

## TRENDS AND THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OF PUBLICATIONS IN A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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ALINA IOANA BOGĂTEAN \*

**Abstract** International publication exchange continues to generate interest within the field of librarianship. For decades, such exchanges have represented a strategic way for university libraries, directly supporting scholarly communication, collection development, and institutional visibility. In the context of digital transformation, open access policies, and evolving research dissemination models, traditional exchange activities are undergoing significant changes. This paper analyses recent trends in publication exchanges within a university library, highlighting the shift from print-based practices towards hybrid and digitally oriented collaboration models. It examines the impact of budgetary constraints, evolving acquisition policies, and the growing prevalence of electronic resources on exchange programs.

**Keywords** Publication exchange, academic libraries, collection development, open access, international cooperation.

### 1. Introduction – The International Context of Scientific Exchanges

The history of publication exchange is closely intertwined with the evolution of scientific publishing. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the processes of publishing and exchanging written works were, for all practical purposes, inseparable. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, publication exchange had become an important means of addressing the acquisition challenges faced by university libraries. Initially, these exchanges were received from partner institutions and were primarily intended for professors, although libraries often incorporated some of these materials into their collections. Swedish universities were among the earliest to formalise such practices, instituting the *commercium literarium* as early as 1745, when the vice-chancellor of the University of Uppsala ordered that thirty copies of each academic publication be reserved specifically for exchange among Swedish universities.<sup>1</sup>

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\* “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca. [alina.bogatean@bcucluj.ro](mailto:alina.bogatean@bcucluj.ro).

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<sup>1</sup> Johanna Lilja, “History of the International Exchange of Publications,” in *Handbook on the International*

A major turning point in the internationalisation of publication exchange occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the efforts of Alexandre Vattemare, a French actor and philanthropist. He developed the first structured system for international publication exchange, laying the groundwork for later programs, such as those initiated by the Smithsonian Institution and the agreements established under the Brussels Convention.<sup>2</sup>

During his travels to the United States, between 1839–1841 and 1847–1849, he advocated for systematic exchanges between American and European institutions. He argued that such exchanges facilitated global access to scientific, cultural, and technical information and promoted cooperation among governments and learned societies. Vattemare's efforts were widely recognised: several American states, municipalities, and educational institutions appointed him as their cultural agent in Europe, Congress authorised the exchange of duplicate volumes held by the Library of Congress, and he was granted duty-free import privileges for materials received from Europe.

Between 1839 and 1864, approximately 300,000 volumes circulated among ministries, universities, and academies in Belgium, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Great Britain, Russia, and nearly fifty American cities. The formalisation of these practices continued to progress. In 1867, the first international convention on publication exchange was signed in Paris, followed by a more comprehensive agreement: the Brussels Convention of 15 March 1886 (*Convention A for the International Exchange of Official Documents, Scientific and Literary Publications*). The signatory states included Belgium, Brazil, Italy, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, and the United States of America.<sup>3</sup> One of the most significant outcomes of the convention was the establishment of national exchange offices, which institutionalised and coordinated the publication exchange on an international scale.<sup>4</sup>

In Romania, the practice of scientific exchange emerged in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Romanian Academic Society received several periodical collections from the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters in exchange for 26 volumes published by the Society. In 1874, prompted by writer Alexandru Odobescu, a systematic exchange program with foreign scientific institutions was established. The first exchanges with American institutions date from 1883. Until 1952, the Library of the Romanian Academy served as the country's National Centre for the Exchange of Publications.<sup>5</sup>

At the international level, publication exchange activities received renewed support in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through conventions and recommendations developed under the auspices of UNESCO and various professional organisations in the field of library and information science.

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*Exchange of Publications*, eds. K. Ekonen, P. Paloposki, P. Vattulainen (K. S. Saur, 2006), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre-Alain Tilliette, *Alexandre Vattemare's International Document Exchanges and the Collection of Foreign Official Publications of the Bibliothèque administrative de la Ville de Paris: a Historian's Treasure Trove*, <https://origin-archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla64/151-133e.htm>, accessed 10 September 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Johanna Lilja, "History of the International Exchange of Publications," 56.

<sup>4</sup> Mircea Regneală, *Tratat de biblioteconomie* (Asociația Bibliotecarilor din România), vol. 2, 157.

<sup>5</sup> "List of Exchange Centres and Libraries with National Responsibility collected by the Exchange Centre for Scientific Literature of Finland," in *Handbook on the International Exchange of Publications*, 145.

Since its first General Conference in 1948, UNESCO has consistently underscored the importance of such exchanges for promoting international understanding, scientific collaboration, and cultural development. The organization viewed exchange programmes as essential for reducing global disparities in access to knowledge, particularly in regions with limited scientific and cultural resources. In 1956, UNESCO, in collaboration with leading experts in librarianship, documentation, and archives, as well as representatives of IFLA (The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions), FID (The International Federation for Information and Documentation), and the International Council on Archives, proposed a revision of the 1886 Brussels Convention, which had become outdated.

A subsequent meeting held in 1958 led to the drafting and adoption of two new agreements: the *Convention on the International Exchange of Publications* (Convention No. 1) and the *Convention on the Exchange of Official Publications and Government Documents between States* (Convention No. 2).<sup>6</sup> Both conventions were unanimously adopted during the tenth session of the UNESCO General Conference, held in Paris on 5 December 1958, and entered into force in 1963. By 1973, thirty-five states had ratified them. Under Convention No. 1, signatory states committed themselves to encouraging and facilitating publication exchanges not only among governmental bodies but also among non-governmental educational, scientific, technical, and cultural institutions operating on a non-profit basis.<sup>7</sup>

The conventions advanced international cooperation, supported the development of national infrastructure for exchange services, and introduced mandatory annual reporting to UNESCO, in order to ensure transparency and continual improvement. Romania adhered to the *Convention on the International Exchange of Publications* through Decree No. 835/1964, published in the *Official Bulletin of the Grand National Assembly of the People's Republic of Romania*, No. 6, on February 26, 1965.<sup>8</sup> These conventions particularly benefited developing countries, which at the time lacked well-established international cooperation networks and could rely on the support of documentary institutions from Western countries. For these nations, including Romania, the international exchange of documents gained significant importance, facilitating access to valuable scientific and literary publications that would have been difficult to obtain in the absence of the foreign currency resources required for their purchase.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Convention concerning the International Exchange of Publication, UNESCO, *General Conference*, 10th, 1958, 85-89; Convention on the Exchange of Official Publications and Government Documents between States, UNESCO, *General Conference*, 10th, 1958, 90-92.

<sup>7</sup> P. Vattulainen, "International Framework of Exchanges," in *Handbook on the International Exchange of Publications*, 38.

<sup>8</sup> Decree no. 835/1964 on the Ratification of the Convention concerning the International Exchange of Publications, adopted in Paris on 5 December 1958, published in the Official Bulletin of the Great National Assembly of the Romanian People's Republic, No. 6, 26 February 1965, available at: <https://sintact.ro/legislatie/monitorul-oficial/decretul-835-1964-pentru-ratificarea-conventiei-privind-schimburile-16806679>, accessed 14 October 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Regneală, *Tratat de biblioteconomie*, 159-160.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rapid global expansion of publishing reinforced the importance of international exchanges as a mechanism for the free circulation of ideas and the dissemination of scientific and cultural knowledge. These exchanges were commonly organised through bilateral agreements requiring mutual delivery of scientific publications. In response to the emerging challenges, an IFLA committee issued recommendations to guide the effective organisation of exchange activities. The guidelines emphasised that exchange services should operate as autonomous units within libraries while maintaining close coordination with acquisitions departments. They also highlighted the need for dedicated staff with proficiency in foreign languages, particularly those widely used in international communication. In line with these recommendations, the international exchange service of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library has consistently operated as a specialised professional office. Over time, it has significantly contributed to the library’s international cooperation initiatives and its broader collection development strategy.

This paper analyses recent trends in international publication exchanges within a university library, highlighting the shift from print-based reciprocal agreements towards hybrid and digitally oriented collaboration models. It examines the impact of budgetary constraints, changing acquisition policies, and the growing prevalence of electronic resources on exchange programs. As libraries operate in a constantly evolving environment, exchange activities must continuously adapt to technological, social, and economic transformations. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the shift towards digital resources and remote services, highlighting the importance of flexible collection development and user-centred approaches.

## **2. Scholarly Context**

The wide range of issues associated with international exchange policies has been the subject of considerable scholarly interest, as publication exchange remains a fundamental component of collection development and a key mechanism for disseminating scientific output at local, national, and international levels. A review of the relevant scientific literature reveals that, in recent decades, research on collection development, exchange policies, open access publishing, and electronic resources has become increasingly prominent in both Romanian and international academic scholarship.

In Romanian scholarly literature, this topic is addressed in studies devoted to collection development and interlibrary cooperation. Several authors have provided notable insights.

Authors such as Oana Mercheș,<sup>10</sup> Carmen Pavăl and Oana Mercheș,<sup>11</sup> Mircea Regneală<sup>12</sup> emphasize the role of publication exchange as a tool for complementing library collections and facilitating the circulation of scholarly information. In Romanian university libraries, international exchange has represented, alongside acquisition and donations, one of the main methods of enriching documentary holdings.

More recent studies conducted within central university libraries have analysed the evolution of this service in the context of technological and institutional transformations. For example, studies focusing on the activity of the “Mihai Eminescu” Central University Library from Iași highlight that the international exchange of publications represents a form of scientific and cultural cooperation between institutions from different countries, based on the principle of reciprocity in the transfer of documents.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Adela Mateuță<sup>14</sup> highlighted that the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca received a substantial number of foreign scholarly publications on a non-monetary basis, many of which possess considerable scientific, documentary, and cultural value.

Alina Ioana Șuta<sup>15</sup> conducted a comparative analysis of publication exchange activities at the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca and the University of Wrocław Library in Poland. The results highlighted the way in which these activities contributed to the development of scientific publication collections and to the strengthening of academic relationships. The paper in question emphasised that international exchange continues to be a widely used method for acquiring foreign literature, particularly in the context of economic conditions that negatively affect educational and cultural policies.

International publication exchange must adapt to contemporary requirements and must be supported by appropriate technical infrastructure to enhance access to electronic information,

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<sup>10</sup> Oana Mercheș, “De ce schimbul?” *Biblos*, no. 15 (2003):

[http://www.bcu-iasi.ro/docs/biblos/biblos15/8\\_Meridian\\_1.pdf](http://www.bcu-iasi.ro/docs/biblos/biblos15/8_Meridian_1.pdf), accessed 14 October 2025; Mercheș, “Modificarea paradigmei schimbului interbibliotecar,” *Biblos*, no. 30 (2018): 86-92.

<sup>11</sup> Carmen Pavăl, Oana Mercheș, “Schimbul interbibliotecar din cadrul Bibliotecii Centrale Universitare ‘Mihai Eminescu’ Iași,” *Breviaria Bibliothecaria*, no. 10-12, 2022, <https://www.bcucuj.ro/node/865>, accessed 12 March 2026.

<sup>12</sup> Regneală, *Tratat de biblioteconomie* (2022), 155-169.

<sup>13</sup> Pavăl, Mercheș, “Schimbul interbibliotecar din cadrul Bibliotecii Centrale Universitare ‘Mihai Eminescu’ Iași.”

<sup>14</sup> Adela Mateuță, “Schimbul internațional de publicații al Bibliotecii Centrale Universitare Lucian Blaga din Cluj-Napoca. Prezentare generală,” *Bibliorev*, no. 12 (2005):

<https://www.bcucuj.ro/bibliorev/arhiva/nr12/info4.html#sus>, accessed October 16, 2025; Mateuță, “Schimbul internațional de publicații al Bibliotecii Centrale Universitare Lucian Blaga din Cluj-Napoca,” *Bibliorev*, no.13 (2006): <https://www.bcucuj.ro/bibliorev/arhiva/nr13/info2.html>, accessed 15 October 16, 2025.

<sup>15</sup> Alina Ioana Șuta, “From the International Exchange of Publications to the Exchange of Experience - a Polish Contact,” *Philobiblon: Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities: Ideas, Books, Society, Readings*, no. 12 (2007): 403-412.

as emphasised by Camelia Gheorghe in a study on international publications exchange at the “Carol I” Central University Library from Bucharest.<sup>16</sup>

Describing the exchange activities of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca, Octavian Petraşcu observed that this service developed continuously, interrupted only during the Second World War, and expanded significantly after 1989 through the establishment of new partnerships. He also emphasised the growing number of exchange offers and requests for new publications, as well as the staff’s commitment to improving the organisational processes and to modernising operations through automation.<sup>17</sup>

Important theoretical and applied studies in the international literature further contextualise the field, addressing topics such as exchange practices, the evaluation of library collections, the future of publication exchange in the electronic era, and even the possible disappearance of exchange programmes. One of the most important contributions in this field is the *Handbook on the International Exchange of Publications*, initially prepared under the auspices of UNESCO and later updated within the programmes of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). First published in 1950 and subsequently revised in several successive editions, this handbook provides guidelines on the organisation of publications exchange, the role of national exchange centres, and the principles of international cooperation between libraries and academic institutions. The fifth edition, completely revised and published in 2006, reflects the transformations that have taken place in the field of scholarly communication and highlights both the traditional importance of the exchange of printed publications and its adaptation to the new realities of the digital environment.<sup>18</sup>

Suzanne Honoré authored one of the earliest reference papers presented at the Conference on the International Exchange of Publications in Europe (Budapest, 13-19 September 1960),<sup>19</sup> and identified two key categories of advantages associated with obtaining foreign official publications. Moreover, from the perspective of European exchange, the conference addressed the challenges and opportunities associated with the exchange of official publications among participating states, including national exchange centres, general exchange policies, the selection of exchange partners, the value and equitable balance of exchanges, practical arrangements, lists of publications intended for exchange and their relationship with the national bibliography, as well as the obligations of each state regarding the treatment of collections received from abroad,

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<sup>16</sup> Camelia Gheorghe, “Schimbul internațional de publicații al Bibliotecii Centrale Universitare din București-trecut, prezent, viitor,” <http://www.bcub.ro/cataloge/unibib/schimbul-international-de-publicatii-al-bibliotecii-centrale-universitare-din-bucuresti---trecut-prezent-viitor>, accessed 12 June 2025.

<sup>17</sup> Octavian Petraşcu, “Schimbul internațional de publicații între deziderat și posibilități de realizare,” *Hermeneutica Bibliotecaria-Antologie Philobiblon*, eds. Florina Ilis, Ionuț Costea (Presa Universitară Clujeană, 1998): 224-228, <http://dspace.bcucuj.ro/handle/123456789/21893>.

<sup>18</sup> Keisti Ekonen, Päivi Paloposki, Pentti Vattulainen eds., *Handbook on the International Exchange of Publications*, 5<sup>th</sup> completely new edition (K. S. Saur, 2006), 158.

<sup>19</sup> The Conference on the International Exchange of Publications in Europe (Budapest, 13-19 September 1960) was organized under the auspices of UNESCO, at a time when the exchange of publications was becoming a strategic instrument for international scientific cooperation.

including their preservation, classification, and cataloguing.<sup>20</sup> At the same conference, Boris P. Kanevsky outlined multiple benefits of exchange agreements, including: rapid delivery of foreign publications without reliance on export-import intermediaries; the elimination of labour-intensive administrative tasks (such as placing orders and managing cash accounts); improved efficiency in book selection; access to materials not produced for sale or already out of print; opportunities to save foreign currency when publications are provided free of charge or at reduced prices; and the ability to fill gaps in collections through the exchange of duplicates.<sup>21</sup>

At the 65<sup>th</sup> IFLA Council and General Conference, held in Bangkok, Thailand (20-28 August 1999), Johannes Metz provided an overview of the concept of official publications that could be exchanged internationally in light of the 1958 UNESCO Convention, after which he presented a report on the official publications received by the State Library in Germany. He emphasised that parliamentary documents, legislative bulletins, information bulletins, statistical reports, and other publications issued by ministries and central government institutions are of primary importance. In his view, the exchange of publications between states varies considerably in both quality and in quantity.<sup>22</sup>

In a study presented at the 67<sup>th</sup> IFLA Council and General Conference, Alexei P. Romanov and Tatiana V. Petrousenko concluded that Western libraries face distinct but equally severe challenges in their exchange operations. They emphasised that publication exchange requires significant expertise and analytical skills due to its labour-intensive nature.<sup>23</sup> The same authors also address the future of international book exchange in the electronic age at the Russian National Library, acknowledging that exchange has historically represented an accessible and efficient acquisition method, and, in certain periods, the only means of obtaining foreign publications. Furthermore, they note that electronic reproduction technologies are expected to become more efficient in the near future and will play an increasingly significant role in international book exchange.<sup>24</sup>

According to Ron Hogg, by the early 2000s, publication exchange was no longer an effective means for Western libraries to acquire publications (particularly serials) from the former Soviet Union or from Central and Eastern Europe, owing to financial difficulties faced by Eastern

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<sup>20</sup> Suzanne Honore, "Special problems involved in the exchange of official publications," *Conference on the International Exchange of Publication in Europe*, Working paper no. 5, Budapest, Hungary, 13-19 September 1960, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000184324>, accessed 7 November 2025.

<sup>21</sup> Boris P. Kanevsky, "Present and Future of the Exchange of University and other Scientific Publications," *Conference on the International Exchange of Publications in Europe*, Budapest, Hungary, 13-19 September 1960, vol. *Conference working paper*, no.11[22], 7-8, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000184324>, accessed 7 November 2025.

<sup>22</sup> Johannes Metz, "International Exchange of Official Publications," *65<sup>th</sup> IFLA Council and General Conference*, Bangkok, Thailand, 20-28 August 1999, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED441472.pdf>, accessed March 18, 2026.

<sup>23</sup> Alexei P. Romanov, Tatiana V. Petrousenko, "International book exchange: has it any future in the electronic age?," *67<sup>th</sup> IFLA Council and General Conference*, August 16-25, 2001: <http://archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla67/papers/150-101e.pdf>, accessed 27 October 2025.

<sup>24</sup> Romanov, Petrousenko, "International book exchange: has it any future in the electronic age? A view from the Russian National Library, St. Petersburg," in *Handbook on the International Exchange of Publications*, 98.

partners and the growing dominance of commercial suppliers.<sup>25</sup> The author further notes that major libraries, including the British Library, maintain only a small number of exchange partners, while Cambridge University Library terminated all exchange agreements as early as 1997, as a result of the economic changes and the emergence of specialised suppliers.<sup>26</sup>

In an article by Judy Mansfield and Beacher Wiggins, the authors reiterate that, over the past decade, many countries, including the United States, have significantly reduced the number of publications available for distribution in print, while increasing the number of publications distributed in digital format.<sup>27</sup>

More recent scholarship expands the discussion into areas of knowledge exchange and community engagement. Peter E. Sidorko and Tina T. Yang, examining knowledge transfer from an academic library perspective, stressed that open access plays a central role in enhancing public availability of research outputs and facilitates knowledge exchange within academia. Citing Eysenbach, they note three major advantages of open access: increased citation rates, broader access for end users, and greater interdisciplinary reach.<sup>28</sup> These three aspects demonstrate the alignment of open access with the Hong Kong University definition of knowledge exchange, insofar as they facilitate the dissemination of knowledge while generating reciprocal benefits for all users.

Johanna Lilja, in her study of the publication exchange practices of four Finnish Learned Societies up to the Second World War, demonstrated that establishing exchange relations alone was insufficient to secure international visibility. Consequently, these societies developed various strategies to promote networking.<sup>29</sup>

The rise of Open Access and digital resources presents both opportunities and challenges for libraries engaged in international exchange. Digital platforms facilitate faster and broader dissemination of publications, reducing dependence on traditional print-based exchanges, while disparities in information and communication technology infrastructure (i.e., the digital divide) may limit access for some institutions.<sup>30</sup> These trends highlight the need for the “Lucian Blaga”

<sup>25</sup> Ron Hogg, “The Death of Exchange,” in *Slavic&East European Information Resources*, vol.3, no.2/3 (2002): 29-43.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Mansfield Judy, Beacher Wiggins, “Transformation of the U.S. International Exchange Service: Project Report,” Paper presented at the World Library and Information Congress: 75th IFLA General Conference and Council, Milan, Italy, August 23–27, 2009. <http://www.ifla.org/annual-conference/ifla75/index.htm>, accessed 18 March 2026.

<sup>28</sup> Peter E. Sidork, Tina T. Yang, “Knowledge exchange and community engagement: An academic library perspective,” *Library Management*, vol. 32, no. 6 (2011): 4.

<sup>29</sup> Johanna Lilja, “Challenging the Matthew Effect. International Exchange of Publications in Four Finnish Learned Societies until the Second World War,” in *Commentationes Scientiarum Socialium* 76 (Helsinki: The Finnish Society of Science and Letters, 2012), 9.

<sup>30</sup> See U. Aliyu, M.N. Musa, A.M. Rabiou, J.H. Kawure, S.D. Ringim, A.A. Ahmed, “Open Access and the Digital Divide: Challenges and Opportunities for Libraries in the ICT Era,” *Insight - Inform*, vol. 7, no. 1 (March 2025): 717, <https://doi.org/10.18282/ii717>, accessed 30 March 2026.

Central University Library to adopt hybrid and digitally supported exchange models, ensuring effective participation in global scholarly communication

In line with global trends in open access publishing, Jarmo Saarti and Kimmo Tuominen observed that numerous prestigious institutions within national research and higher education systems have adopted open access principles. In their view, digitalisation has affected the organised exchange of publications, but has not completely disrupted it in Finland. There still appear to be researchers, fields of study, and libraries that benefit from the exchange of scholarly literature, although their number is gradually decreasing. It remains to be seen how the exchange of publications will evolve if the majority of new scientific works become available not only in digital format, but also through open access.<sup>31</sup> Supporting this view, A. Landøy, S. Ghinculov, A. Repanovici, and N. Cheradi noted Romania's strong presence in the Directory of Open Access Journals, with more than 300 indexed journals.<sup>32</sup>

L.M. Luchka analyses the role of book exchange in the development of scientific library collections and highlights its evolution over time. Book exchange represents an important component of the process of acquiring high-quality collections in Ukrainian libraries.<sup>33</sup>

The existing literature provides significant perspectives into the development and functioning of publication exchange programmes. Most studies focus either on general theoretical aspects or on individual institutional experiences. The transformations brought by digital publishing, open access policies, and changing financial conditions have significantly influenced traditional exchange practices. In this context, the international dissemination of scientific knowledge, whether through traditional publication exchange or open access initiatives, must be understood in relation to the balance of exchanges, the financial costs associated with the distribution of print materials, and the strategic role that exchange services play in the development and maintenance of library collections.

Despite these contributions, a relatively limited number of studies provide a detailed analysis of how international publication exchange currently functions within Romanian academic libraries and how these services adapt to contemporary changes in scholarly communication and collection development policies.

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<sup>31</sup> Jarmo Saarti, Kimmo Tuominen, "Openness, resource sharing and digitalization – an examination of the current trends in Finland," *Information Discovery and Delivery*, Volume 49, Issue 2 (2021): 97-104.

<sup>32</sup> A. Landøy, S. Ghinculov, A. Repanovici, & N. Cheradi, "Open Access policies and experiences in Norway, Romania and Moldova," *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries (QQML)*, 5(3) (September 2016): 647.

<sup>33</sup> L. M. Luchka, "Library book exchange: History and current state. University Library at a New Stage of Social Communications Development," in *Conference Proceedings 6* (2021): 83–88, [https://doi.org/10.15802/unilib/2021\\_248388](https://doi.org/10.15802/unilib/2021_248388)

### 3. Research Objectives

This research addresses the functioning of the international exchange office of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca, which operates as a distribution centre for publications within both national and international exchange networks. The study aims to document the role of the library’s international exchange office, highlighting its contributions to the collection development, its efforts to disseminate scientific publications, and its role in meeting the academic needs of the academic community.

The main research questions are the following: How has the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library succeeded in its efforts to distribute scientific publications? How has the Open-Access movement influenced the institutional exchange agreements? The exchange office operates within the library’s Evidence and Collection Development Department and has adapted and reorganised its activities over the past decade in order to support Babeş-Bolyai University’s policy of promoting international collaborations and to create an effective framework for disseminating academic scientific outputs.

### 4. Research Methodology

The research methodology is based on a comprehensive review of scientific articles, books, specialised publications, legal documents, statistical data, analysed through both quantitative and qualitative approaches, as well as on the author’s professional experience. For the literature review, the databases subscribed to by the institution through the ANELIS PLUS 2020 project (National Electronic Access to Scientific Literature for Supporting the Research and Education System in Romania) were consulted. In the first phase of the research, searches were conducted using EDS (EBSCO Discovery Service), which enables simultaneous retrieval of records from subscribed scientific resources, the library’s online catalogue, and other resources provided by EBSCO. In the second phase, a content analysis was carried out on publications and studies relevant to the research topic.

### 5. From Traditional to Hybrid Exchanges

Initially, international exchange was conceived as an agreement or contract under which the parties reciprocally exchanged a wide range of printed materials. Over time, however, it became an important means of collection development, providing access to both current and older publications.<sup>34</sup> To ensure a fair balance, exchanges were often conducted on a piece-for-piece, page-for-page, or value-based basis. Open exchange, in which balance is not strictly controlled, was also possible.<sup>35</sup>

University libraries are among the institutions most interested in publication exchange, their main objective being the exchange of their own publications: university textbooks,

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<sup>34</sup> Şuta, “From the International Exchange of Publications to the Exchange of Experience,” 404.

<sup>35</sup> Lilja, “Challenging the Matthew Effect,” 11.

yearbooks, periodicals, reports, manuscripts etc. In the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca, the first concrete initiatives aimed at establishing an international exchange office were discussed during a meeting held on 24 October 1923.<sup>36</sup>

The project was proposed by Professor Emil Racoviță and supported by the university library board. The first results of national and international exchanges were recorded in the university yearbook for 1929-1930, which reported that the university library had exchanged materials with 125 Romanian and foreign universities and other scholarly institutions. It had received 103 parcels containing yearbooks and doctoral dissertations, as well as 124 printed volumes since the establishment of the exchange service.<sup>37</sup>

The legal framework for the international exchange programme was established through the Council of Ministers’ Decision No. 62/1960 and Directives No. 835 and No. 836/1964. Since then, the library has continuously strengthened its relations with the exchange partners involved in such agreements. Thus, the exchange network currently includes 206 partners from 33 countries, according to the statistical data from the end of 2024. The library receives both monographs and periodical publications in print and/or electronic format.

In return, the principal publication distributed through the exchange programme was the *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai* journal, the main periodical of Babeş-Bolyai University. Formerly published as the *Bulletin of Victor Babeş and Bolyai University*, it has been one of the most important publications sent by the library’s exchange office since the publication of its first issue, in 1955.<sup>38</sup> The journal’s primary objective was to publish the results of the scientific research conducted by the academic staff of Babeş-Bolyai University.

From 1985 onwards, the journal’s contents were published in languages of international circulation, including English, French and other widely used languages. This initiative was the result of the cooperation between the university faculty and the librarians working within the exchange office. Since then, the exchange office has regularly distributed the journal *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai*, together with other periodicals, to partner institutions throughout Romania. Since 2017, *Studia* has 29 different subject series, which reflect the full range of specialisations, faculties and departments within the Babeş-Bolyai University. The editorial activity of these periodicals is run by the National University Research Council and by the Senate Specialised Commissions.

Many of the series of the *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai* journal are available online. The level of access varies depending on the series and the publication period, in accordance with the principle that making research publicly available supports a broader global exchange of knowledge.<sup>39</sup> By way of example, in the case of the *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Mathematica* series, all articles from the year 2000 onward are freely available in PDF format.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Adela Mateuță, “Schimbul internațional de publicații al Bibliotecii Centrale Universitare Lucian Blaga din Cluj-Napoca. Prezentare generală.”

<sup>37</sup> Petrașcu, “Schimbul internațional de publicații între deziderat și posibilități de realizare,” 225.

<sup>38</sup> Șuta, “From the International Exchange of Publications to the Exchange of Experience,” 405.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.cs.ubbcluj.ro/journal/studia-mathematica/journal/about?>, accessed 31 March 2026.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.cs.ubbcluj.ro/journal/studia-mathematica/archive/>, accessed 31 March 2026.

In the case of *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Iurisprudentia*, this series was one of the first Romanian legal journals to adopt online publication. Starting with the second issue of 2008, the journal has been published in both print and electronic formats. As such, all published articles are freely available on the journal's website. Since 2017, all published materials have been assigned persistent identifiers in the form of Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) through metadata registration with Crossref. In 2018, it became one of the first law journals in Romania to implement the OJS platform to ensure rigorous registration of published materials and their metadata.<sup>41</sup>

Beginning in 2021, at the suggestion of the journal's then coordinating editor, the "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca entered into a partnership with the Harvard Law School Library, thus becoming the first university library in Romania to provide access to and support for the Perma.cc service. As a result, the journal's editorial team can use Perma.cc's long-term archiving service to preserve web pages and electronic documents that may be modified or removed from their original URLs after being cited by authors, whether due to dynamic content or other factors. Currently, articles are published under the terms of a Creative Commons 4.0 CC BY-NC-ND license, which allows use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium solely for non-commercial purposes, provided that the original work is properly cited and the content remains unaltered. Any commercial use requires prior written permission.<sup>42</sup>

For some series, such as *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Biologia*, recent articles can be downloaded in PDF format directly from the journal's website, while older series of the abovementioned journal can be accessed through the library's platform dedicated to course bibliographies and journals, which is continuously updated and expanded. Access to this platform is restricted to registered library users.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to the 29 series of the *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai* journal, the library also distributes other periodicals requested by partner institutions which represent distinct research areas. Almost all these scientific publications are published in international languages and are now available in open access, allowing users to consult both current issues and the complete archive.<sup>44</sup>

In light of these editorial innovations, it can be argued that providing extended open access to journals' contents facilitates the broad dissemination of scientific information and makes it readily available to academic communities worldwide. In this respect, Romanian editors are following a major trend in contemporary scholarly publishing. The exchange office of the university library regularly distributes scientific publications issued by the institution, including *Philobiblon. Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities*, *The Historiographical Yearbook of Romania*, and other publications listed on the library's website under the Research and Editorial Activity section.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> <https://law.ubbcluj.ro/en/journals/studia-universitatis-babes-bolyai-iurisprudentia/>, accessed 31 March 2026.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> <https://public-view.bcuccluj.ro/login.php>, accessed 31 March 2026.

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.ubbcluj.ro/ro/structura/publicatii/reviste>, accessed 31 March 2026.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.bcuccluj.ro/ro/despre-noi/activitatea-editoriala-c4%83-cercetare>, accessed 31 March 2026.

## 6. Practical approaches

Following the example of other libraries across the world, the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library is part of an international exchange network whose primary objectives are to support the development of foreign-language collections, to disseminate publications issued by Romanian publishers and institutions, and to promote Romanian culture and civilisation. Initially, international exchange activities were managed using paper records on which all relevant bibliographic information, including the title of the journal, its origin, and the years and volumes received, was recorded.

Beginning in the early '90s, the library introduced new technologies and procedures in order to improve the management of exchange activities. This led to a shift from traditional working methods to more modern practices through a series of initiatives developed by the IT department, enabling more efficient centralisation and management of data relating to institutional partners.<sup>46</sup>

Since 1996, international exchange activities have been centralised through the use of FoxPro, a program developed by specialists from the university library's IT department. The system incorporates several modules, including a database of exchange partners and a register of publications sent and received through exchange agreements. This application facilitates the updating and management of partner records, publication titles, and postal fees. It enabled the creation, modification and deletion of database records, it supports the processing and distribution of publications, it establishes links between publications and partner institutions, and generates reports and statistical data.<sup>47</sup> The exchange activities require the following operations: establishing new exchange relations, drafting the lists of publications available for exchange, responding to offers and enquiries, dispatching publications, recording exchange transactions, and handling transport and customs procedures.<sup>48</sup>

Since 2008, the publications (books and journals) obtained through the library's exchange agreements have been processed in Aleph 500, an integrated system whose configuration has been adapted to the exchange procedure which involves the sending and the processing of the publications received from the country and abroad.

Since 2020, Aleph has been used exclusively in the desire to integrate all exchange activities into this library system. The institution has faced significant challenges posed by the emergence of e-science and the exchange office therefore has rebuilt its work flow. It has adapted to the growing expectations of university library users regarding their access to the relevant scientific information. Practically, the service has aligned its activities with institutional priorities in order to increase operational efficiency.

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<sup>46</sup> Alina Ioana Şuta, “From the International Exchange of Publications to the Exchange of Experience,” 408.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Anneli Virtanen, “Organisation and methods,” in *Handbook on the International Exchange of Publications*, 27-35.

The international exchange office has integrated its activities with those of other library departments, especially the processing/cataloguing service, in order to maintain more accurate records of incoming publications and ensure a balanced and transparent exchange process. The cataloguing module of the library system has made it possible to develop a model tailored to the needs of the exchange office, while the acquisitions module facilitates the receipt of publications and the claiming of missing issues. These practical changes did not affect the ongoing exchange activities, as the office continues to contribute to the enrichment of the library's collections, especially in today's institutional budget constraints which have negative repercussions on the educational and cultural policies.

The international exchange programmes established between libraries, educational institutions, and research institutes offer significant economic advantages. Foreign publications are often considerably more expensive than their domestic counterparts, and direct purchases frequently involve foreign-currency transactions. In many cases, libraries must rely on intermediaries to acquire such materials, which results in additional commission costs. Another advantage of the exchange program is the fact that extra editorial publications can thus be procured, even if the scientific publications are not available on the open markets.

## **7. Results**

An analysis of the collections acquired through international publication exchange programmes, based on both quantitative (collection size and growth, materials budgets size and growth, document delivery statistics etc.) and qualitative methods (direct collection checking, users observations) highlights the following developments: from its beginning until 2007, the service continued to expand in size, scope and costs, but starting in 2009 with the reorganization of the exchange activities, we observed a drastic decline in the number of institutions involved in such agreements.

In 2009, as part of an effort to improve the library's international exchange activities, a questionnaire was sent to more than 1,200 exchange partners, in order to gather information on the publications distributed and received through exchange agreements, partners' areas of interest, the balance of exchanges, and their preferences regarding publications in Romanian. More than 900 partners responded to the questionnaire distributed by the university library. Many of the institutions involved in the exchange indicated a preference for publications in international languages. At the same time, the library continued to systematically send Romanian publications to Romanian-language lecturers and institutions abroad.

According to statistics, in 2009, the exchange office of the university library cooperated with 944 active partners, in 2014 with 909 institutions and at the end of 2024, the number of exchange partners was substantially reduced to 206.

**Table: Statistical overview of exchange partners and publications sent and received between 2014-2024**

Years	Number of partners	Sent publications		Received publications	
		Titles of books	Titles of journals	Titles of books	Titles of journals
2014	909	821	100	343	468
2015	934	537	88	324	406
2016	732	556	72	694	565
2017	510	60	71	488	421
2018	421	66	71	296	381
2019	401	484	65	137	358
2020	378	174	64	100	228
2021	321	452	72	219	244
2022	316	643	50	234	234
2023	240	344	40	416	229
2024	206	437	40	640	186

Source: the author’s own interpretation based on international exchange statistics

The data presented in the Table above indicate a clear downward trend in the number of exchange partners over the last decade, accompanied by fluctuations in the volume of exchanged publications. While the number of partners decreased significantly, the number of received publications did not decline proportionally, suggesting a shift toward more selective and potentially more valuable exchange relationships. This evolution reflects a transition from extensive exchange networks toward more strategic partnerships, focused on quality rather than quantity.

The sharp decline in exchange partners can be attributed to several factors: institutions are facing recent budget cuts, in addition to the increase in customs duties associated with the delivery of parcels with publications; thus, many of the partners have had to cancel the exchange programmes. Other shortcomings of international exchange (such as the instability of acquisitions compared to purchasing, the difficulty of continuously and systematically collecting multi-volume publications, and the time-consuming nature of the process) have become increasingly apparent.

These changes are found not only in the case of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca, but have also been mentioned in the case of libraries abroad.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Jarmo Saarti, Kimmo Tuominen, “Openness, resource sharing and digitalization – an examination of the current trends in Finland,” *Information Discovery and Delivery*, Volume 49, Issue 2 (2021): 97-104.

The open access movement and the digitisation of publications even led to a decrease in the exchange of printed publications because more and more partners thus prefer to focus on electronic resources. Institutions are prioritising electronic resources, which are not only more cost-effective, but also more accessible to users worldwide. The data also confirms the growing impact of digitalisation, as many institutions reduce print exchanges in favour of electronic access models.

Electronic publications, mostly journals, issued by large commercial publishers require expensive access rights. To cope with these trends, libraries have formed large national or international consortia, which buy licenses for widespread use in all institutions that are an integral part of these large-scale projects. Collaborative collection development extends beyond resource sharing, in order to include the coordinated acquisition, preservation, and access strategies. Core elements include – resource sharing: providing access to materials held by other institutions via interlibrary loans or shared electronic resources; bibliographic access: awareness of available resources, facilitated by platforms like OCLC WorldCat; coordinated collection development: libraries cooperate in the acquisition, retention, and subject specialisation to maximize the use of funds and reduce duplication. Consortial and cooperative efforts are increasingly critical, due to stagnant budgets and limited space. Joint digital initiatives, shared storage, and cooperative electronic resource licensing help libraries meet user needs efficiently.

In Sari Lehtinen's opinion, it is almost impossible to negotiate an agreement for access to commercially issued electronic resources through exchange programmes. The exchange partner, the publisher and the distributor are often three different institutions, the latter of which are interested in making a profit. In the case of a hybrid version, some publishers offer free access to the electronic version for subscribers to the printed versions. In most cases, this problem does not concern subscriptions obtained through the exchange.<sup>50</sup>

At first glance, the number of publications sent appears to exceed the number of publications received. This situation can be explained by the fact that, in exchange for a single journal title obtained from abroad (often of considerable scientific value and financial cost), the library typically dispatches several Romanian periodical titles. The imbalance between sent and received publications highlights the asymmetrical nature of exchange relationships, which may be influenced by differences in publication output and institutional priorities.

The recent decline in submissions can be attributed not only to reduced funding, but also to a more efficient use of the financial resources allocated to the distribution of publications requested by exchange partners. This was achieved through a systematisation of submissions with the aim of improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and overall quality of the exchange process. We must also note that some institutions have expressed a preference for online exchange arrangements, particularly in the case of scholarly journals. This may involve granting full electronic access to journal content or, in some cases, discontinuing traditional exchange partnerships altogether in favour of electronic publications.

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<sup>50</sup> Sari Lehtinen, "Electronic Publication," in *Handbook on the International Exchange of Publications*, 24.

## Conclusion

These changes have not adversely affected the effective functioning of the exchange programme. International exchange continues to play an important role within the institution's collection development policies, constituting an alternative source for the acquisition of foreign books and periodicals, contributing to the scientific dissemination of scholarly knowledge across all intellectual fields. The study demonstrates that international publication exchange is undergoing a structural transformation, shifting from traditional print-based reciprocal exchange towards digitally mediated forms of knowledge sharing.

Rather than disappearing, exchange programmes are being redefined as complementary mechanisms within a broader ecosystem of scholarly communication. A quantitative and qualitative increase in publications entered through international publication exchange is noted. More and more partners prefer electronic exchanges because of the rapid and global digital accessibility, the reduction of costs associated with printing expenses, transportation costs etc. which is a significant advantage for institutions wishing to distribute or received resources.

In this context, university libraries should invest in hybrid exchange models that integrate digital platforms, open access policies, and selective print exchanges. The future of library collections is defined by collaboration, technology, and responsiveness to evolving user expectations. Key trends include: expansion of collection types beyond traditional formats; increased reliance on collaborative initiatives and consortial purchasing, integration of Open Access resources and OER into library offerings; adaptation to user expectations for instant, digital, and accessible content.

The "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca continues to support and develop this activity despite the numerous challenges it faces. Future research should focus on evaluating the long-term sustainability of hybrid exchange models and their impact on the diversity and accessibility of library collections.