

The Academic Library - Information and Research Resource Centre

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Libraries are no longer the only institutions whose purpose is to preserve and make information available. However, library services are particular and specific: they grant access to impressive collections of organized information. These collections were put together over a long period of time and are continuously developing and diversifying.

If traditionally academic libraries are intermediaries between external information and subjects of internal communities, when it comes to open access, their role is to spread the materials produced internally to the outside. Thus, the role of academic libraries in promoting open access is ever more important.

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The Evolution of the Idea of Open Access

The point is that open access means that specialized papers are based on two prerequisites, i.e.: they are stored in a public online archive (free access) shortly after being published, and they can be reused and redistributed freely.

Thus, free access is a defining element of open access. The main idea is to abolish publishers' control over the publication of peer-reviewed papers. In a defining order of the history of open access, Peter Suber mentioned, as early as 1974, that “the libraries of Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) and Deutsches Elektronen Synchrotron (DESY) started to electronically index preprint physics papers.”¹

Another significant moment for the history of open access was Allen Bromley's statement of what we know as Bromley's Principles “regarding full and open access to global change data.”² This document describes

some steps that are to be taken in the field in which the papers are written. Some of these actions are very important to highlight the idea of open access:

- a. managing, validating, and distributing data sets,
- b. fully sharing data sets with all researchers in the field,
- c. using national or international standards allowing for the data sets to be processed and communicated to a broader extent,
- d. providing the data at the lowest possible cost for researchers in a certain field, so that they can access it openly.

The last, but not least important stage in the evolution of open access is the existence of the first preprint electronic archives (e-prints) in the 90s. These aimed at communicating the results of scientific papers before the peer-review process and their publication in journals.

One of Bromley's principles - using standards to



communicate data on a large scale - is also part of the reason the *Open Archives Initiative* was launched. It was approved in 1999 and is rooted "in the open access and institutional repository movements."³

Thus, the OAI was born from the development of e-print archives and from the need to get quick access to their collections. Due to this, the articles archived in any type of electronic repository can be accessed freely by anyone, without having to know where they are. A protocol was elaborated providing free access to all publications in all electronic archives, as if they were not part of a unique and global archives.

The Role of Academic Libraries in Promoting Open Access

Nowadays, the principles of the open access movement have started producing very important effects, and the drive on academic libraries is due to the emergence of a hybrid scientific communication mechanism. "Suber identifies several effects of open access on libraries"⁴:

- libraries can have licenses, as well as hold their own copies of electronic journals that they can archive,
- consulting open access electronic journals with no password or other restrictions, documenting units no longer have to deal with technical issues, such as identifying users or managing proxy servers,
- libraries have the right to make available or to multiply articles electronically, under any circumstances, for any specific or foreign user,
- the libraries no longer have to reach an agreement regarding prices or certain licensing conditions, nor to manage agreements which change from publisher to publisher or from year to year,
- all users have equal access rights and access is anonymous,
- there are budget constraints, but still, libraries will no longer have to cancel a certain type of subscription or accept negative licensing agreements.

Thus, open access has a lot of advantages for libraries, helping them fulfil their mission. In their turn, libraries have the opportunity to contribute to maintaining the success of open access in many ways.

An important role related to open access is informing users on the existence of quality resources available openly. Also, academic research units can help researchers self-archive, aiming at scientific literature breaking from the restrictions of the traditional publishing system.

Contemporary libraries are not just mere electronic scientific information "consumers". A great number of libraries are guided to create digital content, mainly by "publishing open access journals"⁵ and by creating institutional digital devices (DDI).

The involvement in the developments of DDIs

can be interpreted as a reaction of academic libraries to extending access to information electronically, a better response to the users' need of information than retrospective digitization.

Therefore, if traditionally academic libraries are intermediaries between external information and subjects of internal communities, when it comes to open access, their role is to spread the materials produced internally to the outside. On this occasion, Giuseppe Vitiello describes four lines according to which academic libraries will develop their activity branches:

- in the short term, libraries will become knowledge communication and management centres. They should fully exploit the knowledge or document management system within the institution they serve.

- in the short term, documenting institutions will often discuss the problem of content management, rather than information management. Libraries have thus played the part of information disseminators. This is considered the ultimate type of content manipulation they have employed, becoming reference services. In this case, it is necessary that the organizational chart includes a number of librarians specialized in fields, having a double competence: both professional, and disciplinary.

- in the medium term, libraries will set up departments specialized in knowledge management, whose purpose will be to bring intellectual debate to the fore, as well as concepts and ideas outlined by universities and associated research centres.

- in the medium term, research documenting units will be scientific institutions. They will participate in the development of knowledge management tools and will act as incubators of new ideas, a market for new theories and a place for public debate.

Vitiello's vision is part of several approaches trying to move academic libraries away from the functionally passive tradition and to guide them to a future in which they will become active agents in the university's intellectual and scientific life. These start from the idea that, unless we take steps to reinvent and rebuild libraries, they will no longer be able to respond to the future world's wishes.

The involvement of academic libraries is the more important, as the issue of open access is nowadays discussed at a global level. In the "Declaration of Principles" published in 2003 on the occasion of the Geneva World Summit on Information Society, under item B3, entitled "Access to information and knowledge", it is stipulated that: "We strive to promote universal access with equal opportunities for all to scientific knowledge and the creation and dissemination of scientific and technical information, including open access initiatives for scientific publishing."⁶

Services Provided by Contemporary Academic Libraries

Over a longer period, the final step of ensuring library services has materialized in a general phrase: preserving and offering publications and spaces to read them. One of the first changes stemmed from the modern mentality and only occurred at the end of the 19th century, when the services around the provision of publications improved through reference services. Their purpose was to consolidate the intermediary function which libraries were obliged to implement, as there was a high number of documents.

In the 20th century, improving provision services became a constant problem. Exploiting the evolution of technology, documenting units extended beyond the physical walls of buildings, which was confirmed after the appearance of the internet. The interlibrary loan occurred a long time before the Internet, and was a step through which a certain library answered to requests related to publications and made by users, regardless whether they were owned by the library or not available in it, and also involved other libraries.

The document delivery services, like the one available at the British Library, have similar functions. Besides, libraries started to offer remote reference services before the appearance of computer networks, only using services available at that time: the post, the fax, or the telephone.

The new model of library services became clear with their development in the online environment. This happened as a necessity, so that libraries could keep up with the requirements of the Information Society, as:

- information technology evolves rapidly, which allowed for an ever-broader interaction, both asynchronously, and in real time, using electronic communication means,

- the digital technology triggers a revolution, not only in the way in which we store and send information, but also in how we search and access it,

- users will start looking for information on the Internet, not using the services of the documenting unit,

- online, users can look for information 24/7; as a result, the library is expected to be available in the same way, not only when it comes to "accessing collections, but also to providing online assistance or intermediation of any kind, whenever necessary"⁷,

- the competition is attractive, and libraries lose their supremacy more and more in terms of access to information and documents.

In her paper, Sarah M. Pritchard states that: "contemporary libraries have to take into account the changes in three main interest areas: the community of users (behavioural change caused by access to electronic

information), the content (modifications at the level of content creators, publishers, and the media), and the interface (the evolution of the information organization systems, of technology, of services, and of facilities)."⁸ Thus, when setting up library services, one has to take into account the current features and the directions in which users are developing, as well as the development of the evolution of collections, and implicitly of the means of communication.

New Service Provision Models

The most important idea regarding the services made available by the library in the era of the Internet is Library 2.0. This is the latest model for library service provision specifically designed for the digital era. It highlights adaptability and flexibility and defines them as important elements of the future of libraries, as it offers the possibility to keep playing an essential role in the information and documentation process.

J. M. Maness came up with one of the best definitions regarding the Library 2.0: "the application of interactive, collaborative, and multi-media web-based technologies to web-based library services and collections."⁹ Besides the technological dimension, we should also mention that the research principles for using and integrating the services into communities are quite important features of the 2.0 model.

For academic libraries, Library 2.0 means they offer the services available in the user's personal learning environment, thus fulfilling the idea of bringing the library to the student by using technology, and to grant visibility to the services provided in the network.

According to K. Chad and P. Miller¹⁰, the defining principles of Library 2.0 are the following:

- the library is everywhere: the library is helpful where it is needed, it can be used via a broad range of IT devices, and it is engaged in external services, such as virtual learning portals or environments,

- the library has no limits: its collections must be mostly visible online, search engines should be able to index them, and they should be included in apps or services created by the library,

- the library stimulates participation: the documentation unit attracts users and motivates them to contribute to the development of the resources selected to be provided, offering the necessary tools.

- the library uses flexible systems: the library is less based on priority information systems, and more on open standards and modules, which can be interoperated, and which are compatible.

More than that, James G. Neal¹¹ reminds of the key points underlying 2.0 organizational culture:

- decentralization,

- distribution,

- "adhocracy" (form of organization bypassing common bureaucracy),

- complexity,



- collaboration.

The most successful academic library model is the educational centre, which can also provide other kinds of services, besides documentation services. It is also known as *learning centre*. Suzanne Jouguelet uses the term “information and research resource centre”, which is defined as an area inside the library for learning, studying, and acquiring new knowledge. Here, one can find services based on new technologies, wireless networks, multimedia equipment and other services which allow people to easily carry on learning activities independently or in numerous groups, as well as libraries or IT experts to provide assistance services.

A fully equipped educational centre must fulfil some of the main missions:

- the documentation mission: offering access to big and diverse traditional and electronic collections,

- the technological training mission: offering computer and audio-visual resources and equipment, allowing for the creation of multimedia materials, as well as assistance services,

- the pedagogical mission: comprises local or distance training, through online courses or online registration platforms,

- the social mission: makes socializing spaces available and supports students from various viewpoints (career guidance, financial counselling, school achievements and competences, etc.) The educational centre consists of a place for group work, thus trying to satisfy the needs of an ordinary public to gain a proper foothold in society and in various communities,

- the cultural mission: less common, but fulfilled by organizing conferences, debates, exhibitions, or other meetings.

Conclusions

The three models mentioned above - Library 2.0, the diffuse library, and the educational centre - share certain common principles, such as: decentralization and distribution of service provision, encouraging and supporting the users to participate, integrating and interconnecting library services with those provided by other entities, or getting involved in supporting the university's research and pedagogical mission.

These principles are present not only in the evolution and development of traditional services, but also in the new services that contemporary academic libraries share with their users.

Note:

1. *Intermediarul difuz: Biblioteca universitară între cultura tiparului și cultural digitală. (The Diffuse Intermediary: Academic Library between Print and Digital Culture).*

chapter II, p. 78

2. Allan Bromley. The „Bromley Principles” Regarding Full and Open Access to Global Change. Data: [online] [Accessed: 27.05.2017]

3. Open Archives: [online] [Accessed: 20.04.2017] Available at: <http://www.openarchives.org>

4. Peter Suber. *Removing Barriers to Research: An Introduction to Open Access for Librarians*: [online] [Accessed: 28.04.2017]

5. One of the first open access journals, *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, is published by the Houston University Library.

6. *World Summit on the Information Society*. Geneva 2003-Tunis 2005. Declaration of Principles: Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new Millennium: [online]. [Accessed: 03.2017] Available at: <http://www.itu-wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html>

7. Lesley M. Moyo. *Electric libraries and emergence of new service paradigms*. In: *The electric Library*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2004, p. 221

8. Sarah M. Prichard. *Deconstructing the Library: Reconceptualising Collections, Spaces and Services*. In: *Journal of Library Administration*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2008, p. 219-220

9. Apud Paul Coyne, *Op. cit.*, p. 109

10. *Ibidem*, p. 108

11. James G. Neal; Damon E. Jaggars. *Op. cit.*, p. 65-66

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