New Management Strategies and Organizational Culture in Libraries

Maria Rodica VOLOVICI

The Central Library of the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Romania
Biblioteca Centrală a Universității „Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu
Personal e-mail:rodica.volovici@gmail.com

New Management Strategies and Organizational Culture in Libraries

Implementation of modern managerial processes is an essential aspect in contemporary libraries which will enable and facilitate their success in the information world. Recent understanding of the importance which knowledge resources have regarding the performance of organizations has lead libraries to consider structural changes and massive investment for implementing knowledge management. In this context, the paper approaches the organizational culture in libraries by way of an example from Romania and emphasizes the necessity to create in libraries a culture that promotes learning and knowledge sharing which can help them become learning organizations.

Keywords: libraries, managerial processes, organizational culture, knowledge resources, Romania

1. Introduction

Educational institutions have an important impact on human values and norms. Schools at all levels, libraries and the church are the main institutional tools in a society for creating and transmitting ideologies and values. They are the most important cultural organizations. In turn, these structures operate acting under the impact of certain values, in other words, each one has a specific organizational culture. Libraries are organizations specialized in the preservation and communication of certain values, but they are also characterized by a specific culture.

Today, when information has become a commodity, and a quite expensive one, when readers have become customers, the differences between the documentary and information structures and the economic ones begin to disappear. These structures tend to change in socio-economic structures in which the priority is employee satisfaction and quality of life. Also, one can see the move from closed system type organization to open system type organization that interacts with the environment, a trend visible in libraries too.

In this world of information, the role of libraries and librarians acquires a new dimension. The market economy offers libraries the opportunity to orientate towards new paid services, the opportunity to come up with offers of services to meet user demands[1].

The new technologies bring new skills into the world of libraries, but at the same time additional responsibilities. The diversification of information media requires from librarians competence and adaptation to these changes. In front of the challenges of information technology, libraries must meet the requirements of the new technologies, of the information market (continuously expanding) and especially of users, some of them already accustomed to use some of these possibilities and tools for getting information and documents.

2. The need for new managerial processes in libraries

Libraries must now assume a new role that involves a series of mutations concerning the services they offer, the staff, the available space and the access to collections. The new structure highlights the importance of services offered to users, which influence even the organization of collections. The management of the library activities has as main

objective increasing the system performance indicators. As the result of the work in this sector is information provided on time, on appropriate support and adequately structured, the performance indicators can be associated with the level of satisfaction of these requirements[2].

In recent years, implementation of modern managerial processes has become an important part in libraries' activity which will enable and facilitate their success in the information world. A possible solution for libraries is considered to be the managerial process that concentrates on the most valuable resource currently available to them, namely the knowledge held both at the level of the employees individually and of the processes and practices specific to each organization[3]. This understanding of the importance which knowledge resources have regarding the performance of organizations has lead libraries to consider structural changes and massive investment for implementing knowledge management. But visible transformations are needed in libraries which could help them for better positioning towards competition and the continuous challenges in society. Specialists underline that in this context any knowledge management approach in libraries "should consider that key element enabling them to adapt continuously to the changing environment, namely learning. This plays a leading role in transforming organizations and therefore in the implementation of knowledge management, and from there to the discussion on the need for their transformation into learning organizations there is only one step"[4]. But libraries need a clear strategy so that the learning process and the application of knowledge management help them in obtaining performance.

The evolution of libraries in the knowledge society can be described as revolutionising, especially the academic world, the research and education[5]. The option for introducing new management models, for introducing the newest techniques of acquisition, processing, storage and sizing of documents and information is here, as in any field, a decisive condition for increasing efficiency. The transfer of information must be carried out in competitive conditions and means with those of the structures that benefit of this process, if not even in privileged situations, given the propulsion role of scientific information in all spheres of knowledge and human action[6].

The main condition for some remarkable results in the libraries' activity is the quality of the specialists. The importance of human resources and organizational culture in any initiative to modernize the libraries is underlined by the experts[7] who indicate that the influence of organizational culture elements "is exercised not only on the organization long-term activity, it also refers to its daily work and thus reflects on the organization's overall performance"[8].

3. Current trends in the activity of the Library of the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu

In the Romanian educational and scientific space the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu is a young institution in which innovation, interactivity and quality are basic principles of the educational process. Established at the same time with the University, the Library of the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, where the courage to constantly reinvent is at home, aims to assist students, teaching staff, researchers, doctoral students in the learning, education, documentation, study and research activity, it is a key link in the knowledge society.

The Library of the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu is guided by four basic principles, namely: unity of vision, good organization and management of services, quality and joint action, cooperation between the parties, focusing with priority on continuing to implement the concept "library of the user"[9] through:

— the design, development and management of the info-documentary services in support of students, teaching staff, researchers and other categories of users;

— facilitation and widening of the access to sources of internal and external information and documentation through the implementation of modern information technologies, the user training for getting skills for the information search, selection, retrieval and use;

— further increase and diversification of the quality of the services offered;

— reorganization of spaces for users;

— development and promotion of programs to attract and guide users;

— organic combination of traditional collection development with acquiring documents in electronic format;

— the existence of the information base necessary for the proper course of activities;

— enhancing the good relations of co-operation with suppliers of publications;

— co-operation within the framework of the internal and international exchange of publications with libraries, information centres in the country and abroad (73 institutions in the country and over 40 from abroad);

— marketing orientation of the library;

— checks and statistical reports.

Performance evaluation is one of the main functions of the managerial process. For the library, this means analyzing the inputs and outputs related to providing information services. Performance is generally considered to be associated with achieving a particular thing. In the case of libraries, performance is the relationship between the resources which enter the library (the inputs) and what the library achieves using these resources (the outputs). The need for performance evaluation is required at present, especially by the rapid pace of change that involves many difficulties, such as:

the growing volume of new publications (the library offers for its users access to a volume of publications about twice higher than in the 1970s, which means that the information published doubles every 15-20 years);

the library stores increasingly more non-print information (audio, video, multimedia), so it must ensure also the equipment needed for access to such information;

users have become more demanding in relation to the library, and the number of information services increases.

Performance assessment helps library managers in planning and communicating, in preventing problems, in making decisions, in monitoring progress and justifying resource allocation. Through a systematic evaluation of performance the user may be better served, both sides getting satisfaction.

The Library of the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu welcomes today its users with the highest quality services, whether coming to borrow books, to seek bibliographic materials in databases, to study in reading rooms or to take advantage of existing technical facilities.

Cultural strategies for attracting young people and children to reading should be developed at macro level and applied in all educational and training environments. A university library brings the individual study to another level, the level of deep research and documentation, and supports academic performance of teaching staff and students alike, and through the interlibrary loan service provides library users access to other collections[10].

Recent research in large academic libraries in Romania[11] showed that a small number of users in the surveyed institutions use and prefer electronic information resources. Other research[12] underlined the need for a better promotion of library services, for a marketing approach to users when introducing electronic resources to libraries.

In this context, an important aspect of the actions undertaken in recent years by the Library of the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu has been achieved by focusing the library on marketing, firstly to popularize the library services, and secondly to improve library activity and thus to increase the quality of services offered by the application of questionnaires to the library users.

In addition to these activities related to user analysis, the library tries to focus also on the analysis of the organizational culture in order to create a culture based on learning and knowledge sharing which could enable implementation in the next years of the knowledge management process.

A survey that was carried out in 2004 identified many elements that could support the creation of a favourable culture for effective knowledge management in Romanian libraries. The author of the study remarked that "Most of the librarians who participated were familiar with this new process, having a fairly good perception of what knowledge management represents, were open to the idea of knowledge sharing and considered the implementation of a knowledge management strategy by their organizations as necessary and beneficial"[13]. An analysis of the characteristics of the organizational culture in large Romanian libraries, among which there was also the Central Library of the "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest, showed that the values promoted in these organizations are performance, professionalism, efficiency, teamwork, communication, competition, and innovation, most of the librarians in the survey being open to the idea of knowledge sharing and many of them characterizing the managerial style in their organizations as being one that creates a stimulating climate.

In Romania there was designed in 2006 a strategic model which includes five basic elements for implementing knowledge management in libraries and information services. The research that continued at the Central Library of the "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest till the end of 2009 gave to the author of the model the possibility to outline a framework for creating a culture of learning and knowledge sharing in Romanian libraries[14].

4. Conclusions

The Library of the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu aims to implement in the next years the knowledge management functions and become a learning organization and having in view the model and the framework created in the context of the Romanian libraries, will concentrate first on creating a culture that promotes learning and knowledge sharing. We consider that by implementing modern managerial processes the library will have the possibility to develop new procedures and practices, to reduce costs, increase staff efficiency, improve the activities, products and services provided to users and in general improve its performance on the market of the information transfer.

Note:

1. C. Martin, P. Powell, *Information Systems: a Management Perspective*, London, McGraw Hill, 1990.

2. S. H. Myaeng, *The roles of user profiles in information retrieval*, Dallas, Texas, Ph.D. diss. Southern Methodist University, 1987.

3. O. L. Porumbeanu, *Managementul Cunoaşterii şi structurile infodocumentare,* Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2006.

4. O. L. Porumbeanu-Madge, *Creating a Culture of Learning and Knowledge Sharing in Libraries and Information Services*, in *New Research on Knowledge Management Models and Methods,* edited by Huei-Tse Hou, Rijeka, Shanghai, InTech, 2012, p. 245-268.

5. M. R. Volovici, M. Fleacă, *Evoluţia bibliotecilor în societatea cunoaşterii. Proceedings of the International Conference of Library and Information Science "Biblio – Braşov 2007",* Braşov, Romania 3-5 May 2007, Editura Universităţii "Transilvania", p. 293-296; R. M. Volovici, *Impactul bibliotecii digitale asupra managementului educaţional*, in *Revista Română de*

Biblioteconomie și Știința Informării, nr. 3/2007, p. 25-28.
6. M. R. Volovici, Rolul bibliotecilor în organizarea sistemului informațional al universității, in *Revista Română de Biblioteconomie și Știința Informării*, nr. 4/2007, p. 36-39.
7. G. H. Hofstede, *Managementul Structurilor Multiculturale: Software-ul Gândirii*, București, Editura Economică, 1996; S. P. Webb, *Knowledge Management: Linchpin of Change. Some Practical Guidelines*, London, Aslib, 1998.
8. O. L. Porumbeanu-Madge, *Creating a Culture of...*, ed. cit.
9. M. R. Volovici, *Biblioteca Centrală a Universității*, in *Monografia Universității "Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu*, Sibiu, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu, 2011, p. 391-416.
10. Gh. Buluță, *Contributions to Library Progress*, Bucureşti, Editura Enciclopedică, 2009.
11. O. L. Porumbeanu, *The impact of electronic resources and new technology in academic medical libraries in Romania*, in *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, 26/2009, p. 152-155.
12. O. L. Porumbeanu, *Is electronic always the right choice? Proceedings of the International Congress on Medical Librarianship "Positioning the Profession", Brisbane, Australia*, 31 August – 4 September 2009, available at the webpage: http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv/UQ:179724/n2_5_Wed_Porumbeanu_160.pdf ; O. L. Porumbeanu, *Is going digital what users want? Researches on the usage of library collections in Romania. Proceedings of the International Symposium "The Book. Romania. Europe",* Bucureşti, Romania 20-23 September 2009, Bucureşti, Editura Biblioteca Bucureştilor, p. 439-445.
13. O. L. Madge, *Knowledge Management in Libraries*, in *Studii de Biblioteconomie și Știința Informării*, Nr. 14/2010, Editura Universității din București, p. 92-98.
14. Porumbeanu-Madge, *Creating a Culture of...*, ed. cit.

Bibiography:

Buluță, Gh. *Contributions to Library Progress.* București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2009.

Hofstede, G. H. *Managementul Structurilor Multiculturale: Software-ul Gândirii (Management of Multi-cultural Structures: The Software of Thinking).* București, Editura Economică, 1996.

Madge, O. L. *Knowledge Management in Libraries.* In: *Studii de Biblioteconomie și Știința Informării (Library and Information Science Research),* No. 14/2010, București, Editura Universității din București, p. 92-98.

Martin, C.; Powell, P. *Information Systems: a Management Perspective*. London, McGraw Hill, 1990.

Myaeng, S. H. *The roles of user profiles in information retrieval.* Dallas, Texas, Ph.D. diss. Southern Methodist University, 1987.

Porumbeanu, O. L. *Managementul cunoașterii și structurile infodocumentare (Knowledge Management and Info-Documentary Structures).* București, Editura Universității din București, 2006.

Porumbeanu, O. L. *The impact of electronic resources and new technology in academic medical libraries in Romania.* In: *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, edited by Graham Walton, No. 26/2009, p. 152-155.

Porumbeanu, O. L. *Is electronic always the right choice? Proceedings of the International Congress on Medical Librarianship "Positioning the Profession"*, Brisbane, Australia, 31 August – 4 September 2009. Available at the webpage: http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv/UQ:179724/n2_5_Wed_Porumbeanu_160.pdf

Porumbeanu, O. L. *Is going digital what users want? Researches on the usage of library collections in Romania. Proceedings of the International Symposium "The Book. Romania. Europe",* București, Romania 20-23 September 2009, Editura Biblioteca Bucureștilor, p. 439-445.

Porumbeanu, O. L. *Strategic Model for Implementing Knowledge Management in Libraries and Information Services*. In: *Studii de Biblioteconomie și Știința Informării (Library and Information Science Research),* No. 13/2009. București, Editura Universității din București, p. 89-105.

Porumbeanu, O. L. *Implementing Knowledge Management in Romanian Academic Libraries: Identifying the Elements that Characterize their Organizational Culture.* In: *Journal of Academic Librarianship,* edited by David F. Kohl, Vol. 36, No. 6/2010, p. 549-552.

Porumbeanu-Madge, O. L. *Creating a Culture of Learning and Knowledge Sharing in Libraries and Information Services*. In: *New Research on Knowledge Management Models and Methods,* edited by Huei-Tse Hou. Rijeka, Shanghai, InTech, 2012.

Volovici, M. R.; Fleacă, M. *Evoluția bibliotecilor în societatea cunoașterii. Proceedings of the International Conference of Library and Information Science "Biblio – Brașov 2007" (Evolution of Libraries in the Society of Knowledge),* Brașov, Romania 3-5 May 2007, Editura Universității "Transilvania", p. 293-296.

Volovici, M. R. *Impactul bibliotecii digitale asupra managementului educațional (The Impact of Digital Library on Educational Management).* In: *Revista Română de Biblioteconomie și Știința Informării (Romanian Library and Information Science Review),* No. 3/2007, p. 25-28.

Volovici, M. R. *Rolul bibliotecilor în organizarea sistemului informațional al universității (The Role of the Libraries in Conceiving the Informational System of a University)* . In: *Revista Română de Biblioteconomie și Știința Informării (Romanian Library and Information Science Review),* No. 4/2007, 36-39.

Volovici, M. R. *Biblioteca Centrala a Universitatii (The Central Library of the University).* In: *Monografia Universității „Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu*, Sibiu, 2011, p. 391-416.

Webb, S. P. *Knowledge Management: Linchpin of Change. Some Practical Guidelines*. London, Aslib, 1998.