation on the market, have to learn from other organizations⁵, and have to orient themselves toward the clients, in order to satisfy and anticipate their requirements.

¹ Banciu, Doina. *Sisteme automatizate de informare și documentare* (Automated information and documentation systems). Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1997: 20.

² Stoica, Ion. *Criza în structurile infodocumentare. Sensuri și semnificații contemporane* (Crisis in info-documentary structures. contemporary meanings and significations). Constanța: Ex Ponto, 2001: 15.

³ Toffler, Alvin. *Powershift: Puterea în mișcare* (Moving Power, original title: Powershift). [Bucharest]: Antet, 1995: 467.

⁴ Stueart & Moran, op.cit. p. VIII.

⁵ Coffman, Steve. "Referințele așa cum sunt ele realizate de alții" (References as They are Created by Others). In *Biblioteconomie. Culegere de traduceri prelucrate* (Library Science. A Collection of Translations), 2 (2000): 16-22.; Scott, Kim Allen. "Belly Up to the Information Bar". In *American Libraries*, May 2001: 70-71.

They may surpass the present image crisis by providing quality services¹, using most efficiently the resources offered by the financing community.

“There is only one option left to us: to willingly transform our institutions, and ourselves so that we may face new realities”, says Alvin Toffler². A crucial step in this direction is the awareness of this crisis, even though insufficient to surpass it (especially if it is not a large-scale phenomenon). The constructive and planned change, with beneficial effects for the organizations, represents a complex process, which begins with the preparation for change, continues with the acceptance of change, and ultimately generates the engagement on the road of change³. In order for this process to be successful, it must happen on at least three levels: the level of structure, the level of human resources, and the level of technology, and it must make use of specific techniques to overpass the resistance to change.

In the case of libraries, changes on the level of structure presume the analysis of departments, of the modernity of the services offered, and the modifications imposed; changes on the level of human resources mainly consider the mentality of the librarian, and his/her transformation from a “*guardian of the temple*” into a “*navigator of knowledge*”⁴; and on the level of technology the changes presume the analysis of adequacy of existing techniques in the library as compared to the level of development reached in the field, and the requirements of specific users.

The basis of innovating public libraries, says Jens Thorhaug⁵, is constituted by the help it offers people in the knowledge and affirmation of their cultural identity, of their past, their affiliation group, and the direction they follow.

¹ Stoica, Ion, op.cit. 194.

² Toffler, Alvin. *Al treilea val* (Original title: *The Third Wave*), Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1983: 489.

³ Stueart & Moran, op.cit. 238.

⁴ Coravu, Robert. “De la Cerber la Ulise” (From Cerberus to Ulysses). In *Buletin ABIR* (The Bulletin of the Romanian Association of School Librarians), vol. 11, 1 (2000): 7-8.

⁵ Thorhaug, Jens. “Noi tendințe în bibliotecile publice scandinave” (New Tendencies in Scandinavian Public Libraries). In *Biblioteca publică o resursă pentru comunitate* (Public Library – A Community Resource). Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință; A.N.B.P.R. (The National Association of Romanian Public Libraries), 2000: 23.

The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto shows that the public library represents the local center of community information¹. Still a desideratum for Romanian public libraries, this idea brings forth the role of the public library as a defender of democracy². It has to offer all citizens the possibility to be informed, regardless of their social condition or special needs; the public library has to insure equal chances, being a guarantor of respecting democratic rights.

“The time has come for national leaders to perceive libraries as information centers that serve and empower the community and as institutions meant to provide access to information for all members of the society.”³

The orientation towards the individual as a central value of society – creator and beneficiary of knowledge – represents the access key of the library, and firstly of the public library to an important place among the organizations playing a major role in the millennium of information.

The positive attitude in approaching this opportunity and at the same time provocation implies an entrepreneurial attitude towards the services that the library may offer to the citizens. The efficiency of library services greatly depends on the superior managers’ awareness of the importance of such a situation (and on their ability to adequately use it) for the position it may gain among community institutions.

In the context of rapid changes, inherent in an information society, citizens are increasingly interested in last-minute information and its attainment in the shortest possible time. They are searching for useful information in their daily life in order to be able to take decisions in different situations, they wish to be offered diverse and high quality services, corresponding to their expectancies. At present, when to survive means to be well (and fast) informed, it is the informative function of all the functions of a library – cultural, informative, educational, social, and entertaining – that managers have to pay most attention to.

¹ UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994: 1.

² Tyckoson. David A. De la oameni pentru oameni: Cum ajută bibliotecile publice democrația (From People to People: How Public Libraries Help Democracy). In *Biblioteconomie. Culegere de traduceri prelucrate* (Library Science. A Collection of Translations), 2 (2001): 98.

³ Angheliescu, Hermina G.B. “Romanian Libraries Recover after the Cold War: The Communist Legacy and the Road Ahead”. In *Libraries & Culture. A Journal of Library History*. Volume 36, Number 1, Winter 2001, p. 249.

A modern service conceived to firstly serve the informative function of a public library is the community information service, the first of its kind in Romania – the Community Information Center–founded within the frameworks of the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library. The Cluj County Library has repeatedly proved its willingness to open up the ways for other public libraries in Romania, a suggestive example in this respect being its implication into the European project that finally led to the creation of this community information service.

History

The Community Information Center (C.I.C.) of the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library was created within the framework of a PHARE project of development of public library services: PLDP – Public Library Development Project. It extended to a period of 18 months, starting November 1995, and had a total budget of 286,888 ECU. Partners were libraries from Great Britain – Essex County Council Libraries, Holland – Nederlands Bibliotheek en Lektuur Centrum (NBLC), Greece – Veria Public Library, Hungary – Pest Megyei Könyvtár (Szentendre), and Romania – “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library.

Among the main objectives of the PLDP was the identification of the possibilities of public libraries in the countries associated with the European Union to assist the reform projects of governments and offer services to other institutions – universities, schools, hospitals, companies. The project aimed thus to develop the abilities and knowledge of the managers of public libraries from associated countries in Central and Eastern Europe, qualities needed for the initiation of modern services, with the direct purpose of defining, implementing, and developing such services in the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library, and Pest Megyei Könyvtár.

PLDP appreciated as outstandingly important the informative role of the public library, starting from the idea that individual and community needs can be satisfied by the effort of the library to form the habit of searching for information, and to educate the public to use the new services offered.

The impact and the positive results of offering new services in the two pilot-libraries mentioned above were to be made known and spread through a national program, under the auspices of a recognized

institution in the field, in order to generate an ampler process of change in the public libraries from the associated countries.

One of the first phases of the project in the “Octavian Goga County Library Cluj was a broad sociological research, taking place in the period of April 22 – May 19, 1996, undertaken with the aim to identify the interests of the Cluj community for new library services. The method used – indirect survey – employed two questionnaires: one for the users, and one for the non-users of library services. The research was done on an unaleatory sample of 2000 subjects, representing 8% of the users at that time of the majority of departments and branches of the library, as well as from two other public libraries in Cluj county: in the towns of Turda and Gherla. Similarly, the research also had the purpose of conducting a pilot study of the opinion of non-users or former users of the County Library services. The sample was made up of 500 subjects: dwellers of apartment buildings in the Grigorescu district – where the County Library has no branch, and the Mănăştur district – with the largest branch of the Library. The timeliness of offering new information services for the citizens was approached in two major aspects: a) the interest of users and non-users for these types of services, and b) their main fields of interest.

The research report was finalized on August 1, 1996 and it expressed the necessity to create an information service for the community, with a field of priority interest: social service. Although this domain did not top the list of interests – the order being: employment possibilities, professional improvement and re-training, medical care, recreation facilities, cultural information, social service– the report considered however, that there were some aspects that placed it above the others. First of all its broadness, as it contained information from other higher ranked domains as well (professional improvement and re-training, for instance); then the relative consensus of users and non-users in reckoning the importance of this field, and the large number of social categories (generally disadvantaged) that reinforced the need for information in this domain.¹

Keeping in mind the results of this sociological survey, the activity itself started to form an information service for the community, bearing the name Community Information Center, and focusing on three distinct directions:

¹ Király, Adriana. “Cercetarea intereselor utilizatorilor – etapă indispensabilă constituirii CIC” (Study of the Users’ Interests – A Phase Unavoidable for the Formation of the CIC). In *Biblioteca* (The Library) 7 (1997): 179-184.

1. contacting source-institutions and gathering information from these,
2. creating an electronic data-base,
3. promoting the new service of the County Library¹.

The working team – which profited from a stage of instruction in Great Britain, and courses held by Western specialists here in Cluj – was formed by human resources from two older departments of the library: the Bibliographic Service and the European Documentation Service.

Following the overview of a literature of social service, a database was created; librarians used the help of computer specialists from the Computer Laboratory, in order to create a Microsoft Access application². Similarly, a document fund was formed, from acquisitions, or book transfers from branch libraries.

The staff identified and classified the institutions for sources of information, established a collaboration protocol with these, and a questionnaire for data gathering. The team of 5 persons, having finished the fieldwork and examined the works of reference, gathered information from over 106 institutions that offer social services for the community. The information was introduced in the Access database.

Taking into account the future development of the service, the developed strategy put forth the necessity of the permanent research on the population's need of information, in order to gather and offer information from other fields of interest³. (It should be mentioned that the lack of strict borderlines between different fields enabled from the very beginning to collect and organize information from fields neighboring social services).

Meanwhile, major attention was given to the promotion of the new service, containing two main stages: 1. publicity for potential sources of information, with two target-markets: governmental organizations (GOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and 2. publicity for potential users. The means of promoting the new service

¹ Pervain, Augusta. "C.I.C. – strategic tip" (C.I.C. – A Sample Strategy). In *Biblioteca* (The Library) 7 (1997): 184-187.

² Burian, Adina. "Aplicații soft pentru Centrul de Informare Comunitară" (Software Applications for the Community Information Center). In *Biblioteca* (The Library) 11-12 (1997): 328-330.

³ Dodu, Georgeta. "C.I.C. – Potențial și direcții de dezvoltare" (C.I.C. – Directions and Potential for Development). In *Biblioteca* (The Library) 11-12 (1997): 326-328.

were quite diversified, including: direct (personal) contact, telephone contact, separate tapes and articles in the press containing essential information about the activity of the new service, advertisements, radio and TV reports and interviews, posters (inclusively on public transportation), handouts¹.

The official opening of the Center took place on 10 June 1997 its permanent objective being to satisfy the citizens' ever growing need of information.

The Community Information Center of the "Octavian Goga" Cluj County Library served as a model to the creation of other information centers within the framework of county libraries in Braşov (1998), Iaşi (1998), Piatra-Neamţ (1999), Tulcea (1999), Constanţa (2000). A similar information center was opened in December 1997, in the "B.P. Haşdeu" Municipal Library in Chişinău (Republic of Moldova). The public libraries that wished to offer such services for their clients, appealed to and received help from the working team that contributed to the creation of the Community Information Center in Cluj-Napoca.

Presentation

The Community Information Center of the "Octavian Goga" Cluj County Library is situated in the center of the city, on the Mihail Kogălniceanu street, no. 7, opposite to the Academy Library and the National Archives, close to the "Babeş-Bolyai" University, and to important high-schools of the city. In the beginning, the C.I.C. had a quality of office of the "Octavian Goga" Cluj County Library, and it had three information sectors: local information, European information, and bibliographic information (there is no distinct Bibliographic Service in the Cluj County Library); now it only has two information sectors: local and European.

There are 3 persons employed at the C.I.C., out of these two librarians in charge of public relations. The C.I.C. owns 3 computers, 2 of them being available for users to consult electronic documents.

The information gathered in the Center is kept on traditional and electronic support, and it can be found with help of C.I.C. working tools:

- a) *traditional*:
 - *documents on traditional support* (books, periodicals, brochures, leaflets, maps, classified according to fields: reference, public

¹ Dodu, Marius. "Strategia promovării C.I.C." (C.I.C. Promoting Strategies). In *Biblioteca* (The Library), 11-12 (1997): 324-326.

administration, international organizations, the European Union, legislation, the Council of Europe – in the framework of the C.I.C. there is a Council of Europe Information Point, created in collaboration with the Documentation and Information Centre of the Council of Europe in Bucharest –, education and learning, culture, Cluj, Romania, tourism, human rights, minorities, social services, foreign languages – exams, licenses, etc.)

- *local information folder*

Represents one of the most important instruments of work of the C.I.C., and it is achieved by the daily “unfolding” of 9 periodicals from Cluj and one central newspaper. The information important for the community is filed and organized according to a classification of its own, which contains all fields of interest, beginning with “presidential administration” and ending with “international affairs”.

The files in the local information folder contain the bibliographical data of the periodical, the importance of the article that contains the information (divided on three levels), the synthesis of the information from the article, its author, and the field to which the article pertains.

The local information folder is the result of a long experience, which started from the necessity to adapt the traditional formula of a local bibliography, with regard to the aim of the Center – offering information of interest for the community –, the lack of a bibliographical service in the Cluj County Library, and the insufficient human resources of the C.I.C.^{1,2}.

- *local information operative folder* (a smaller version of the local information folder, which helps in the quick search of factual information – addresses, phone numbers, etc.)
- *the analytic folder of periodicals that contain information about the European Union* (created by the presentation of the most

¹ Pervain, Augusta. “Serviciul bibliografic – redefinire” (The Bibliographic Service – Rethinking). In *Lectura* (Reading) 21 (1995): 10-12.

² Pervain, Augusta, and Georgeta Dodu. “Bibliografia locală și C.I.C. (Centrul de Informare Comunitară)” (The Local Bibliography and the C.I.C). In *Referate și comunicări în bibliologie [lucrările sesiunii științifice]: 100 de ani de la înființarea Cercului Literar Ovidiu din Constanța: 1897-1997* (Reports and Essays in Library Science [The Papers of the Scientific Session]: 100 Years from the Creation of the Ovidiu Literary Circle in Constanța: 1897-1997). Constanța: County Library Constanța, 1999, 43-47.

important articles from the 25 titles of periodicals received from institutions of the EU).

- *the folder of library science* (signals the new publications in the field received by the Librarians Information Point within the C.I.C.)
 - *topographic catalogue of existing material*
 - *alphabetical catalogue of existing material*
- b) *electronic:*

These are made up of databases in Microsoft Access, in the following fields:

- a) "*social service*", containing information referring to the governmental and non-governmental organizations in Cluj county that are active in this field (identification data, contact persons, specific activities);
- b) "*medical service*", offering information regarding state institutions, individual doctor's offices, family doctors in Cluj county;
- c) "*public administration*", giving information about the institutions of public administration: Prefect's Office, County Council, Mayor's Office, and Local Council (identification data, structure of the institutions, commissions, directions, offices –, contact persons, office hours, services);
- d) "*education and learning*" (2 databases, containing information regarding educational institutions in Cluj county: nursery schools, schools, high-schools, state and private colleges and universities – data of identification, faculties, and admissions exams), and
- e) "*library science*" ("*BIBLOS*"), which signals articles from periodicals that come to the Librarians Information Point within the C.I.C., and TINLIB-400 database, containing information about the documents of the library, the program of Romanian legislation LEXEXPERT, CD-ROMs, electronic folders.

Public relations offered by the Center's staff are different from the traditional one; they are suited to the requirements of the new type of service. The librarian working here has formed in time skills and abilities to carry out a constructive dialogue with the client, so as to establish exactly and in the shortest possible time the real need of information, its

profoundness, and the support that should be used to hand out the information.

It is clear that not all users wish to or are able to express their requests or aims in the most coherent way by using the librarian's answers to their questions. Taking this into account, the Community Information Center practices reference interviews, following which the client's questions can be answered. Should it be necessary, the client is also instructed. Similarly, in case the personnel of the Center should not dispose of the necessary information, or the existing information should not suffice for the client, he/she is directed to the institutions or organizations that are able to give a complete answer.

Since this type of service for the users may be stressful, the public relations-duty of each librarian was established for a 3 and a half hour period in order to maintain a high level of the service, the rest of the time being used to prepare answers for the questions, to gather and organize information, for self-instruction, and other service tasks.

The information offered by the two persons responsible for public relations – directly, on the phone, or by mail (depending on the requests) come from a very large variety of interests: public administration, medical service, social service, Romania's legislation, European Union, Council of Europe, culture, human rights, minorities, education, international organizations, tourism, statistics, etc. etc. Similarly, in case the personnel of the Center should not dispose of the necessary information, or the existing information should not suffice for the client, he/she is directed to the institutions or organizations that are able to give a complete answer.

Two highly important problems interfere in the relation with these organizations, worth mentioning since they generate unpleasant situations:

- a) the lack of collaboration on the side of source-institutions to update information, despite the existing protocols, combined with deficient resources – material, as well as human – of the Center (e.g.: drastic limitation of the number of impulses for telephone calls, insufficient number of persons to gather field information), and
- b) the veracity of information offered by institutions and organizations, frequently disputed by the users.

The Community Information Center responds to the requests of individuals of all kinds, as well as to the requests coming from governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The most frequent categories of users are students, pensioners, the unemployed, and schoolchildren. Since the staff of the Center shares the opinion that the best way of promoting a service – in the absence of suitable resources for this activity – is the quality of its services, a large number of occasional users have become permanent clients of the Center, and they contribute to the spreading of information regarding the existence of C.I.C., and recommend its services to their acquaintances.

Parallel with the activity of gathering, evaluation, organization, and offering of information, the staff of the Community Information Center elaborates, or collaborates in the elaboration of certain works. Here are some of such achievements: Ward, Suzanne; Sumsion, John; Fuegi, David; Bloor, Ian. *Indicatori de performanță și instrumente manageriale pentru biblioteci* (Performance Indicators and Management Tools for Libraries), [Bucharest]: ABBPR, 1997; *Indexul alfabetic al periodicelor din bibliotecile din municipiul Cluj-Napoca 1997-1998*. (Alphabetical Index of Periodicals in Cluj-Napoca, 1997-1998). Cluj-Napoca: [s.n.], 1998; *Cheile succesului: Indicatori de performanță pentru bibliotecile publice* (The Key to Success: Performance Indicators for Public Libraries), [Bucharest]: ABBPR, 1998; *Contribuții la o bibliografie Goga (1965-1995)* (Contributions to a Bibliography on Octavian Goga), Cluj-Napoca: [s.n.], 1998; *Bibliotecile publice și societatea informației* (Public Libraries and Information Society), Bucharest: ABBPR, 1998; *Clujeni ai secolului 20* (Personalities of Cluj in the 20th Century), Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Stiință, 2000; Mustăță, Constantin. *Student la Cluj* (Student in Cluj), vol. 1: *Seniorii* (The Seniors), Cluj-Napoca: Studia, 2001.

The staff of the Community Information Center edits annually the *Calendar of Cultural and Historical Events and Manifestations of the "Octavian Goga" Cluj County Library*, and monthly a *Letter of Information* of a library science profile, for internal use, which includes reviews of works or articles in the field, news in librarianship contained in the material that inflows to the Information Point for Librarians within the C.I.C., as well as articles from the press that reflect events being to a certain interest of librarians in Cluj. At the same time, the C.I.C. also deals with the redaction of bibliographies or translation of material on request, and performs a reference activity to cover certain fields of research.

Last but not least, the C.I.C. staff is actively involved in the life of the community, taking part in symposiums, conferences, seminars, courses, in collaboration with diverse and numerous institutions and organizations, contributing thus to the promotion of its image in the community, and implicitly of the library to which it belongs.

With all the modest resources possessed, the Community Information Center has made progress over the years, made visible by performance indicators that seize the quantitative aspects of the specific activity. Here are a few examples: number of information and reference offered: 1998 – 18,708 / 2001 – 28,846; visits (frequency): 1998 – 3,724 / 2001 – 5,451; documents consulted: 1998 – 13,814 / 2001 – 17,610.

The quality of the service is best illustrated by the results of the sociological survey completed in the whole library in 1999. The survey intended to identify the degree of satisfaction of the users with the different services offered by the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library. In case of the community information service, the number of the respondents was 73, giving 62 valid answers. By the calculation of the partial satisfaction indices for each service – with factor analysis and regression –, the Community Information Center, a new service though, obtained the index of 1.788, that is, a level of satisfaction of the users situated between “very pleased” and “pleased” – a very good result indeed. Correlated with the other types of library services that the users were questioned about, “community information” was situated on a middle position, between “book and periodicals consultations” (1.767) and “book loan” (1.802).

The C.I.C. was the only service of the County Library that did not receive “very displeased” qualification in case of 4 out of 6 service specific indicators. Similarly, for the direct question “How pleased were you with the community information service of the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library Cluj?” there was only one “very displeased” answer out of all the valid answers, that is, 1.6%.

The part of the survey referring to the Community Information Center has outlined the fact that its highest priority is to be ensured with informative material of a high quality, the indicator “existing informative material” obtaining a very high percentage: 54.28%. The next places are taken by “conditions of usage” (room, light, environment, other equipment) – 23.13%, and “updated information” – 8.95%. Other indicators that influence the satisfaction with this service are: “promptness of librarians” – 8.57%, and “programs for the public” – having the bottom place with a percentage of 5.07%.

Besides this information made public by specialists on the basis of frequent surveys, the C.I.C. uses the *C.I.C. User's Notice Book* in order to be permanently informed regarding the requests of the public (it contains the users' dissatisfactions, suggestions for improvement, or thanks for the quality of the service), from where very important conclusions can be drawn.

Perspectives

However, regardless of its success, we think that the present structure of the Community Information Center is inadequate. The C.I.C.'s adaptation to modern requirements of public library services, **means the organization of a reference service in the Cluj County Library**, having as a model the United States reference services, **wherein community information would only comprise a small part**. This fact would allow for the focalization of the Center's activities on community information, and other types of activities – unspecific and time-consuming – performed by the C.I.C. staff would be passed to other departments.

To build up a reference service first and foremost means to have an adequate overview of its importance, illustrated in management policy and the objectives of the library. The reference service should be separately mentioned in the organizational diagram of the library, should have separate funding, a necessary number of well instructed personnel, top technology to support it, and, last but not least, should benefit of publicity campaigns accordingly.

Taking into account the fact that the fundamental elements of any organization are the individuals that work in it, and that the quality of the human factor is particularly reflected in the public service department, through the quality of the services offered to the population, the problems raised by the human resource management should be given special attention. It is a role of major importance to change the mentality of the staff so that they accept this objective, and certain tasks that are fairly unusual to them, as well as to put aside the prejudice that book loans is the most important activity of a library. As for the specific conditions of our library, moving to the new building in the Mărăști district would offer the opportunity to ease part of the staff from traditional tasks (mainly due to free access to the publications), and thus retraining it in fields of information and reference. If necessary, new personnel would be employed as well.

It goes without saying that a modern reference service should have updated sources of information, and it should possess up to date technical means. This does not mean of course that traditional sources and means should be abandoned; their utility needs to be reconsidered, and they have to be acquired and used in a proper medium accordingly.

A coherent strategy of creating a reference service should keep in mind all the functions it may fulfill: information, instruction, and direction of the users. Besides the interest in information, the solution of problems raised by the users' instruction and direction should also be considered. Thus, it is important that adequate personnel be appointed for this type of task, a suitable time, and certain modalities of users' instruction are needed, the level/depth of information should be established, as well as the optimal time period that a reference librarian should spend with a user searching for information.

The types of services offered by the reference service of a library are diversified; they should be selected according to the existing material and human resources, and the community's need for information. Reference services for specific categories should also be considered: children, young people, the elderly, people in financial difficulties, disabled people, persons belonging to national minorities.

Finally, one more aspect that should not be neglected: that of establishing the specific modes to evaluate this type of service, with a view to operating the measures imposed. Due to the vastness of the problem, a single technique of evaluation cannot offer a complete image of this service. We appreciate that several modes may be used in parallel: testing the staff's solutions for requests for information and reference in this service (based on standard responses, and considering the average of correct responses given for similar services in Western libraries to be of 55%¹), reference statistics, and periodic application of questionnaires for users and reference service staff.

In the wide framework of reference services, a community information service should be regarded as an integral part. Its main objectives and directions should be included into the development plan of reference services, so that it may contribute by its specific activities to the library's general strategy of opening towards new quality services, corresponding to the pretensions of today's clients.

¹ *Reference and Information Services: An Introduction*. General Editors: Richard E. Bopp, Linda C. Smith. Englewood: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1995: 218.: see also Coravu, Robert. op. cit. 7-8.

Unfortunately mainly due to financial reasons we cannot optimistically state that the Community Information Center of the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library could be easily maintained at its present level of development; focusing the Center's activity on community information and the creation of a reference service in our library therefore remains only a future wish for more generous times.

NOTE:

Since November 2002, the Community Information Center has functioned in the Headquarters of the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library, on the Dorobanților Road.

To the two information sectors, local and European, a third one was added on 21 December 2002: the NATO Information Public Centre was inaugurated in the framework of the C.I.C.