

IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIBRARY OF THE ACADEMY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OF MOLDOVA

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The development of a modern academic library is characterized by an increase in the speed of changes taking place in the information space, the education system and the scientific communication, which have a significant impact on modern directions of library activities.

In recent years, due to the implementation of information and telecommunications technologies, increased competition in the market of educational services, globalization of science and education, the emergence of scientific projects, etc. in the higher education as a whole, as well as in the activities of the university libraries, significant changes can be observed.

Currently, a modern library is an indispensable part of the educational space, being the basic support of the training and research process. The role of the university library increases in connection with the transformations and modernizations that are taking place in society, but also because of the stormy evolution of information and electronic communications technology, which have radically changed the information environment, offering new opportunities and at the same time creating new challenges for libraries. The efficient implementation and use of modern information technologies in the library activity requires solving a diverse spectrum of problems, starting with the conceptual, technological, organizational ones and ending with the professional development of library staff and the training of users. Today, the library must have a general view of the information sources, information techniques, information transfer systems and information services. Thus, the university library must take all possible measures to facilitate access to information; to gather and disseminate as much qualitative and complete information as possible.

The libraries of the universities of Moldova have modernized their activities, taking into account the constant dynamic changes in the society, education, in the field of communications and information. Today, it is possible to talk about the primary role of the university libraries in the process of meeting the social needs of the community as a source of training and provision of documentary and informational resources.

Professor Ion Stoica states: "The info-documentary environment is generous, it has a huge training potential (Stoica 2001)." The university library is such an institution that, through its functions, comes to fulfill the university's role of training, educating and life-long learning. By disseminating the contents, the library fulfills its main mission to inform; by getting involved in organizing important cultural events, it is defined as a cultural agent; by providing complementary preparation of bibliographic specialty and by assisting in the research processes, the value of the library increases, it becomes a provider of training and research support.

Thus the modern library is a library armed with modern technical equipment that implements the latest innovations in the field of science and technology, becoming an integral part of the educational and scientific infrastructure of the educational institution.

For the Library of the Academy of Public Administration, the second decade of the XXI century is the decade of great changes oriented to the modernization and creation of new information library products and services, structural units, the introduction of new methods and forms of information processing and dissemination, the application of new modern library technologies. The library adjusts its activity to meet the information needs of the users by changing the range of services, which is accompanied by a change in the technology of production, organization, maintenance, change of the entire library environment. However „through the information culture it contributes to the consolidation of knowledge, to the creation of new skills, adapted to new technologies, but also to the progress of scientific research and to the preparation of the next generation" (Repanovici 2017).

One of the most efficient concepts of development and modernization implemented in the Library is the project management, which aims to adapt its activity to the international standards of the info-library institution. The elaboration and implementation of projects offers modern, flexible ways of organizing and functioning of the info-documentary institution, with the purpose of adapting to the changes of internal and

external environments, the training of the personnel in order to achieve the set objectives. The fulfillment of major changes in the activity of the library are largely due to the impact of the latest international projects implemented by the Library of the Academy of Public Administration.

“The projects are oriented towards achieving the proposed objectives, being characterized by dynamism and complexity. Any project, including the ones funded by the European Union, aims to support donor policies in achieving the set goals. By implementing any project, it is desired to develop the regions and achieve sustainable development objectives. Currently, projects represent a way of surviving of the libraries, generating effects on the organizations that implement them, on stakeholders.” (Harconiță 2017)

Thus, in the period 2015-2019, the APA Library benefited from 2 international projects that led to the reformation and modernization of the library:

1. The international project **“Modernization of Academic Library Services in Moldova” (2016-2019)** was financed by the Norwegian Program of Cooperation with Eurasia in the field of higher education and realized in partnership between ASEM and the University of Bergen, Norway, the Transylvania University of Brasov, Romania and 18 libraries from the Republic of Moldova, including the Library of the Academy of Public Administration. The main activity in this project was to strengthen the capacity of librarians and through them those of the teachers and students from higher education institutions.

2. **“Library Network Support Services: modernizing libraries in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus through staff development and reforming libraries (LNSS)”** (2015-2018), whose main purpose was to consolidate and modernize libraries, improve the level of competences and skills of library staff in higher education institutions in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus. The project was carried out under the Erasmus + Capacity Building Program in the field of higher education and was funded by the European Commission.

Through the implementation of the project **“Modernization of Academic Library Services in Moldova”** <http://aap.gov.md/files/publicatii/ziar/18/518.pdf>, a series of specific objectives were pursued, such as the creation of strong and lasting institutional partnerships through academic collaboration between the higher education institutions in Norway and the cooperating countries, the regional collaboration between the higher education institutions in the partner countries in

the project, the development and implementation of the study programs that are considered relevant to the needs of the libraries of the Republic of Moldova, the development of research-based and internationalization-oriented education in the institutions of the countries participating in the project, in particular in the field of information literacy; improvement of university management, including the implementation of reforms related to the Bologna process, also valid for university libraries. The major role of this project is the change, production and distribution of knowledge, and through this the modernization of library products and services.

The modernization of university libraries requires the orientation to the informational dimension of the European space, which includes the following components: coordination and cooperation efforts in facilitating access to information; developing and implementing strategic policies regarding information literacy; the mobility and training of librarians for the development of innovative libraries in support of education and lifelong learning. In order to achieve these objectives, the Scientific Library of the Academy implemented a second international project with the title ***Library Network Support Services: modernizing libraries in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus through staff development and reforming libraries (LNSS)***” in the period 2015-2018. It was a project implemented within the Erasmus + project funded by the European Commission. <http://www.aap.gov.md/biblioteca/article/library-network-support-services-lnss#>.

The main objective of the project was to consolidate and modernize libraries, to improve the competences and skills of library and academic staff from higher education institutions in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus, by developing innovative libraries that support education and lifelong learning.

Thus, by implementing these two projects, the library aims to promote innovation in the professional development of library staff, to undertake a wide-ranging reform of the library through the development of staff skills, information services, access to national and international information resources, creation of networks and partnerships between libraries.

In both projects, the partners collaborated and disseminated knowledge for all partner university libraries. The main activity was to strengthen the capacity of librarians and through them that of the teachers and students from higher education institutions, by developing the skills of using information for study and research. Through training

activities, workshops and summer schools, the community of university librarians from Moldova and from the partner countries, created a space for professional debates and exchange of experience, and thus developed internal networks in the field of information services. Communication through the web page of the project “*Modernization of Academic Library Services in Moldova*” <https://newinformationservices.wordpress.com/> and *Library Network Support Services: modernizing libraries in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus through staff development and reforming libraries* <https://lnss-projects.eu/amb/> also supported the efficient operation of both domestic and international networks. At the same time, the dissemination of information on project activities at international conferences, the study visit to university libraries in Norway, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Belarus and the trainings held by international experts offered to the academy librarians access to the international network ” (Neaga 2018).

Within the LNSS project, librarians were trained to strengthen management, innovation and accessibility capabilities in libraries through strategic planning and policy development. Thus, the modernization of higher education institutions was pursued through the implementation of an innovative training program as part of a curriculum incorporating a range of relevant and modern library staff development modules that respond to the most urgent training needs of the 21st century librarians. Programs have also been developed and implemented to develop research skills in libraries to help users identify, locate, evaluate and, effectively and ethically, use information in daily life for lifelong learning and knowledge based society. Therefore, a series of training activities were carried out for librarians, in which all stakeholders were involved for the exchange of experience in order to improve the librarians’ skills and abilities. This has influenced the quality of higher education and scientific research. Librarians know English better and strengthen communication within the networks created, both in the Republic of Moldova and abroad. Thanks to the results of the project, the university community is more aware of the importance of the activity of the university libraries

During the implementation of the projects “Library Network Support Services (LNSS)” and “Modernization of Academic Library Services”, the libraries participating in the project formulated missions, visions, values, elaborated strategies and policies of institutional development, promotion programs of resources, products, services (with new promotion elements such as educational video tutorials, etc.). The trainings during the workshops, the summer schools in Romania, project meetings,

information and documentation visits, exchange of experience, etc., all had a positive impact on the development and consolidation of the professional competences of librarians. Subsequently, the competences obtained were applied in practice in each library participating in the project. And as mentioned by S. Ghinculov, PhD, coordinator of the project “Modernization of Academic Library Services in Moldova”, “... this project has the potential to improve the activity of university libraries in the country. The way in which the training actions are structured is very convincing and they seem to be important so that the partners participate in international research...” (Sobieski-Camerzan 2018).

The impact of international projects on the Library of the Academy of Public Administration has been demonstrated by the creation of new products and services with a lasting impact on the academic community, which include:

- Following the professional development of librarians within the projects, a wide range of modern services have been implemented, such as Information Literacy, Digital Library, Ask the Librarian; Proposals for purchases, online thematic exhibitions; selective dissemination of information; developing and disseminating newsletters regarding recent acquisitions; Access to databases;

- To facilitate access to the library’s services, resources and products, the APAM Library website has been modified and updated in accordance with the requirements of international standards in the field and the information needs of the users, thus making the site a platform to facilitate access to resources, products, and information services of the library: <http://aap.gov.md/biblioteca/>;

- As part of the LNSS project, the Library of the Academy of Public Administration organized several training activities in the field of library management; innovative services for the 21st century library, English for specific purposes, in which 142 librarians and academic staff were trained. Also, the results of the training activities within the project “Modernization of University Library Services in Moldova” were disseminated and applied in practice to librarians and the academic community of APAM.

- As a result of the competences obtained in the training activities regarding the elaboration of the strategy for the development of the university library, carried out by the Pro Community Centre NGO, the Strategy for the development of the APA Library 2017-2020 was written and approved within the APA Senate meeting on October 19, 2017.

The purpose of the strategy was determined by the process of training, research and professional development within the APA, focusing on modernizing the information services of the library and the efficient use of the information resources.

- In order to modernize the services of the APA Library, new physical and virtual spaces were created in accordance with international standards (Multimedia Room, spaces for individual and team work, spaces for recreation). The library was equipped with modern technical equipment: computers, laptops, tablets, projectors, interactive boards, server, multifunction printers, etc.;

- As a follow-up of the training activities and the consolidation of knowledge within both projects, the course "Information Literacy" was delivered to librarians, civil servants participating in professional development courses, master and PhD students of the Academy. It was updated and adapted to the exigencies of the training environment and the research characteristics of the 21st century;

- By installing and adapting the Koha integrated system to the specific of the library, the electronic library catalog was created, transferring to the electronic medium the activities that make up the collection processing flow, the creation of our own bibliographic database (electronic catalog) and providing remote access to it.

- With the financial support of both projects, access to information resources in open access was expanded by subscribing to a number of prestigious international databases such as EBSCO, subscribed to within the LNSS project, Clarivate Analytic, Taylor & Francis, Cambridge University Press, Sage research methods, subscribed to within the project "Modernization of Academic Library Services in Moldova". Thus the Library recorded positive changes in the efficient use of information resources and services.

- Due to the collaborations and the partnerships formed in both projects, the exchange of experience extended in exploring the development and introduction of innovative services in the library, in particular, of on-line services and Open Access to scientific information, the elaboration and implementation of a digital and electronic strategy for the improvement of electronic library services.

- By conducting a quantitative sociological research, supported by the Pro Community Center, the long-term development trends of the APAM Library were determined under the conditions of the competitive information environment. Thus, the specific of the future of the library

was identified based on the opinions of two categories of respondents: librarians and users (students and teachers). The ideas were approached on several blocks: library spaces, library staff, information resources, services provided, the role of the library in the development of education and academic research.

- The visibility of the Library has substantially increased through the elaboration and implementation of the program for promoting the APA Library: media information (articles in newsletters in the specialized press, interviews, etc.), information during professional meetings, ensuring visibility in social networks, feedback from end users, other stakeholders, colleagues, decision makers. Also, a substantial impact on the increase of the role and the livability of the Library in the society has the "National Awareness Day" with the generic: "Your Library - your progress", established on April 23, 2017 within the project "Support services for the network of libraries: modernization of libraries in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus through the development of library staff", which will be marked every year by the libraries in the country (Sobieski-Camerzan 2018).

- In order to promote the new paradigm of Open Access and to disseminate the results of scientific research within APAM, the "Institutional Policy of the Academy of Public Administration on Open Access to Information" was written and approved by the Senate (December 12, 2017), as well as the "Regulation for the organization and operation of the APA Institutional Repository" (25.02.2018).

- Dspace library specialized software was applied and the APA institutional repository was created: "Institutional Repository of the Academy of Public Administration" (IR APA), which offers Open Access to the content of the didactic and scientific works elaborated under the aegis of the Academy <http://dspace.aap.gov.md/>;

- In order to facilitate the use of the self-archiving service, the video tutorial was developed for the Academy's researchers: "Self-archiving in the APA Institutional Repository";

- During the same period, the Open Access Policy of the scientific-methodical journal "Public Administration" and its Indexing in the DOAJ (Directory of open access journals) database was approved, 16 June 2016.

- In order to promote Open Access to scientific information, the APAM Library is part of this global movement by organizing various activities for the Academy community during the International Open Access Week, which takes place every year in October.

Today, we can affirm that following the implementation of the project „Modernization of Academic Library Services in Moldova” and of the LNSS project, the librarians, working in the library of the Academy of Public Administration, are better prepared for the implementation of modern library services. „The projects were successful the librarians working in the academic libraries in Moldova are better trained for running modern library services. This will influence the quality of higher education and research. The librarians will have better English language skills, and will have strengthened their networks, both within and outside Moldova. The general public will have a better understanding of the importance of libraries” (Ghinculov 2019).

Gaining access to new, prestigious databases, the APAM Library has registered positive changes in the efficient use of information resources and services. The focus today is on digital skills training, participation in the creation and development of institutional digital scientific content, promotion of research results at national and international level, participation in projects and development of national and international partnerships.

Certainly, all the activities carried out within the projects had a positive impact in the process of studies and research, the visibility of scientific research, the improvement of the information literacy, the use of new applications, information technologies, by accepting a new rate of modifications under the pressure of global changes.

Today, the library is looking for ways to implement its functions in a situation in which we are witnessing a continuous and endless increase of the speed of all economic and social processes, being combined with constantly changing traditions and innovations in the field of culture. All of these objectively create new opportunities and directions for library development.

In this sense, the statements of library representatives about the future of the library are viable. They claim that the future of the library, like its present, is determined, however, by the human factor. Without a highly professional, creative and positive thinking librarian there will be no successful library and no user with a high degree of training in the field of information literacy. The library will continue to be a promoter of spiritual culture.

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