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LIBRARY WEBSITE MANAGEMENT
[ZARZĄDZANIE SERWISEM WWW BIBLIOTEKI]

Abstract: The article presents Bulgarian Libraries best practices for creation and supporting library websites. It is focused on the possibilities of library websites as instruments of library management, marketing and public relations. An important point is to create individual electronic resources for the libraries. Particular stress here is laid to ensure access for blind people by creating text versions of the library websites. A viewpoint presented involves organization of library website development by creating teams responsible for different resources and themes. The goal is to support reach, useful and attractive library website by taking advantage of resources and creativity of library specialists, with no additional costs.

BULGARIA – DIGITAL RESOURCES – LIBRARY WEBSITE – MANAGEMENT – PUBLIC RELATIONS

Abstrakt: Przedstawiono najlepsze praktyki w tworzeniu i utrzymywaniu domowych serwisów WWW w bibliotekach bułgarskich, skupiając uwagę na możliwościach wykorzystania stron internetowych jako narzędzi zarządzania biblioteką, marketingu i *public relations*. Za istotne w tym kontekście uznano kreowanie przez biblioteki własnych zasobów elektronicznych – biuletynów, kolekcji linków, bibliotek cyfrowych, wirtualnych wystaw, programów edukacyjnych itd. Ze szczególnym naciskiem podkreślono potrzebę zapewnienia równego dostępu do tych materiałów użytkownikom niewidomym przez udostępnianie bibliotecznych stron WWW w równoległej wersji tekstowej. Wyrażono przekonanie, że projekt tworzenia serwisu internetowego w bibliotece powinien zakładać pracę w zespołach zadaniowych odpowiedzialnych za poszczególne typy zasobów i kolekcje tematyczne. Celem istnienia serwisów jest bowiem oferowanie bogatych, użytecznych i atrakcyjnych zasobów, tworzonych – bez dodatkowych kosztów – w oparciu o zbiory własne biblioteki, dzięki kreatywności zatrudnionych w niej specjalistów.

BUŁGARIA – PUBLIC RELATIONS – SERWIS WWW BIBLIOTEKI – ZASOBY CYFROWE – ZARZĄDZANIE

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Introduction

The subject of this report emerges from educational process of the first year students at the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia. The discipline concerned is "Library and Information Resources". The key tasks within my first exercise have been taken up to receive the information on two important questions. First, what kind of libraries have the students visited so far? Second, what stage of reading competence have they reached? Having discussed the issues, I specify that they have the following experience: they know school libraries and only a few of them are familiar with public libraries; their reading culture is not at high level and the prevailing perception of the libraries is that they are uniform and routine institutions.

While planning my exercises in discipline "Library and Information Resources", I separate the module „Bulgarian Libraries and library websites". The module involves practical webside activities and visiting various kind of libraries (National Library "St. St. Ciryl and Methodius", University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia City Library, Central Science and Technical Library etc.). Before having a visit to a library, the student presents the library website. The students develops papers to inform and to present the possibilities of different Bulgarian library websites. While preparing this training organization I have set the following goals:

- Introduction of students including wide variety of library institutions and their contemporary tasks, mission and organizational structure.
- Increasing reading competence of the students.
- Optimal perception and giving a meaning to the educational material in discipline "Library and Information Resources".
- Disclosure of possibilities of library websites as an instruments of library management, marketing and public relations.
- Provoking a new perception of a library - library as a creative institution, attractive place for future realization of library specialists.

An analyses of websites at 30 Bulgarian libraries provides me an opportunity to make basic conclusions upon some achievements and best practices for Bulgarian Libraries in creating and supporting library websites.

Library websites as an instrument of library management, marketing and public relations

The contemporary library website is a basic instrument of library management, marketing and public relations. Solid and complete presentation of the library's mission, tasks, information opportunity and its whole activity gives us possibility to overcome spatio-temporal and geographical restrictions and the library messages can be reached by numerous users and partners.

- A well structured, actual and supported website allow us:
- To reflect the history, structure, mission and tasks of the library and to reach successful public communication;
- To reveal information possibilities of a library; to stand out its unique quality, regarding specialized funds and collections;

- To totally clarify the full spectrum of our library-information services – free of charge and paid;
- To expose the activities corresponding to the educational function of contemporary library as a center for building information competence of the users;
- To show up the cultural activities performed by the library and to make it become a space of cultural and spiritual communication;
- To draw public attention to the application of new information technologies and a library meaning in the information society;
- To introduce the projects which a library serves to the public;
- To introduce present partnerships of a library and to win new partnerships;
- To be a good platform for communication with users; for performing activities connected with library public communication;
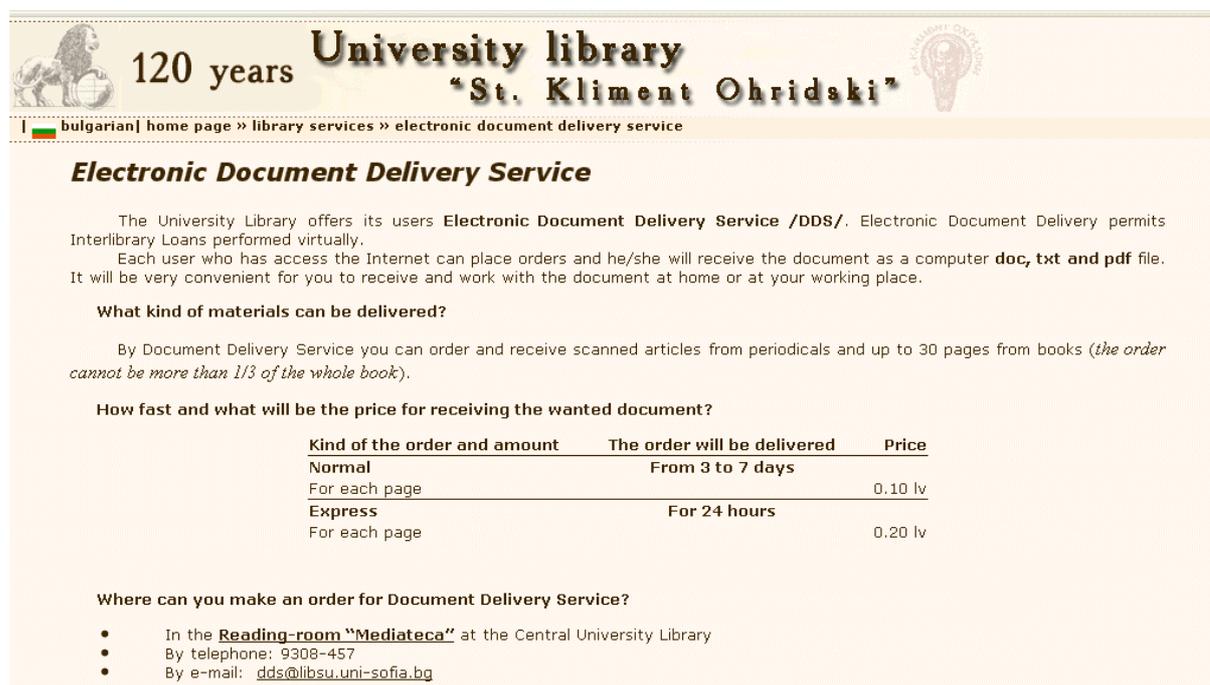- et alia.

The practice of Bulgarian libraries in websites creating shows 3 approaches – using services by external companies that take charge of the website development, creating website by a library's own team and a combined approach.

At the first stage of creation of library website you should write and accept a website instructive conception.

There should be Home page content prepared consisting of: basic menu (sections: About library, History, Structure, Rules for readers, Project etc); Services and Resources; Electronic catalogues; Own electronic resources; Events etc.

Section About library shows users the library's history from the beginning to the present day, and it is usually illustrated with pictures. There is also a library structure presented: departments and contact information. Special attention is given to contemporary information opportunities of a library – fund's structure and prosperity, valuable donations, reading places, specialized library collections, reference system, multimedia and electronic resources, servicing people of special needs. The readers should be given a possibility to take a first hand look at Rules for readers.

Section Services should present the full spectrum of library-biblioghraphic and information services and the library fund and collection's variety. There is a comprehensive information for all library services given – free of charge and paid. There should be information on a character, way of purchase and price of each service available. The library should popularize its new services based on application of information and communication technologies - Electronic Document Delivery Service, Mediatheca Reading Rooms, Adapted Services for disable people etc. as well as its participation in Interlibrary Loan (united catalogues, Library Loan, Interlibrary Loan) including the programmes at national and international level.

Picture 1. Electronic Document Delivery Service: Leaflet. http://www.libsu.uni-sofia.bg/dds_en.html [visited 14.04.2009]

In Section Resources there is a structured information about electronic catalogue in the library (with instruction for its size and retroconversion activities) and about traditional catalogue system of library given (it is a good solution to put interactive map to help the users find the location of particular catalogue in the library). There are very detailed electronic resources presented, on-line and off-line databases that the library serves.

In a separate rubric there can be educational activities and resources for self-training indicated: On-line Guides, Self-training Courses, consultations and trainings offered by the library. For the University Libraries it is important to emphasize their place and importance as contributors to e-learning curricula.

An important moment of development of scientific and university library website is its use for effective promotion of the on-line resources offered by the library. Leading information suppliers prepare recommendations on how to make more effective popularizing and use of scientific resources. A good example are "15 Ways to promote Effective Use of Online Resources" [Fifteen 2007, p. 5] set by Library Connect Editorial Office of Elzevier – They include: Library Website Positioning (on the institutes' homepage – include indispensable links to library pages; on the library homepage – offer links to digital resources and subject-specific content; reduce the number of clicks to facilitate a full-text access); Library Website Searching (allow searches on metadata or key words associated with online resources; offer options to specify search criteria; offer searchable lists of online resources and providers); Library Website Help Features (List library staff titles and names with telephone numbers and email addresses; incorporate subject-specific help features within your library website; provide well-structured FAQs as part of your website; provide guides appropriate for all levels of users, from beginner to advanced); Marketing to users (use communication extending beyond library buildings and targeting users in subject-specific ways; avoid generic email alerts to a wide audience in favor of tailored email messages; create training courses focusing on specific subjects or problems; allow users to register online for training courses or sessions; collaborate with your publisher and vendor contacts).

As to a library website, it is important to point out the information which is connected to completed library projects. Excepting chronological presentation of projects, there is recommended to publish some short annotation about the project (name, goal, activities, results) and links to its site or to publication, giving additional information. Participation in projects is an important tool of library management to attract resources for realization of new ideas for library development. That is why the actual information on its experience and achievements presented on the library website will help us to write new project conception and will be an impressive visit card attracting the future partners.

An important point of development of the library websites is creation of own electronic resources in the libraries – bulletins, inquiries, web-collections, digital libraries, virtual exhibitions, educational programmes etc. There are some examples of the best practices of Bulgarian libraries: University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" at Sofia University (http://www.libsu.uni-sofia.bg/), Regional Library "Pencho Slaveikov", Varna (http://www.libvar.bg/library/), Sofia City Library (http://www.libsofia.bg/), Public Library "Stilian Chilingirov", Shumen (http://www.libshumen.org/) etc.

Some interesting ideas are realized by University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" at Sofia University [Yankova 2004, p. 100–105]. The Section *Electronic Library at University Library* includes: virtual library with electronic resources in the area of education in slavic philology and Slavic studies *Bibliotheca Slavica:* http://www.libsu.uni-sofia.bg/slavica/, common project of University Library and Slavic Faculty at Sofia University and *Library "Chetivo":* http://www.libsu.uni-sofia.bg/e-texts.html, which gives the access to multidisciplinary electronic publications.

I would also like to point out a developed, in project, kids fen website (http://www.libshumen.org/do/) at Public Library "Stilian Chilingirov", Shumen, dedicated to children.

The backup of rubric "Events" is a challenge for the library PR – as it requires continuous updating, which will chronologically illustrate all the library initiatives - cultural, information, educational, promotional as well as different forms of partnership with professional, government and social organizations in the country and abroad. The efforts are worthwhile because this is an archive of the active library's work, the prepared materials can be available for the reports and for presentations of different aspects of institution activity.

Considering the library website development we foresee additional menu which usually includes: Frequently Ask Questions; Ask the librarian; Bulletins; Guide; Exhibitions; Advertising and information materials; Virtual tour.

What is important to emphasise here is the role of Public Relations Department. The publishing of electronic bulletins – News from the Library, New Books etc. with opportunity of subscribing, allow us to reach unlimited number of patrons and to give current information for the library activities. This is an important instrument for the library management – to inform the public about the achievements, to present new moments, to search the adherents and support.

Digital exhibitions of University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" at Sofia University can be viewed at: http://www.libsu.uni-sofia.bg/exhibit_58.html. There is also "Newsletter of University Library" http://www.libsu.uni-sofia.bg/newsletter.html and "Books Newsletter" issued by the library. Virtual tours are offered at: University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" at Sofia University (http://www.libsu.uni-sofia.bg/virt_trip_en.html), Regional Library "Pencho Slaveikov", Varna (http://www.libvar.bg/library/tour/index.html) etc.

Functional menu (links to text version, English version) contains address information, form for searching on the website and on the Internet, investigations and forms for subscription for electronic bulletins etc.

Usually, in the central section of the website we present the most recent and actual information on the library, on services and resources offered, and on forthcoming events.

An important stage is the design creation and visual conception – they make our image unique. That is why we carefully select each component – colours, logo, type, illustrations etc.

Accessibility of the Library websites

Bulgarian libraries have serious achievements in the area of accessibility of the website dedicated to blind people. Many of them offer reading places for blind people, which are equipped with the specialized software - Jaws for Windows and Bulgarian Speech Lab 2.0.

I have specified some of technical problems concerning webpage designing, and their elements that make work for blind users difficult:

- Pictures with no alternative text;
- Complicated pictures (graphics and diagrams) with no good explanation given;
- Video without text or audio explanation;
- Wrong charts' description (with no titles of columns);
- Using frames without option 'No frames';
- Forms with no possibility to pass the fields with TAB key and incorrectly named fields;
- Browsers with non-standard interface (changed menu, key combinations etc);
- Browsers without key combinations for all functions;
- Non-standard documents and formats;
- Flash animations;
- JAVA scripts and applets;
- Too many links on a page etc.

All over the world organizations are making every effort to make the use of the Internet more easy for blind people. In order to achieve this goal they create and apply unified standards for accessibility of webpages. Here are some resources containing recommendations to web-developer : World Wide Web Consortium – Web Accessibility Initiative (http://www.w3.org/WAI/http://www.w3.org/WAI/Resources/), Daisy Consortium http://www.daisy.org etc. There is recommended to apply these standards in the process of library websites' development, in order to meet social expectations and needs of all the readers.

I would like to indicate the activity of UNICA – Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe and their "Mission and Statement on Equal Opportunities", signed on 15 December 2000. During the Warsaw Conference "Education for All", held in 2007, Minimal Standards for Disabled Persons for UNICA Universities" have been confirmed. European Universities should take advantage of the UNICA network experience - the university libraries are considered as a key partner to achieve the goals.

In Bulgaria, in the period of 2005-2006, the national project "Access to Electronic Information for People with Disabilities in the Bulgarian Libraries" had been run (March 2005 – March 2006). The project involved the

Union of library and information services officers and had been implemented with the financial support of the British Council Bulgaria [Grashkina 2007, p. 357]. There has been the Website 'Access to Electronic Information for People with Disabilities in the Bulgarian Libraries' developed: http://www.libsu.uni-sofia.bg/project_access/. It compiles Bulgarian libraries' own electronic resources and databases. The website is available to both general public and visually disabled users by a suitable format. The website won public recognition and received a national award Information Technology Project 2006 in category "Public Organizations".

Conclusions

To conclude, I would like to generalize my opinion on optimal organization in a library in the aspect of its development and library website support (considering the two possible cases: the website is supported by a library or service of an external organisation is provided) by creating teams responsible for different resources and themes. The goal is to support reach, useful and attractive library website by using resources and creativity of library specialists, with no additional costs.

In the end, Library Websites based on Web 1.0 product might be at the moment regarded as a slip in the past, whereas Web 2.0 or 3.0 might be worth investing in the research regarding library management, marketing and Public Relations. The future will show, we will keep up with new tendencies, ideas and practices.

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