

2005: a New Approach to Branch Libraries

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Abstract

This study presents the changes which occurred as a consequence of the new organisational chart of the Central University Library adopted at the beginning of the year 2005 whereby branch libraries were incorporated.

The paper presents the activity of this new department for the year 2005, focusing on the collections, rooms, personnel and electronic equipment of the branch libraries as well as the different activities performed by them.

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The permanent economic, socio-humanistic and political change which characterizes contemporary society at the beginning of this millennium makes necessary a change of function in modern organizations and institutions, inclusively in libraries.

The method of total quality management which takes into consideration some principles (the 14 essential principles elaborated by E. J. Deming and adapted for libraries by Makey and Makey) would be a suitable solution for any institution confronted by a change. This method is used as "an instrument for exploring some new organizational and administrative possibilities starting out from the premise that the final result will lead to the restructuring of some organizational aspects."¹

Questions are asked regarding the role of libraries and librarians in the 21st century, taking into consideration that information is the key resource of these days and modern libraries use computerised

¹ Irene Owens, *Managementul calității totale, factor al schimbării: strategii pentru secolul XXI* (The Management of Total Quality, the Factor of Change: Strategies for the XXI. Century), in *Management for the future – Libraries and Archives*, Hermina Anghelescu, István Király (eds.), Cluj-Napoca, University Press of Cluj, "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library, 2000, p. 55. (Bibliotheca Bibliologica, new series, 21).

technologies intensively. *How will libraries look like in our country and in developed western countries in five or ten years? How and with what instruments will librarians work and what knowledge, skills and competences will they need in order to meet the new conditions? How will librarians be able to add value to the administered information in the most competent way?* These are only some examples of such questions.

A successful strategy for changing the librarian profession in the future would be to assume some new roles such as: crucial point between past and future, educator, administrator of knowledge, creator of information policies, filter of information sources, individual information consultant and producer of information.

The necessity of *change* has been felt at the "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library and at all its branch libraries too. The first stage of this change was the adoption of the new organisational chart of the Central University Library at the beginning of the year 2005. In this branch libraries were grouped in the same organizational unit.

Each branch library functions according to the same principles. The personnel, the publications, and partly the computer technology belong to the Central University Library, while locations, furniture, a part of the computer technology and connection to the network belong to the "Babeş-Bolyai" University. A differentiation between these libraries can be made according to:

– *The localization and organization of reading rooms*: these are old buildings having rooms with or without a service desk and new rooms specially furnished for modern library needs, with open access to publications.

– *The number and information needs of specific users*: lower year students prefer to study the publications at home, except at examination sessions, while teachers, researchers, PhD, masters or higher year students prefer to study the publications in the reading rooms (usually scientific serial publications) or in their personal offices. This latter group also prefers the access to electronic information. (Because of this it is necessary to create some modern library instruments and to ensure an access station to the Internet and the databases the Central University Library is subscribed to.)

In the present paper I shall analyze the activities of the libraries belonging to the newly created Department for the year 2005 by interpreting the data received from each branch library apart. As the library activities in these branch institutions are greatly varied and complex, I have fixed and followed some primary indicators. These will

make it possible to analyze realistically the development of activities and services from these libraries from the point of view of both quantity and quality in the following years as well. These indicators are:

- the collection of publications existing on 31. December 2004, (the situation from the RMF register);
- the real increase of the publication collection in 2005 (only the books and periodicals with inventory number for 2005, processed until 31. December 2005.);
- the origin of these publications;
- the circulation of documents and the readers' statistics for the year 2005.

The data received from the branch libraries have been processed and interpreted, having as results some comparative reports (presented in the graphical annexes) and some conclusions and proposals for improving and making more efficient the library activities and services.

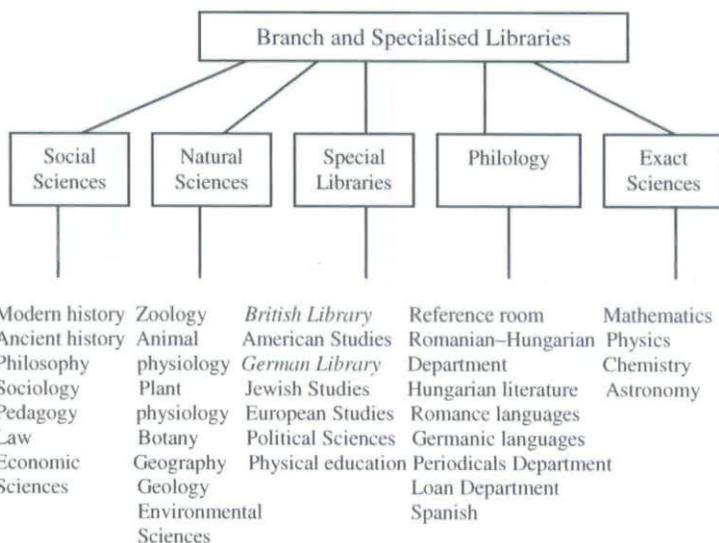
I. The presentation of the Department

1.1. Component libraries and library staff

The Branch and Special Libraries Department consists of three services and two offices: Social Sciences Service, Natural Sciences Service, Philology Service, Exact Sciences Office and Special Libraries Office. In the year 2005 this Department comprised 25 libraries (24 in Cluj-Napoca and 1 in Gheorgheni, Harghita county), the Environmental Sciences branch library being newly established at the beginning of the year 2005.

These services and offices comprise several libraries specialized on related fields of study and are directed by the service and office chiefs who are the members of the Central University Library operational management.

The structure of these departments can be comprised in the following diagram:



The personnel of the branch and specialised libraries occupy 74 posts in the Central University Library staff structure. These librarians have superior studies in librarianship (long-range or/and short range studies), superior studies in the domain their library is specialised on or secondary studies and a librarianship certificate. There is also a book handler post (at Philology). Two posts are occupied by colleagues who work in special libraries (British Library and German Library) patronised by other institutions (the British Council and the German Cultural Centre), which signed an agreement of collaboration with the Central University Library in this respect.

As regards the staff of the branch libraries we must also mention that we have collaborators, employees of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University or of the Research Institutes of the Romanian Academy in some of the affiliate institutions: 1 person in Modern History Library, 1 in Ancient History Library, 1 in Sociology Library and 1 in Political Sciences Library.

Because some librarians were on leave (maternity, study or sick leaves) there were some changes and fluctuations of personnel, the employees on leave being substituted with librarianship students.

1.2. Reading rooms and book stacks; users

All the branch libraries serve the faculties of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University and function in rooms administered by these in **24** buildings. The libraries occupy approximately **4,958 m²** (2700 m² occupied by reading rooms and 2258 m² by book stacks) in these buildings. **22,603** linear meters are destined to store the publications in these libraries (in this number the linear meters from the stacks of the Central University Library are also included). The number of reading rooms had increased to **45** by the end of the year 2005, while the number of seats reached **1,329**.

The Mathematics Library functioned in the year 2005 in a new location (in Ploieşti Street). This is a more functional room than the one the library occupied until 2004, however, some modifications have been still necessary in order to optimise the public relations activities (creating open access reading rooms).

The new Environmental Sciences branch library was housed in a building belonging to the "Babeş-Bolyai" University on Ştefan cel Mare Square. At first the library had only one room (with closed bookcases) for storing the publications, but we suppose that as the number of publications increases, it will receive further rooms for book stacks from the Faculty.

The rooms with special libraries function have usually modern furniture and the readers have open access to the publications. Unfortunately, there are not enough seats for the great number of users in the reading rooms, the cloakrooms are not well furnished, and only in the Physical Education Library exists an antitheft system that ensures the safety of the publications.

In this year the Ancient History library room was renovated and furnished anew (this activity lasted for four months). On this occasion the library collections, the book stacks and the reading rooms of this library were reorganized.

The branch libraries users are, according to the Internal Regulations of the Central University Library, all those persons who are registered for the Central University Library and possess a Reader Pass the validity of which is confirmed and verifiable in the Circulation module of the integrated Aleph library system. In general, the libraries belonging to this Department are mainly used by the students, teachers and researchers of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University.

In the year 2005 **4,011** Reader Passes were issued (141 of them being duplicates) and **7,728** Passes issued in previous years were renewed in the branch libraries.

If the registration of the new users has been fragmented until this year, the plastic covers for the Reader Passes being made in the Central University Library and in the Philology Library, this activity can be done in other branch libraries as well beginning with the university year 2005–2006, since some new machines were purchased for making the covers.

In order to orientate the first year students of the University towards the services offered by the Central University Library and its branch institutions more efficiently, a new registration method was proposed. Unfortunately, the University did not support this plan. As its support is absolutely necessary for the efficiency of this activity, this proposal to the Rector's Office of the University will be renewed in the year 2006.

The program dealing with the users' instruction and information will have to work in a more organized manner in branch libraries as well, in parallel with and according to the same principles which are applied in the Central University Library.

1.3. The activities and services of branch libraries

In each branch library there are permanent activities (special activities of library technique, public relations activities, offering bibliographical and documentary information) and periodic activities (inventories, reorganizations and/or moving collections, sanitation activities etc.).

The publications used in the reading rooms or lent are served from closed stacks or they are kept in an open access regime (in the case of the Special Libraries Office, the Periodicals Room of the Law Library and the Reference Room of the Philology Library).

In the following chapter the activities and services offered by branch libraries in 2005 will be detailed and analysed according to the primary indicators mentioned above.

II. The analysis of the Department's activity

2.1. Collection of publications existing on 31. December 2004.

The collections existing in the branch libraries at the end of the year 2004 comprised **996,727** volumes: **790,871** books, **153,414** periodical publications and **52,442** other categories of documents (STAS-s, microfiches, maps, audio-video materials).

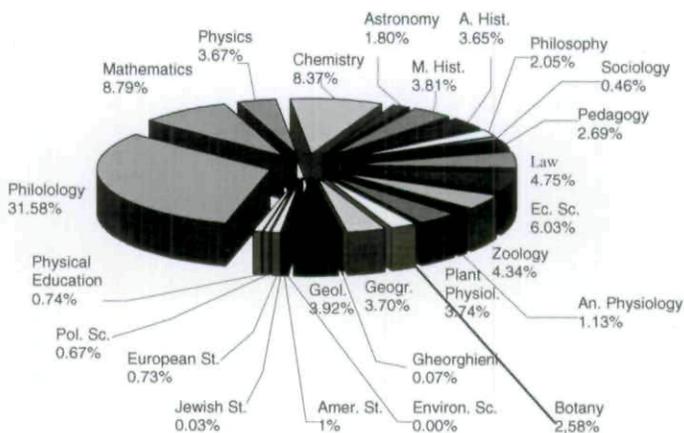
Surveying the distribution of these collections to the branch libraries, one can observe the "supremacy" of the Philology (most of the

publications are books). This fact is due to the existence of a single administration for all the sections of this service. The Jewish Studies Library and the Library of the College from Gheorgheni (extension of the Faculty of Geography) had the smallest collections at the end of the year 2004. However, there were a great number of publications in the custody of these libraries from the "Dr. Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger" Institute of Jewish Studies and Hebrew History, respectively from the College from Gheorgheni (donations received directly). There are publications of the Research Institutions of the Romanian Academy in other branch libraries as well (Modern History, Ancient History, Philology).

The libraries of Mathematics, Chemistry and Economic Sciences have the second largest collections among the branch libraries after the Philology Library. In the Library of Mathematics most of the publications are books, but there is also a significant number of periodicals, while the Economic Sciences Library contains mainly books. In the Chemistry Library there are many documents of other type (STAS-s), almost equal in number with the books.

On the whole, the Special Libraries Office has the smallest collection in the Department (3.17% of the branch library collections), being followed by the libraries of Natural Sciences (19.48%), Exact Sciences (22.63%) and Social Sciences (23.44%).

Collections distribution on 31. Dec. 2004.



2.2. Collection increase; The publications in the on-line catalogue

Although many publications (reflected in each librarian's personal activity) were processed during the year 2005, until 31 December, the publications which entered the Acquisition Service appeared only later on the shelves of the branch libraries. Because of this the real increase of the collections can be seen if one surveys the publications that received an inventory number in the year 2005. Thus the branch library collections increased with **8,059 titles** (6,423 book titles and 1,636 periodical titles), represented by a total number of **12,662 volumes** (8,417 volumes of books and 4,245 volumes of periodicals).

There is a difference between the collection increase of the different branch libraries in the period 1st January–31st December 2005, more publications entering the socio-human branch libraries in general.

Thus, if we compare the five branch library services, the following situation can be observed:

	Publication titles	Publication volumes
Social Sciences:	2,698	4,437
Natural Sciences:	1,149	2,285
Special Libraries:	961	1,379
Philology:	2,304	3,039
Exact Sciences:	947	1,522

The conclusion may be drawn from this data that a better collaboration with the Acquisition Service of the Natural and Exact Sciences branch libraries is necessary in order to purchase publications in these domains.

The first step for making this collaboration more efficient was taken in autumn 2005. Inquiries were made which publications were to be purchased from the publication funds received for Legal Deposit. The University teaching staff were questioned once again as well, which foreign publications were considered necessary by them. A part of these publications already entered the branch library collections at the beginning of the year 2006.

At the end of the year 2005 the **91,406 titles** described in the on-line catalogue of the Central University Library represented also a part of the publications existing at one or more branch libraries.

The best represented collection in the on-line catalogue was that of the Philology Library (44,063 records in Aleph). The least represented

was that of the Jewish Studies Library (18 records) where there were technical problems with the electronic communication network for a long time.

In order to exploit the Aleph integrated library system efficiently in the loan activity, the users must find the publication records in the on-line catalogue; the catalogue indicates the available exemplars from each library of the Central University Library network. To this effect, in 2005, clear criteria were established for the retro-conversion of the publications in the on-line catalogue. Cataloguing and ITEMS attribution activities were performed at all branch libraries according to these criteria. This happened to a lesser degree in those libraries (Jewish Studies, Political Studies, Botany, Gheorgheni) where there were and still are technical difficulties. The personal activity reports indicate a high number of catalogued titles in Aleph in the Philology Library (9,536 titles) and a high number of ITEMS attributions in the libraries of: Economic Sciences (9,075), Philology (3,000), Sociology (2,397), Chemistry (3,953), Mathematics (1,354) and Physics (1,408). Totally 150,290 ITEMS attributions were made till the end of the year 2005 in the analyzed branch libraries.

Some of the branch libraries had pursued this activity since 2004; some of them even succeeded in starting a computerized loan service (Zoology: 300 computerized loans were reported for October–December 2005). The situation was the best from this point of view in the Environmental Sciences Library where the processing of publications as well as loan activities had been computerized from the beginning.

2.3. The origin of the newly entered publications

Regarding the publications which received the inventory number until December 2005 (the real increase of the collections for that year) I processed the data taking into consideration their origin as well: buying, Central University Library copy workshop, transfers in the Central University Library network, international exchange, different donations; in the case of periodicals subscription to Romanian and foreign publications.

Only a few publications originate from the copy workshop. The number of transferred books is relevant only in the case of the Sociology, Environmental Sciences, Philosophy and Modern History branch libraries, while that of transferred periodicals is significant in the case of the Sociology Library.

Looking more closely at the three ways of purchasing the publications from the branch libraries, one can observe that donations are predominant, being followed by buying (in the case of books) and by international exchange (in the case of periodical publications).

2.3.1. Books

A more or less balanced situation was to be found in the Economic Sciences Library with regard to the three main acquisition forms of the book titles newly entered in the inventory in the year 2005: 106 titles bought, 131 titles donated, 93 obtained through international exchange. Donations predominated in the case of many branch libraries (in the Philology, European Studies, Political Sciences, Mathematics libraries), many titles being obtained by buying and international exchange as well. More publications were bought than donated at the libraries of Modern History, Philosophy, Pedagogy, Law, Gheorgheni and Jewish Studies. There were no donations in the case of the Ancient History Library (the situation being due to the reorganization of the library room). The greatest number of books were bought in the Philology Library (567 titles), while the smallest number in the American Library (1 title).

A remarkable number of publications were received through international exchange in the following libraries: Economic Sciences, Law, Mathematics, Philology, Geology, Sociology and Physics.

2.3.2. Periodical publications

With regard to the origin of the new periodical publications, most of them entered the libraries through international exchange, the libraries of Gheorgheni, Astronomy, Physical Education, Animal Physiology, European Studies and Sociology making an exception. The American Library received titles only through international exchange, while the Mathematics, Geology, Botany (direct international exchange with the publication *Contributions to Botany*), Political Sciences and Zoology libraries titles with such origin were evidently predominant.

A remarkable number of books were bought by the Philology, Ancient and Modern History libraries.

The number of Romanian periodicals purchased through subscription was more or less equal to the number of those that entered through international exchange in the Economic Sciences Library. Many Romanian periodicals were subscribed to by the libraries of Philology, Law, Mathematics, Zoology, Geography and European Studies. No titles

were subscribed by the following libraries: Ancient History, Plant Physiology, Gheorgheni, Geography, Geology, Environmental Sciences, American Library and Political Sciences.

The greatest number of foreign periodical titles was subscribed to by the Philology and Law libraries (where the Faculty helped to finance the subscriptions). The other branch institutions purchased by subscription only a small number of foreign periodical publications or no titles at all.

Comparing the number of book and periodical titles which entered the libraries and were processed by them in 2005, one can observe that: only book titles entered the library in Gheorgheni; the percentage was balanced in the case of the Zoology and Botany libraries; while in the other institutions the percentage of book titles was greater. The situation is different if one compares the number of book and periodical volumes that entered the libraries and were processed by them in 2005. This is due to the fact that different numbers of bibliographic volumes were entered for one periodical title.

In the year 2005 the Central University Library continued to subscribe to some databases which could be consulted on the computers belonging to the network of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University. A campaign was organized to present these databases (ProQuest and Springer Link) to the teaching staff and the students. The librarians of the branch institutions were instructed to use these databases in order that they themselves could teach the users interested in this service. The Springer publishing house also offered us a database of electronic books. Since the teaching staff required it, this database was also purchased at the beginning of this year.

We wish to continue purchasing these categories of documents in the future as well.

It is necessary to increase the library collections, and first of all to purchase more publications from the Romanian editorial market, especially in the domains of natural sciences and exact sciences.

The collaboration with the teaching staff must focus on the indication and acquisition of the publications edited by them. These publications could be offered for international exchange, along with the series of the periodical *Studia*.

The collections administered by the "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library will be substantially increased if we manage to attract donations from the teaching staff, different Romanian and foreign institutions collaborating directly with the faculties of the "Babeş-Bolyai"

University, as well as different representatives of the Romanian cultural and scientific life.

2.4. The circulation of documents

In order to give an account of the circulation of documents, I have processed the data obtained from each branch library separately. These data should have been collected uniformly and according to the same criteria. They should have corresponded to the data given to the Central University Library for numeration.

These data reveal that **761,850 volumes** (572,682 in the reading rooms and 189,168 at home) were used by **402,118** readers (282,056 used the materials in the reading rooms and 120,062 borrowed them) in the branch library collections in the year 2005. These data, however, are different from those calculated in the Central University Library, as some of the data were inattentively compiled, incorrectly transmitted or erroneously calculated.

The correctness of data will be beyond doubt only when document transactions will be computerized. Until then the registration methods of these transactions must be revised. We must differentiate between the activities with the public in the reading rooms functioning in an open access system and the activities in those library sections where the books are kept in closed stacks. Attention must also be paid to statistics.

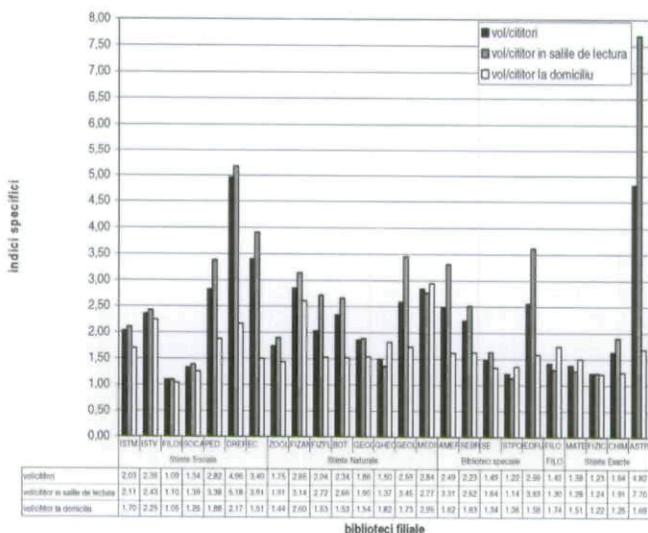
In this chapter I have interpreted the data referring to the volumes used by the readers in the reading rooms and at home, the number of users who frequented the reading rooms and used the publications there and of those who borrowed them. It can be observed which branch libraries had exceptionally frequent activity with the users. The materials were predominantly consulted in the reading rooms (values between 29,500 and 99,000 volumes) in the libraries of Philology, Law, Modern History, Pedagogy, Geography and Economic Sciences. Here there is a need to revise the way in which publications are delivered from the closed stacks or these rooms must be reorganized into an open access system. This system would require less effort from librarians, at least physically. Anyway, such a reorganization could be possible in the year 2006 due to some renovation works (Geography Library) or the moving of some libraries (Modern History, Pedagogy, Economic Sciences).

Generally, a greater percent of the publications was consulted in the reading rooms. In the Animal Physiology Library the percentage of

the publications used in the reading room and that of the borrowed ones was balanced.

Loan activity being relatively uniform in the branch libraries, it can be a good criterion for a comparison between these institutions. When the loan activity will be computerized, librarians will have to accord much less time to it.

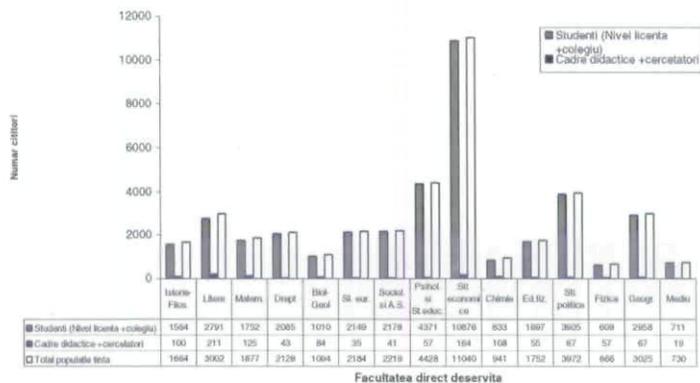
Statistica circulație



We can determine the number of publications per student and the number of delivered volumes per reader by adding to the data received from the branch libraries referring to their collections and to the document circulation the data received from the "Babeș-Bolyai" University referring to the number of its teachers and researchers, as well as that of the students attending the faculties directly served by our branch libraries (only the number of graduating and college students).

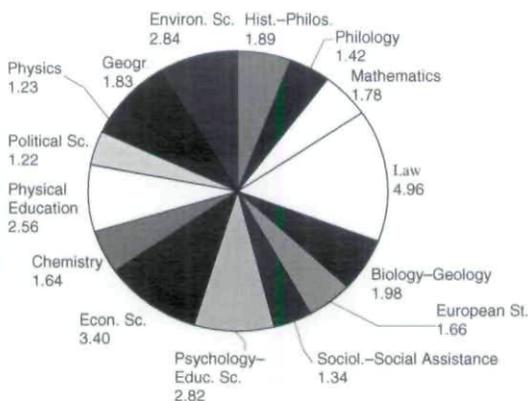
The number of students and teachers from the faculties which are not served directly by a branch library of this department (the faculties of theology, Business, Theatre) has not been included.

Populatia tinta



The number of volumes/students was 25.56 in the branch libraries, while 1.89 volumes/active readers (having a Reader Pass and frequenting the library) were delivered. The following figure shows these data partitioned for each faculty.

Delivered volumes/reader



2.5. Other branch library activities

- Participation at the realization of the work Scientific Activity of the Teaching Staff, 2004;
- Updating the ProCite databases from the Special Libraries and some libraries from the Natural Sciences Service;
- Updating the on-line bibliographical database, that can be accessed from the Mathematics Library, and the *Bio-bibliography Gabor* accessible from the Physics Library;
- Collaboration in order to create and periodically update web pages for the branch libraries according to a certain pattern elaborated together with the IT Department; creating some informative posters containing data about the library (Zoology, Animal Physiology);
- Solving some problems of global or individual import;
- Checking and reorganizing collections, moving great amount of publications in some of the branch libraries (Ancient History, Philology, Sociology, Geography, Zoology);
- Proposing some publications for reconditioning and selecting those that are to be removed from the inventory in the future;
- Remaking the notification posters in the open access room of the European Studies Library.

III. Electronic equipment

All the branch libraries are supplied with personal computers ensured by the Central University Library. The faculties of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University also donated electronic equipment (computers – sometimes nonfunctional ones –, printers, copiers) to some of the branch libraries. There were **96** computers in the branch libraries at the end of the year 2005, **64** ensured by the Central University Library, **32** by the "Babeş-Bolyai" University. **39** computers were intended for public use, generally for searching the on-line catalogue and the subscribed databases.

In the year 2006 it will be necessary to renew the old computers in some of the branch libraries, especially as the new Aleph version will function only on the Windows XP operational system.

IV. Conclusions

Analyzing the data received from the libraries belonging to the Branch and Special Libraries Department one can draw some conclusions

that can serve as a starting point for the changes that are necessary for improving and making more efficient the activities of the analyzed branch libraries.

- New reading rooms endowed with adequate lockers and coat racks are necessary for the libraries functioning in an open access system. It is also necessary to secure the collection of these libraries.
- The furniture or the reading room conditions are inadequate in some library rooms (generally in old buildings administrated by the University). In these libraries it is necessary to perform sanitation works, to renew the electric installations and to furnish the rooms adequately.
- In order to attract the students of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University to the Central University Library and its branch institutions more efficiently a new registration method will be presented to the University once again and its support will be solicited.
- The users' instruction and information programme must be organized better in the branch libraries as well. The same principles as in the Central Library must be applied in their case too.
- The collaboration between the Acquisition Service and the university teaching staff must be mediated by the branch librarians. University teachers should indicate the publications necessary for a good educational activity, as well as the databases with electronic periodicals and books on different domains that should be purchased. Donations will have an important role in enriching the library collections. They may come from some Romanian and foreign institutions collaborating with the "Babeş-Bolyai" University or some cultural and scientific personalities from Romania. Branch librarians have an important role in attracting these donations.
- Describing the publications will be continued according to the criteria settled at the level of the Central University Library. It is of great importance to attribute ITEMS to the volumes from the branch libraries; thus the Aleph integrated library system can be exploited efficiently. In this way users will have extensive information about the collections of the Central University Library and of its branch institutions. A computerized loan service will also be at their disposal.

- In order to satisfy optimally the users' needs it is necessary to revise the way in which publications are served in the reading rooms in some branch libraries (Geography, Law, Modern History, Pedagogy). The reorganization of some library rooms (renovations in the Modern History, Geography and Botany libraries, collection removals at the Pedagogy and Economic Sciences libraries), will offer the possibility to create more reading rooms with an open access system. The redistribution of posts can also be considered depending on the solicitations at certain library sections.
- Branch library activities are varied and they require physical and intellectual efforts from the librarian. He/she must have a distributive attention and has to maintain an attitude adequate for the academic environment in his/her relations with the public too. These activities depend on the way in which the educational process (specific to each faculty) operates, on the number of students or on the different administrative changes which take place at the faculties. Because of this, the collaboration with the collectivity of teachers and even with the faculties' administrative personnel sometimes depends on the librarians' diplomatic skills.
- The libraries' electronic equipment must be maintained in optimal functioning conditions and replaced when it is technically antiquated.