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BASE CONCEPTS OF LIBRARIES

BY

CORNELIU FĂGĂRĂȘAN*

Technical University of Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning

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Abstract. In order to understand the development of libraries we must first set some pillars of establishment and operation without which the institution in itself would disappear. This pillars are: **1. A centralized population** –libraries don't flourish in nomadic conditions, and the question to which we have to find an answer is “What attracts the users to the library?”; **2. Stable locations** – for storing and study of info-documentary materials, the possibility of expansion being one of the key requirements of any library. There are four vital factors that intertwine in the development of a library; **3. Economic power** – the economic development implies that libraries must invest a great deal in having solid book collections, that feature old and antique materials, this implies high costs, thus the old manuscripts are rare and have high maintenance costs, but they are not only the main source of spending, as it must be understood the high social role and value of the library. Thus libraries need solid financing, especially public funding.

Keywords: library development; library concepts; progress; library user; info-documentary material; higher education; growth; expansion; economic power; value.

1. A Centralized Population

After the French Revolution (1789 – 1799), the rising of the middle class led to the seizure of the ecclesiastical property and of private collections of

*Corresponding author: *e-mail*: corneliu.fagarasan@gmail.com

the nobility. This program was visionary, resulting in two major progresses: **the first one** involving large and open access of the middle class to books especially if we refer to white male individuals; and **the second one**, involving the development policy of the French nation, a movement that would set the central (national) libraries with national educational responsibilities. This was one of the first steps into creating a new type of library user.

An important role of the library involves educating, even if the interested parties in the democratic environment have the tendency not to agree with the values that a library should promote. Therefore the library, depending on the environment and of those that interpret its purpose, either educates its readers to higher levels of perception and understanding, or it can suppress information that the readers might have found helpful in the pursuit of the opportunities to evolve intellectually, economically and politically. The librarian as a promoter of certain values, as someone that decides a certain educational objective and then follows that objective through the construction and promotion of collections of a certain character or, on the contrary, as being someone that can suppress a collection with educational potential, plays a decisive role in the formation of users.

Michael Harris defines the reading ideology as „*a consensus of the value of reading and of the propagated spread of books*” (John *et al.*, 2010), the one of writing towards a nation’s or a community’s growth and progress. This ideology becomes clear in three particular constructs. **The first one** refers to **control**, the idea that info-documentary material and libraries symbolize the exerted power of the elite to support their values and personal interests. Social control may function to cultivate obedience through the poor and middle class, as to maintaining the political status-quo and avoiding civil unrest. **The second** construct is **the public library as a product**, it being an integrated part of a business that incorporates the associated work of authors, publishers, marketing experts, book sales agents and librarians, partners in this prosperous business from developed societies with multiple funding sources.

A last construct regarding libraries is the one of **memory**. A nation or a municipality develops its capacity to reflect over the progress and to examine its own history, but, also to execute these tasks in environments that are monumental, in places that are representative enough so they will remind the citizens of their intellectual and cultural maturity. Thus millions of words organized in the reading material of a civilization, confirming and promoting the human progress, gathering all the stories that form the narrative of libraries, essentially become the memory of individual or group aspirations, of families or communities, of movements and nations, of actions and of ideas (Harris, 1995).

Therefore, relating to all of the three constructs, it can be concluded that no matter from which perspective the role of the library is approached, the user

will be the one that will conform to the building of the institution in itself and the importance that it plays in the local or national plan, indifferent to the political system in which it operates and indifferent to the pressures and alterations over the information. The need for knowledge becomes thus far more important than the need to choose correctly the source of information. This is the main idea that stands behind the importance of a library as an institution and that will permanently feed its roots.

2. Stable Locations for Growth

Extending the libraries is a process of creation and growth of its resources and an insurance of their use.

The four vital factors for the extension and growth of a library, because it represents a complex process and not something that changes over night, can be seen from different perspectives: a) **Understanding**; b) **Staff**; c) **Material resources**; d) **Wish of participation**.

a) **Understanding** – if a new library service is designed or if an existent one needs to be improved, it is essential that the staff developing them, document themselves with what it has already been done in other countries on the same topic. They will need to visit libraries and study the services that they provide, discuss ideas and objectives. They must not copy everything that is accomplished in other countries, but they should find out what has been tried and how, what has failed and what has been successful.

b) **Staff** – above all, library staff must determine the rate and quality of progress. The effect of staff work over the quality of services is generally immediately recognized; but it is not always aware that its contribution on the rate of progress is equally as strong. There must be sufficient experienced and qualified personnel to lead the services of institutions at every level of development and it would be a very big mistake to start without a framework of people carefully selected that had the maximum of training and experience. How can this, be influenced, for example, in a country without public libraries? Choosing the personnel would have to take into consideration a much broader base; for example, a person that has experience on the management side of a business with a large network of contacts, public official or an engineer or a scientist maybe, having the minimum of special training necessary, each of them can become a great librarian. Once the libraries are well established, staff must be recruited and educated particularly for the work from inside a library; hiring a “profane” as a librarian, would be a mistake over the professional prestige of librarianship, and might prove to have serious limitation effects for library users (Joeckel, 1946).

The essential procedures regarding selecting staff could be as follows:

i) Selecting the best people available based on their qualities and their personal abilities.

ii) Sending them in different countries with advanced developed library services, helping them continue their studies, going to specialized courses for librarians and working in a public library. This would take at least a year.

iii) Establishing national learning institutions that can educate personnel on different levels, with the assistance of qualified foreign staff if necessary. Especially in the first years of development, there needs to be special funding, with most of it spent on giving scholarships in order to promote and support individuals to specialize themselves in this field. There are usually two ways of approaching education when it comes to librarianship: 1) libraries pay students a modest salary while they are studying in the field, helping them work and study at the same time; 2) staff is usually hired first, and if they fit in, then they are sent to library schools, having their studies being paid by the local/central authorities.

iv) The first truly qualified people in the field must be empowered with leading the field or at least with the task of establishing the first agencies that deal with library services. This should be the foundation stone for the development of educational process described previously.

Staff mobility is also important, for instance we can either refer to the ability with which they can change jobs or positions within the library managing structure, but also the much needed help from the local authority for occupying public system jobs are other very important factors that relate to library personnel.

Library personnel has thus the ability in playing a major role in extending the national library system, advancing itself from position to position and taking on more responsibilities and opportunities, that will enable them to occupy various jobs and gaining vast understanding over the problems associated with library services, making this particular occupation very attractive for anyone choosing this career path. Consequently taking care of the staff mobility capacity is imperative, especially when it comes to limitations that can be avoided such as the rigid regulations of a public servant, or of local authorities requesting applicants to be residences of a certain area. All library staff jobs should be open to the best possible candidates, no matter whom they may be and where they may come from.

If local authorities are willing to support the development of a library, from both moral and financial point of views, they are the first to receiving help from central authorities, thus it would be advisable that a potential educational institution in this field should be directly subordinated to the local authorities

which develops public library extension projects and, together with them, wish to grow the number of labor force required in this field.

c) **Material resources** – at a central level, there needs to be a constant support for the local authorities in their efforts of expanding the public library system, but only if they manage to come up with viable and serious projects of development, because it will lead to adequate and useful projects. It goes the same for private library projects requiring public grants or governmental/European funding (Lionel, 1949).

d) **Wish of participation** – libraries without their readers are useless. In every country there are people that can read but they do not wish to, and in some other countries there are people that would read but cant. Were confronted with a high rate of illiteracy, expectations regarding a high percentage of library use just like in countries that have a low illiteracy rate are in vain, but that doesn't mean that libraries aren't necessary or that financing them would be in vain. On the contrary, the literate population from high literacy areas will not need fewer libraries, but more, because their responsibilities as citizens and their opportunities as leaders and educators will be greater. So, although the success rate of such an approach is lower, the need for such approach is much greater.

An optimistic view over the situation described above could take into consideration that there will always be a growing number of semi-illiterate people who will want to read and learn, and for whom it is very important to get used to the use of books in an adequate environment. Therefore, wherever the library system will need to be expanded, the expansion of the library system should contain attractive and useful collections for potential readers. It is in no one's best interest educating people in the secrets of reading if they are denied the right to a wide range of usable materials.. That's why libraries need to have a close relationship with the learning institutions, to know their permanent evolution and needs of expansion.

3. Economic Power

In the current economic climate, public libraries are facing the hard fact of being obligated to defend their position in society and justify their need of financing. Many libraries look to prove to their communities how much they worth through various ways, that will try to show quantifiable contributions and added value they bring to their communities.

Libraries are currently confronted to many challenges in their struggle to prove their importance:

1° Changes when it comes to management philosophies. Ever since the beginning of the `80 it has been emphasized that economic value is the primary

unit for the capitalization of public goods and services, therefore this is a very difficult way of looking at libraries and other social institutions that have a primary educational nature, rather than an economic orientation, and can rarely be profitable from a financial point of view.

2° In the last years it has been intensively debated the fact that the decreasing value of library is caused by the development of the Internet use, some considering that modern libraries often display confusion when it comes to showing their true purpose, which undermines the traditional understanding of a their purpose which is supplying readers with information (Peter, 2007; Robert & Paul, 2002; Sallie, 1997; John, 2003).

3° Some others might consider that Google`s omnipresence has led to challenging the role of the library itself (John & Paul, 2006). While the pressure over public libraries over them having all types of information available is raising, this being based on the fact that many consider that libraries should be like Google, real search engines, there is also a rising pressure over them having an entertainment role as well.

Thus, public libraries are faced with philosophical challenges of their position on the market, with this fact, having a huge impact on their ability of claiming and proving their true value.

The definition of value - „*Value*” at its core is a subjective term, which changes together with the thought processes of those who determine its definition. Value reflects in the quality within something, even though that thing is a physical one or an abstract idea. This in relationship with libraries from the United States of America, gives us one glimpse over the mission and the objectives that are at the base of it all, setting the stage for a dialog over the value of public libraries as we consider them today.

Given that in the year 1732, books were expensive and rare, Benjamin Franklin founded the first library, in Philadelphia, that had a subscription process, a library that had 50 members and the motto: „*To support the common good is divine*” (EBSCO, 2011). After exactly 100 years, in the year 1833, the first public library is being established, in Peterborough, New Hampshire (Price, 2011). While the public library movement has late beginnings, in comparison with other democratic institutions, the founders of this movement thought that libraries are the key social and cultural institutions, required for personal perfection and perfection of the community itself, so that their value cannot be quantified (Harris, 1976; Heckart, 1991; Morehead, 1999; Wiegand, 1996). However, in the political and economic environment of today, expressing and demonstrating values has become more and more significant for the economic survival of public libraries. From the business stand point, value is measured by the intensity of utilization or of the non-utilization of the services offered by the library (Paul *et al.*, 2011).

The National Association of Libraries and Public Libraries of Romania (ANBPR) was one of the main actor's that contributed to the accomplishment of the European Program for Public Libraries 2020 (PL2020), created with the goal to promote the importance of public libraries in Europe, their number being situated at over 65,000 libraries (<http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education...>). Between 2014-2020 ANBPR dedicated and will continue to dedicate great efforts to support the public libraries in their struggle to be declared eligible for the access of European structural funds. Through the access of European funding, ANBPR contributes to the absorption of structural funds allocated for Romania, and ABNPR had developed in this way programs through which they support digital inclusion and training, given that:

- a) approximately 50% of the EU population has less to no knowledge in the field of computer use (<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/...>);
- b) there is a high rate of unemployment in Europe (over 10%) (<http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/>);
- c) 8.9% of EU citizens participate in educational activities, too much under the set target of EU for the year 2015 and that is 15% (<https://digital.lib.washington.edu/...>; <http://www.publiclibraries2020.eu/...>).

Thus ABNPR, had contributed to the development of the funding program EUSPHERE, destined to counter the phenomenon's described earlier, and ABNPR desires the creation at a national level, of a government reserve fund, through which the Romanian Government would contribute, to the participation of Romanian public libraries, in accessing and developing European projects (<http://www.anbpr.org.ro/index.php/...>).

4. Conclusions

The library plays an essential role in society and the present article is intended to confirm this working hypothesis through setting some key landmarks in the research:

- a) **the first key element** of the article is based on the understanding of the idea that *the need for knowledge becomes thus more important than the need to choose the correct source of information*. The library public (regardless of its type) will wish an unlimited access to all of the materials/services that the library has offer;
- b) **the second key element** of the article is based on the understanding of the idea that *the expansion (growth/development) of a library is given by 4 vital factors*;
- c) **the third focal point** of the article is based on the understanding of the idea that *behind any library there must be an economic power*, and this power is based on the manifestation of public interest in creating a legal

Framework For Better Distribution Of Possible Revenues. In Romania, The Role Of ABNPR is essential in this direction, this organization fully contributing to the possibility of funding the library as a factor of progress in society.

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CONCEPTE DE BAZĂ ALE BIBLIOTECILOR

(Rezumat)

Pentru a putea înțelege dezvoltarea bibliotecii trebuie stabilii anumiți piloni ai înființării și funcționării fără de care însăși instituția ar dispărea ca entitate. Acești piloni sunt: 1. O populație centralizată – bibliotecile nu prosperă în condiții nomadice, iar întrebarea la care trebuie găsit un răspuns este „Ce anume atrage utilizatorii spre bibliotecă?”; 2. Locații stabile – pentru depozitarea și studiul materialelor infodocumentare, posibilitatea extinderii fiind una dintre cerințele cheie ale oricărei bibliotecă. În acest sens există patru factori vitali care să contribuie la dezvoltarea bibliotecii; 3. Putere economică – dezvoltarea economică presupune ca bibliotecile să investească foarte mult în a avea fonduri de carte solide, dotate cu materiale vechi și foarte vechi, iar acest fapt costă, prin urmare manuscrisele vechi sunt rare și au costuri ridicate, însă nu doar ele constituie principala sursă a cheltuielilor, întrucât trebuie conștientizat rolul și valoarea socială a bibliotecii. Astfel bibliotecile au nevoie de finanțări în special din fonduri publice.

