

## **The Ever Changing Bibliorev**

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### **Abstract**

The article offers a retrospective look on the development of the electronic review *Bibliorev* from its beginning to the present by analyzing the evolution of its structure, content and web design.

The publication *Bibliorev* was started as an online informative bulletin of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library having as its main objective to inform the personnel of the institution on the events organized in and by it, presenting briefly different aspects of the professional activity. Gradually, more scientific articles were included from the field of library and information science.

Having received a review like structure and content as well as an elegant graphic design, at the beginning of 2004, *Bibliorev*, which was initially an informative bulletin, became an electronic review.

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The change referred to in the title of this study represents the capacity of the review to adapt itself to new developments. In this age when the domain of information technique is permanently changing, making an *online* review implies “keeping abreast of the times”.

At the same time, in order to avoid monotony and to increase the number of readers as much as possible, permanent attempts have been made to improve its design and structure. Regarding the design current trends have been taken into consideration, and, to improve the structure, new sections have been introduced (which we are going to mention in the course of the study).

The *Bibliorev* was initially launched as an informative bulletin of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library in order to notify the personnel on the changes which took place in the institution and the

events organized in and by it at a given moment. Moreover, the library board of directors also wished to extend the communication towards the users of the library services and to establish a connection with them. Before 2000 there had been some attempts to edit and publish an informative bulletin of the library in traditional paper based format, but only in July 2001 it was decided to publish it directly in an electronic format. Some potential titles were suggested – *InfoBib*, *InfoRel*, *BiblioRel* and *BiblioREV* –, the editorial board choosing the last variant.

The initial **aim** of the bulletin was to present in brief different professional activities (participation in seminars, conferences, symposia, and other professional events). The editorial board intended to inform the (internal and external) users as promptly as possible on the projects running in the library, on the investments of the institutions for optimizing the services offered to the users, on the important donations received by the library, on external collaborations, etc.

*Bibliorev* was initially edited by an editorial staff consisting of the librarians of the *Public Relations* service. Since 2005 the members of the editorial staff (including the webmaster) have been the employees of the *Bibliographic Research and Documentation Department*.

The main **objectives** of the bulletin and, later, of the electronic review have been:

1. to offer the library personnel the possibility to make a brief written presentation on the professional events they participated in, as well on the projects proposed and carried out in the library;
2. to offer the users the possibility to express their opinion and to get information regarding some professional activities and programmes related to the library and its personnel.

The bulletin was, at first, to be published monthly in paper based format being no longer than 4 pages, but it was later decided to publish it in **electronic format** every third month. There were several causes leading to this change of conception, and the sections of the informative bulletin were conceived according to the **target public** which, initially, was the library personnel. Later on, at the suggestion of some librarians interested in a better relationship with library users (including the students in library and information science, other users from the cultural, academic, etc. circles), the idea to create some sections for them to express their opinion on the library activity in general occurred. Thus the sections *The Readers Write to Us* and *Opinions* were created.

Moreover, in the attempt to avoid monotony and to attract as many readers as possible, the design and structure of the *Bibliorev* was also improved from time to time. New sections as well as pages allowing a better communication between the librarians (*Colleagues, Answers*) were introduced.

Due to its review like aspect and elegant graphics, as well as to the structure and content of the sections, at the beginning of 2004, *Bibliorev* was transformed from an **informative bulletin** into an **electronic review**. This was especially determined by the inclusion of the publication in the database of the National ISSN Centre with the international identification code ISSN 1584-1995. More precisely, *Bibliorev* was inscribed to the International Catalogue of Serial Publications ISSN Online.

To facilitate the editorial work and to maintain the uniformity of the aspect, format, and length of articles, as well as with regard to professional deontology, the editorial staff of the *Bibliorev* made some recommendations to the potential authors, such as:

- the electronic review publishes only instructive and informative articles, but, according to its editorial programme, it also contains scientific articles from the field of library and information science;
- the authors are responsible for the content of their articles and they are recommended to submit their materials to the editorial staff in electronic format;
- any suggestion or observation on the review can be expressed directly to a member of the editorial board or in the *Opinions* section.

### **Some data**

Over 100 articles, 5 reviews, and 10 translations have been published in the review by 45 authors working in the different departments of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library, as well as a few external collaborators (see: *The index of authors and collaborators of the review Bibliorev* in the *Appendix* where the departments the authors work or worked in are also mentioned).

During the 7 years of publication and in the 14 issues (published up to the present), the content of the review was structured in 18 sections, 12 permanent and 6 temporary, as follows:

## **Permanent sections**

*Editorial*

*The Manager's Column*

*Professional Information*

– *News*

– *Retrospectives*

– *Projects*

*The Readers Write to Us*

*Book–Culture–Civilization*

*Miscellanea*

– *Events*

– *The Librarian's Library*

– *Jokes, Aphorisms, Quotes*

There were also other sections, which changed according to the content of the articles (e.g. *Study Trips, Professional Meetings, Exhibitions, Impressions of the Library*).

The permanent sections were present in the first 7 issues (2001–2003). They offered the possibility to group the articles authored by librarian colleagues, library users, and collaborators according to their subject. There were a great number of articles referring to library management, professional training, library legislation, library projects, etc.

During the period of the survey, the webpage of the review was accessed 8000 times separately from the library home page.

## **Romanian online library and information science reviews**

In Romania there are several online reviews focusing on library and information science issues. We shall mention only those similar to our review and the periodicals of the Romanian central university libraries:

- *Biblos* – review of the Mihai Eminescu Central University Library in Iași launched in 1994 (17 issues up to the present), accessible on the web page:  
[http://www.bcu-iasi.ro/resurse\\_electronice.php#revista](http://www.bcu-iasi.ro/resurse_electronice.php#revista);
- *UniBib* – review of the Carol I Central University Library in Bucharest launched in 2001 (21 issues up to the present), accessible on the web page:  
<http://www.bcub.ro/continut/unibib/articole.php>;
- *BiblioVest* – electronic library and information science review founded in 2003 by the Library and Information Science

Department of the Faculty of Letters, History and Theology, Western University, Timișoara, its scientific editor being the Director of the Eugen Todoran Central University Library, Univ. Prof. Dr Vasile Țâra. Only five issues have been published so far. The Library and Information Science Department as well as the review can be accessed on following page: <http://www.litere.uvt.ro/bibliovest.htm>.

*Bibliorev* can be accessed from the webpage of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library: <http://www.bcuculuj.ro>, or directly on the following web page: <http://www.bcuculuj.ro/bibliorev>.

### **The changing design**

We are now going to present some data on the realization of the four design variants of the *Bibliorev*. The first format was made in 2001 and it was used up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of the review. Beginning with the 4<sup>th</sup> issue, published in 2002, the second design variant was conceived. In 2003, with the publication of number 8, the design was modified, the sections being named according to the submitted articles. The fourth format (the present one) was launched in 2007 with the 14<sup>th</sup> issue of the review.

When creating a site, it is important to plan it before beginning to build it (writing the HTML code), namely, to make a paper draft of the project in order to establish all the web design elements for each page. The website interface must meet the target public's demands.

The data contained by a site is ordered hierarchically by structuring the pages in three categories: home page, pages containing the main subjects, and subsidiary pages. In these pages information is ordered according to its importance.

The home page must offer the contents of the whole site so as the visitor may find the information searched for as easily as possible. On the basis of the first page the visitor gets a first impression on the site. If the home page has an interesting design, there are good chances that the user will return to it.

The web designer faces a dilemma: to choose an attractive home page, based on graphic elements which require a longer time to load, or to focus mainly on the text in order to make possible for the user to access the information as fast as possible. A middle way would be ideal; however, there is, as a rule, a tendency to swerve towards one of the two variants according to the target users of the site.

In the case of *Bibliorev*, the middle way was tried in the first two variants: several static and animated images were included (small size images being chosen which would be loaded rapidly enough), while the two latter design variants focused mainly on the text, using only a few images. Although there is a tendency to use applications created with Macromedia Flash, such files can have a great size which requires a considerable time for the image to load. It is also possible that some users may not have the Shockwave plug-in installed on their PCs, being thus necessary for them to download it before viewing the review.

When structuring the pages of the review *Bibliorev*, a basic rule used in creating websites was respected: from each page one can access the pages the former page, as well as the home page.

The **information technologies** used to realize this site are:

1. for scripts, the languages:
  - HTML
  - PHP
  - JAVASCRIPT
  - CCS
2. for editing images, the programmes:
  - ADOBE PHOTOSHOP
  - SWISH
  - PAINT SHOP PRO
  - COREL DRAW
3. for databases:
  - MySQL programme package and the SQL language
4. for the content of articles:
  - MS OFFICE (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)
5. for uploading the files to the server:
  - LINUX commands
  - TOTAL COMMANDER file manager

A **HTML** (Hypertext Markup Language) document consists of descriptive tags similar to the instructions of programming languages. Nevertheless, HTML is not a programming language since it does not work with variables. Therefore, HTML is a descriptive language by which the elements introduced to the web page and their aspect are communicated to the browser.

To create HTML files a text editor (to write the document), a browser (to visualize it), and a graphic editor (to edit the images) were necessary. Wordpad was used to edit texts, the browsers Internet

Explorer and Netscape Navigator to visualization, and especially the programme Adobe Photoshop to edit images.

**PHP** is a programming language created firstly for the Internet. With it dynamic web pages can be created. It is one of the most important open-source and server-side web programming languages.

**JavaScript** is an object oriented programming language. It is used most often for scripting web pages. Web programmers can include into HTML pages scripts for different activities such as verifying the data introduced by users, or creating menus and other animated effects.

**CSS** (Cascading Style Sheets) represent a set of features which define the way in which the elements of HTML documents are displayed in the browser.

Nowadays most sites are dynamic. By this we do not only refer to some animations being shown, but also to the fact that sites are modified according to the users' demands. A web page created with the programme Macromedia Flash is dynamic only to the extent to which it communicates with the server after it has been uploaded to the user's computer. This can be achieved by means of the PHP programming language and a database.

Thus dynamic pages have been introduced in *Bibliorev* as well. To this category belong the pages *Opinions* and *Internal Page* (which was given up in the 18<sup>th</sup> issue of the review) through which users interact with the server by means of PHP scripts and the database created in MySQL.

On the *Opinion* page, the readers of the review can express their opinion on the design and content of the review. To express his/r opinion, the reader must fill a form. Clicking on the *Insert* button the data is taken over by the database, being possible to visualize it on the page where the opinions are displayed. If the reader does not fill all the requested data, an error message will be shown and the field left unfilled will be pointed out.

The *Internal Page* was created only for the librarians of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library, the page accessed only by password. This page contained two other pages: *Answers* and *Colleagues*, as well as the site management page used exclusively by the webmaster.

The designers have tried to order everything on the pages of the review (images, animations), so that all the elements included may transmit the basic idea and may be related to what is to be published in the review.

In the first two design variants, frames were used to create some pages of the review. The left hand frame showed the contents of the review, while in the right hand one the content of the articles could be read.

For the following two design variants, a technique common to online publications has been used. On the home page, all the sections and articles of the issue are enumerated; the section title, the article title, a short fragment from the beginning of the article, and a link to the page which contains the entire text are displayed. The reader has the possibility to decide from the first page which articles interest him/r.

In all design variants the following pages have been preserved: *Archives*, *Opinions*, *Editorial Staff*, *The Map of the Site*, and *Jokes*, *Aphorisms*, *Quotes*. Some pages and sections considered no longer of interest have been eliminated, and new ones have been introduced. The *Archives* section was created to offer the readers the possibility to read the former issues of the review. *The Map of the Site* was elaborated in the first two variants as a graphic representation of the site, a figure which presented its structure and the connections between the pages. In the two latter variants it appears as a draft similar to a table of contents which helps the readers to understand the structure of the review.

One of the most useful pages in the review is *Bibliorev by E-mail*. This page makes possible for the readers to request to be announced by e-mail whenever a new *Bibliorev* number is issued. The page has been appreciated and used by a large number of readers.

The last stage in elaborating each design variant of the site was to test it in different browsers and to upload the files to the web server. For uploading the files, File Transport Protocol was applied, using a ftp client (Total Commander).

When the files had been uploaded to the web server, it was checked whether the file names were compatible with the system the files were moved to. The Unix (Linux) system used as a web server being case-sensitive, the (HTML or image) file names were always given in lower case in order to avoid errors.

An advertisement campaign is made in order to promote the review and to make it known to the target public. Some possible ways for promoting the *Bibliorev* are: search engines, web site directories, a link to the review on the site of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library.

The web crawlers used by search engines are programmes which visit web pages, they read them, and follow their connections to other pages. These web crawlers analyze the title, META tags, headings,



and content of the site. The meta tags are a special tag category invisible for the readers of the page, which offer information to the search engines.

There are differences between web site directories and search engines. Thus, while search engines use automatic web crawlers for searching sites, directories are created manually by editors, and the sites are listed only if it has been previously sent by the webmaster.

### **Future plans for the review**

The visibility of electronic reviews is problematic because of the prejudice that anybody can publish anything on the Internet by which forums, blogs, reviews, etc are understood. This prejudice is spread by those who never entered on the sites of reviews and never saw what this means – that electronic reviews have an editorial staff, where the texts are selected, and that someone is assuming responsibility for the publications (besides the authors, of course). Unfortunately, not all electronic reviews are published regularly. Because of this they may be considered “only sites”, the same lot as other sites. We believe that this leads to their remaining invisible and to not being taken into consideration.

What is considered to be an advantage by some (e.g. minimal costs), the appearance of the electronic format can be, in fact, a great disadvantage in the reception of a review. The differences between electronic and paper based cultural press would disappear and only the difference of the medium would remain if authors were encouraged somehow (professional recognition; material or financial remuneration, etc.) to publish in the former.

At the present stage, electronic reviews are regarded as a “tool” used by someone who cannot publish a paper based periodical, using thus the Internet. There are not two ways of conceiving a review: paper or Internet based, only one: professionally. This is the only way to accomplish serious and “visible” things.

It is important for a review to be published with regularity, in case of our review in each three months, as well as to insert the articles in PDF format, to use permanent sections, and to modernize the design continuously. Last but not least, the editors of the *Bibliorev* will focus on advertising the review in the electronic media as well as by traditional means (flyers, posters, etc.).

**As a conclusion**

- *Bibliorev* was conceived and realized in order to improve internal and external organizational communication;
- The obtaining of the ISSN made the editor responsible for the accomplishment of the proposed objectives;
- The editorial programme states that besides informative articles scientific articles in the domain of library and information science should also be included in the review.

## **Appendix**

### **The index of authors and collaborators of the review *Bibliorev***

1. Barca (Hotea) Meda Diana – Special Collections
2. Belean Ana – Library of Legal Studies
3. Botez Maria – Indexing
4. Branzaş (Grigore) Liana – Public Relations / Multimedia Room
5. Căpâlneanu Anamaria – Documentation
6. Chiorean Tudor – Public Relations
7. Ciorascu Paula – Public Relations
8. Cistelecan Felician – IT Department
9. Costea Ionuţ – Special Collections
10. Costin Angela – Periodicals
11. Crişan Carmen – Multimedia Room
12. Curta Olimpia – IT Department / Deputy Director
13. Dumitrascu Costel – student in library and information science / Public Relations
14. Fodorean Nastasia – Cataloguing
15. Géczi Róbert – Digitization
16. Ilis Florina – Documentation
17. Kovács Mária – Special Collections
18. Lazăr Monica – Indexing
19. Macarie (Presecan) Georgina – student in library and information science / Marketing
20. Maier Eliza – References
21. Marcu Angela – References/ Documentation
22. Mateuţă Adela – International Exchange
23. Mátyus (Tamás) Kinga – Library of Physics / International Exchange
24. Meister Éva – Indexing
25. Miclăuş Liliana – International Exchange / Public Relations
26. Moldovan Nicoleta – Public Relations (temporary employee)
27. Molnár Erika – student in library and information science / Public Relations
28. Morărescu Gabriela – Zoology Library
29. Mureşan Simona Viorica – Cataloguing
30. Ostrovschi Felix – Collection Preservation / Adrian Marino Room
31. Perşa Mariana – Human Resources

32. Pop Lenuța – Book Cleaning Laboratory
33. Popescu Marlen – Newspaper Room
34. Radosav Doru – Director of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library – University Professor
35. Roman Cosmin – British Library
36. Salánky Valeria – Documentation / Public Relations
37. Sincrăian Viorica – Periodicals
38. Stoica Monica – Collection Preservation
39. Șuta Alina Ioana – Public Relations / International Exchange
40. Szász Melinda – Library of Physics
41. Szekely Adriana – Public Relations / Subscriptions – Loan
42. Timofte Simona – Public Relations
43. Todor Daniela – Documentation
44. Vlassa Dan – Library of Psychology
45. Guțanu Laura – Mihai Eminescu Central University Library, Iași
46. Radu Mădălina – student in library and information science / document manager, Babeș-Bolyai University

Translated by Ágnes Korondi