

A STUDY ON OPTIMIZATION OF INFORMATIONAL FUNCTION OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN CONNECTION WITH THE EDUCATIONAL PART

Letitia PURDOIU, Bogdan Georgescu

University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest,
59 Marasti Blvd, District 1, 011464, Bucharest, Romania

Corresponding author email: letitiapurdoiu@yahoo.com

Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to determine the perception degree of the role of university library by its users, its relevance in relation to academic learning and research. It is an analysis of possible ways to optimize the accessibility of university library structure, correlated with current information environment impact on its users.

The conducted research follows several important aspects of the relationship between information-documentation and processes of learning and research, especially from the perspective of the analysis of services and electronic informational resources offered by the library, in conjunction with the profile of its users from the served academic environment.

Analysis of conducted study results showed that the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Bucharest Library at present does not fully exploit its info-documentary potential in supporting learning and research. Thus, it certainly should be carefully reviewed its marketing policy in order to define optimal solutions for advertising, creating accurate and complete picture of the library both in terms of content and functionality and offered services; there should be developed specific practical ways to optimize accessibility through information literacy.

Key words: university library, documentation, research, electronic resources, users, informational education.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of learning and research is an upper part of the ongoing human knowledge process, the driving force that has always made possible the progress of human society along historical epochs. Both facets of this phenomenon, the theoretical and the practical knowledge, involve the circulation of information by generating an appropriate informational flow. Libraries by their functions: conservation, information, respectively education, have permanently supported learning and research, through providing information (Regneală, 2009). Teaching and research being placed at the frontier of knowledge require a large amount of information that is stored today on a variety of media. By harnessing them, one evolves towards higher levels of knowledge, generating new information (Kuhlthau, 2004). The urge to research and time factor set new dimensions in developing storage, retrieval and dissemination of information device in the library structures. Today, more than ever,

rapid access to good quality information is a prerequisite for the success of research (Gunnstein and LandØy, 2010). In this context, integrated academic libraries are compelled to respond to new demands/challenges of the moment: continuous optimization of the quality of information provided to all users; adequacy of information products to the expectations of users; influence of the computer science development in the library area; mutations caused by ICT in the content of library activities; diversification of documentation typology managed by the library; translation of emphasis from document to information; the expansion of dissemination and exploitation of information resources to the digital environment; the need for a new information and communication behavior; overcoming space-time conditionalities in communication and information exploitation etc. (Tîrziman, 2010; McNeely and Wolverton, 2008).

Quality is an issue that determines user satisfaction and covers both form and content

of information products and services, being an essential factor in attracting and retaining them (Sutter, 1992).

A suitable method for measuring the quality / effectiveness of library information services is to evaluate its clients satisfaction through regular sociological researches among them. The aim of this evaluative work supported by the library is to get objective feedback among

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The sociological research that I accomplished was conducted during November 2014 and used the questionnaire as a tool for investigating established in the conduct of surveys and polls (Chelcea, 2001). Questions were addressed to actual and potential info-documentary service users of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Bucharest Library, in order to obtain the answers according to the position they adopt in relation to some issues of library activity shown explicitly. The logical sequence of questions was guided by a chronological criterion (questions were asked about the past, present, and then the future) and regarding the link between questions, they were formulated so as to be able to check the sincerity of respondents and knowledge of proposed issues for research.

The undertaken sociological investigation with the target audience of users of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Bucharest Library (undergraduate students and students in master cycle, doctoral students, and teachers) was performed with the help of colleagues from this library. Questionnaires were administered using survey operators, so completion of questionnaires was partially assisted. Related to this reason, we present some aspects regarding the application of questionnaires:

* There was used the technique of questionnaires administered using survey operators within the library to library users frequenting the library, and to those who require info-documentary services within teaching / research departments without coming into direct contact with it. The latter received the questionnaire in departments where they work.

users, regarding the execution of its two fundamental functions: information and education. The investigation results are helpful for the library, representing the starting points for finding new solutions to develop appropriate management strategies to continuous optimization of the functions that define virtually the library work, outlining its relevance in academia that it serves.

* There was used the technique of questionnaires self-administered for that percentage of teachers who for some reason (desire for freedom of response, time inopportunity for the operator to asked the questionnaire completion, lack of time, etc.) did not want a direct collaboration with survey operators, but like the idea of participation in the investigation, and also for the non-users, and potential info-documentary service users willing to cooperate.

Clearly, both types of administration present both advantages and disadvantages:

- the administration of the questionnaire by survey operators allows registering the verbal and nonverbal behavior, and additionally saves time;
- the self-administration enhances safety for response development, but on the other hand it may be at risk of misunderstanding the questions and therefore unable to obtain additional information.

Given the target audience involved in our research, with a high level of education and culture, we believe that the technique of self-administration did not reduce the investigation quality. The conducted sociological research study intended to address the issue of info-documentary services of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Library, through two interpretation angles:

User community of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Bucharest **perception** on related library service in terms of the potential of information and documentation to support learning and research - the content of traditional collections, as of the digital ones, online catalogue, electronic databases -, of the quality of provided services, librarian staff as a specialist in the field of info-documentation, etc., of the promoted image (Tomescu, 2008).

Requirements-expectations of the community specified above, related to the progress of the library institution in question, within the development of the knowledge society.

There was intended through this sociological research to determine in a deep and rigorous manner the real problems faced by users when requesting info-documentary library services. For a higher relevance of the conducted study, in addition to opinions obtained from the noted target audience, there were registered also the opinions of librarian staff relative to the user community position, to facilitate defining those attributes expected in the future by those.

Structure / creation of questionnaires

The specific requirements used to develop questionnaires are found in the specialized literature (Chelcea, 2008). Questions theme in the questionnaire covers the following aspects of the relationship between targeted info-documentation structure and served users community:

- info-documentation potential for learning / research;
- contemporary documentary typology, accessing electronic databases;
- importance of modern technologies in information-scientific documentation - skills for search and use of information;
- requirements regarding the media by which the data / information / knowledge is to be transmitted to the solicitants;
- users perception regarding librarian professionalism on the knowledge, skills, qualities, habits, etc.
- the level of satisfaction of users on library service regarding received information, behavior of library staff, waiting time, etc.

Developing questionnaires covering presented topics appealed to deep knowledge of the info-documentary profession, through a sociological prism, perceived as a particular social level which refers to a group, rights, respectively obligations of its members in relation to society. The context in which the librarian profession can be perceived by the

served society / community relates to the social, economic, cultural area or is determined by other structures or factors. Library staff is appreciated, and rated by the specific community of users and public in general.

The results of the analysis of the questionnaires

Following the analysis and interpretation of the results of investigation we found the existence of substantial differences by comparing perceptions of Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Library users (72%) with those of non-users in this area (28%). Part of non-users of the library under investigation (11%) refers in this respect to certain past sporadic experiences that by their unsatisfactory effect (librarian staff attitude, promptness, professionalism, etc.) have drive them away from the library. The other part of non-users (17%) refers simply to personal choice of not using the services of the faculty library. Analysis shows practically that out of a total of 672 interviewed subjects, 72% are real users and 28% do not attend or do not require the info-documentary services of the analyzed library. We note that in calculating percentages were not taken into account non-responses that existed in an insignificant proportion.

In the following, we present graphically some achieved investigation results values, relating to the most relevant surveyed issues, according to respondents' questions.

According to represented values (Figure 1), of the total number of respondents, the first two categories (making library requests very often and quite often) totaling 41.75% are virtually the most involved, and in the same time, the most interesting part of the users, that showed increased availability through deep cooperation in conducting sociological investigation. They not only respond promptly to investigation requests, but have made many comments where needed, which clearly expressed both perceptions of library service and their expectations regarding this structure.

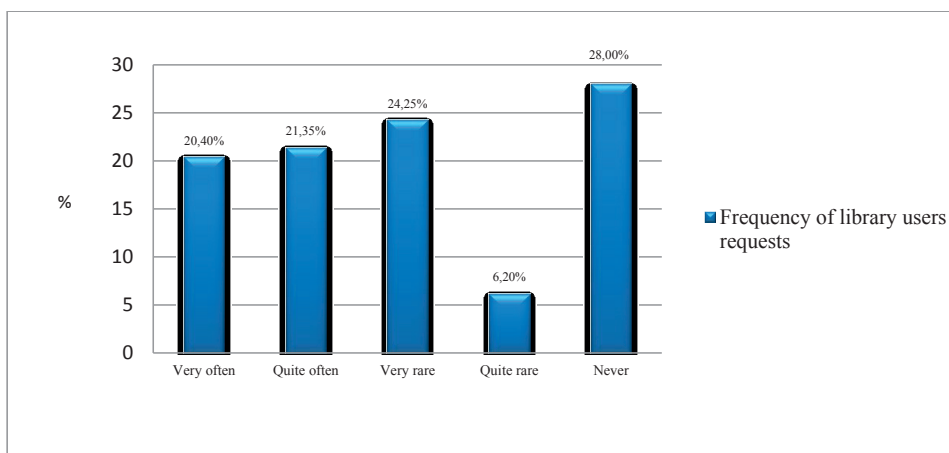


Figure 1. Frequency of library requests made by users

The other two categories of users making library requests quite rare or very rare (totaling 30.45%) were very cooperative in terms of availability for completing questionnaires, showing more interest in expressing their expectations regarding the support that the library can provide in their process of learning / teaching / researching.

Regarding non-users, these are a category of surveyed respondents who do not frequent library for various reasons and do not use its services. They represent a 28% of all respondents. A comparative analysis of the three values of the frequency of library requests from the public in question presents an unsatisfactory situation in terms of this indicator. A percentage of 41.75% of

respondents for optimal frequency (less than half of the targeted public) to 30.45% (with low frequency) and 28.00% (non-users) (Figure 1) shows a reality on which decision makers of the targeted library for investigation must reflect very seriously in order to optimize it.

We believe that in such sociological approach the non-users should receive special attention, their identification influencing future management actions involving reorganization of library services, with regard to transforming these individuals in potential users.

The following graphic (Figure 2) gives an idea of the variety of reasons for non-users category in question not using library services for their ongoing activity.

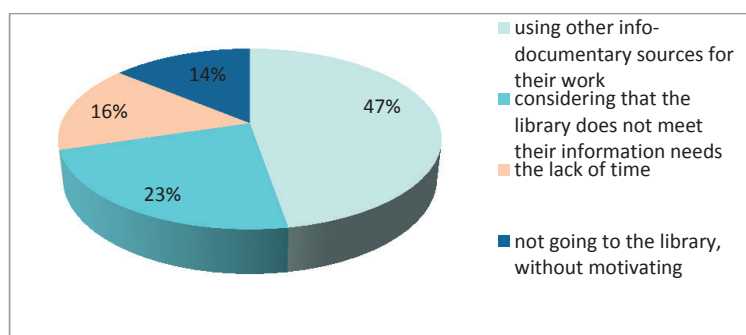


Figure 2. Reasons for which the non-users do not use library services

Non-users identified in this sociological approach are included in all subject categories, and, as shown in the chart above (Figure 2), 47% of them simply resort to other info-documentary sources in their work than

those of the library. A percentage of 23% consider that the library of the institution where they work do not satisfy the requirements for information, another 16% say they do not have time to use the services

of the library and another 14% do not motivate, but just do not make library requests. Regarding non-users, they could be structured along several new categories on matters related to the use of modern library Information and Communication

Technologies. Also we note that non-users proved to cooperate in the sociological approach in a more than satisfactory manner, they offered various data and comments which are actually their main expectations (as potential users) on the library.

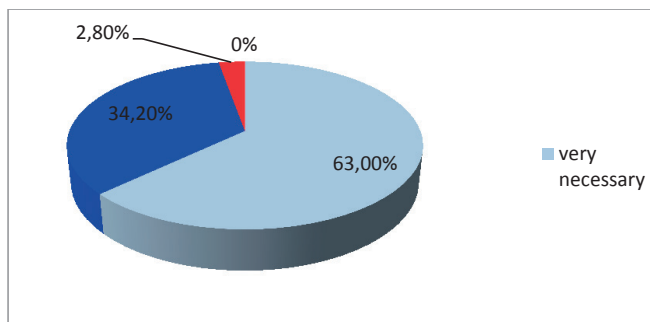


Figure 3. Considerations of non-users regarding the library endowment with modern Information and Communication Technologies

Without being influenced by age criteria, the percentage distribution reflecting importance of automated library systems and widespread use of modern Information and Communication Technologies is relevant (Figure 3). Thus, approximately 63% of non-users consider this very necessary, another percentage of 34.20% consider it necessary and a very small percentage, 2.8%, find it less necessary.

Referring the evaluation of the level of library communication of info-documentary potential we do not see significant appreciation differences between librarians and research staff, however we note that the percentages values are relatively low compared to the other comparative studies. These results show that among both librarians and research staff there is a lower level of appreciation regarding info-documentary potential communication issues related to the library. As a result, this should be examined carefully for determining solutions to rectify this deficiency, moreover to optimize the communication level of the library on its info-documentary ability for learning and research.

Analysis of the importance of modern technologies in scientific info-documentation and search and use of information skills shows that 72% of teachers have the skills

and knowledge of appropriate search and use of information strategies, 23% are not fully satisfied on their level in this matter, and 5% believe they do not have such skills.

Among students of the two cycles and PhD students, a 65% consider that they have search and use of information skills, 20% had a moderate level of satisfaction in this respect, while a 15% said they do not have these skills.

Regarding the typology of contemporary documentary / accessing electronic databases available through the library, it was noted that 63% of teachers use strategies and effective means of information retrieval in collections and databases, which gives them a satisfying retrieval of the necessary information, a 31% know only part of such strategies and search methods and 6% have a satisfactory approach in this direction. In the students group, 54% think they have good knowledge of how to access databases, while a 30% consider having satisfactory knowledge in consulting this informational base, and 16% say they are dissatisfied with their level in this field.

Given the special importance of this segment of info-documentation and the average results shown by the analysis of the strategies and ways of accessing collections and databases, is foreseen the need to develop skills to build

more complex strategies for information retrieval, especially given that the majority of respondents said they trust these sources of scientific information provided by the library.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research revealed that the general perception of the library still retains some traditional attributes, although there is a growing trend of a large number of respondents for widespread using of modern methods and techniques of information retrieval and use in learning activity and research.

Analysis of survey results through the info-documentary potential of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Bucharest Library makes it clear that unfortunately at present it does not fully exploit this potential generously available. In this respect, one has certainly to carefully reconsider the marketing policy of the library to define optimal solutions for advertising, creating accurate and complete picture of the library, both in terms of content and functionality and services.

It emphasizes the need to develop and conduct practical training programs for use of electronic resources and skills training on ICT - access to electronic databases and specialized platforms; the importance of operating in order to develop library users capacity to cope with ever-increasing information volume and hyper-turbulent global information environment; the necessity for the library to assume in cooperation with the teachers the responsibilities that relate to information literacy of users; fostering collaboration between info-documentary structures specialists and experts in education in order to develop strategies and programs to promote the development of information skills; a unified teaching approach to users education in information literacy based on consistent pedagogical principles.

REFERENCES

- Chelcea S., 2001. Sociological research methodology: qualitative and quantitative methods. Economica Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Chelcea S., 2008. Psychosociology: theory, research, applications. Polirom Publishing House, Iași.
- Gunnstein A., Landøy A., 2010. How to facilitate and make the academic libraries more accessible to young researchers, especially by implementing open access. Romanian Review of Library and Information Science, 6 (3), p. 7-18.
- Kuhlthau C.C., 2004. Seeking meaning. A process approach to library and information services. 2nd edition. Libraries Unlimited, Westport.
- McNeely I.F., Wolverton L., 2008. Reinventing knowledge. From Alexandria to the Internet. Norton&Company, New York and London.
- Regneală M., 2009. New librarianship studies. Romanian Librarians Association, Bucharest.
- Sutter E., 1992. Services d'information et qualité: comment satisfaire les utilisateurs. ADBS, Paris.
- Tomescu S., 2008. University library electronic services for holding the study and research. Library: Journal of Bibliology and Information Science, 8/9, p. 251-254.