Human Resources and Information Services

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To speak about human resources within the walls of MIT is of special importance. Since its founding, MIT has given special attention -- and assistance to the human enterprising spirit. As President Paul E. Gray wrote in the last academic year’s Bulletin: “MIT has a responsibility to itself and to the nation to be open and to reach out -- to the most talented and promising people, regardless of race or sex.”

INTRODUCTION

During the stormy centuries of Hungarian history, Hungarians had to use their quick wit and docility to survive. Even the current century was characterized by wars, revolutions, dismemberment of the country, a decrease in population, lack of natural resources, and oppression by the superpowers.

Under these conditions, Hungarians could not really except economic and political success, therefore they often concentrated their energy on intellectual activities, drawing the attention of the world to their scientific achievements. Among Hungarian scientists just to mention a few: Dennis Gabor, Eugene Wigner, and John Neumann.

What is the present level of Hungarian human resources amidst the political and economic transition of the country?

Currently international organizations (World Bank, International Monetary Fund) and experts of the developed countries and analyzing the economic situation in Hungary and in Central and Eastern Europe with the intent of assistance and in the hope of future markets and investments. These experts are often surprised, sometimes pleasantly. Such pleasant surprise is the intellectual level of the human factor.

Of course, we librarians and information experts are interested in the relationship between the human factor and information services.

The human resources and information services are in an interaction: on the one hand human factor played -- and still plays an important role in the development of information services.

HUMAN RESOURCES IN INFORMATION SERVICES

The human factor played an important role in the introduction of modern technologies in libraries during the last two decades. Librarians, in spite of ideological and financial restrictions were able to follow the main trends of development, to realize the basic technical investments, and to establish and keep contacts with the international society of librarians.

The activity of the human factor can be proved by the early adaptation of Chemical Abstracts magnetic tapes in Hungary. According to the brochure of the Chemical Abstracts Service, in 1971 the CAS computer-readable files had only eight users outside the US, among which a Hungarian Library could be found: the Veszprém University Library.

Undoubtedly, there was a need for a live librarian spirit and a strong personality to arrange financial support, to ensure the technical background,
to convince users, and to introduce up-to-date, new services. This attitude is still characteristic of the Hungarian librarians, who currently receive a lot of support to improve their knowledge.

During the panel discussion last year in Turku it was stated concerning the changes in Eastern Europe that the Hungarian librarians had no chance to make personal contacts with the libraries of the developed countries. Fortunately enough, it is no longer the case. This year five members of Veszprém University Library had the chance to take longer study-tours in West-European libraries with the help of various grants, mainly TEMPUS. They had the opportunity to study the latest information services and library activities. The most important subjects studied are:

- end user training,
- training via televideo conferencing (LIVE-NET) in the library of Imperial College,
- the "PICA" automated library system and CD-ROM technic in the library of the Twente University,
- the computerized library system and the OPAC system in the Radcliffe Library, and
- library organization and management in the Library of Technical University of Graz.

Here I would like to thank colleagues (all are IATUL members) for making possible these trips: Mrs Magda Czigány, Dr. Gerald van Marle, Dr. Dennis Shaw, and Dr. Karl Stock. During the trips the participants not only improved their professional knowledge, but also got familiar with the organization of work and working style of the host library. In addition, they improved their knowledge of foreign languages and had some cultural experience. These trips are the results of IATUL connections and can be considered as good examples of the development of human resources.

INFORMATION SERVICES FOR HUMAN RESOURCES

In view of the future development of the economy, the intellectual development of undergraduate student is of high importance. In this work the technical university libraries play an important role. In Hungary the teaching of information searching was introduced at the technical universities during the late 1960's. This teaching activity is still maintained using more sophisticated methods. Today online searching is taught as a part of the curriculum using DIALOG and STN International training files. The students thus trained are capable of compiling a professional bibliography, obtaining information on their own and can conduct scientific research.

Now the university libraries offer new services for the information of students.

Such service is the network of information offices established with the support of USIS and the SOROS Foundation. In these modern offices students can have access to information on American universities, admission conditions, the necessary language exams, etc. using GRADLINE and COLLEGE data banks, rich microfiche collections, a reference library having 140 volumes, video cassettes and brochures. As to the educational advising center of the Veszprém University Library, 90 interested persons were provided with the necessary information during the period from September -- the time of foundation -- to the end of the academic year, and there are some students who have already been accepted by US universities from this fall. By the help of
the advising centers the Hungarian students can reach out to the World, can continue their studies at the universities of the developed countries, and in the future can contribute to the economic progress of their countries. Therefore, these offices can do a lot for the development of human resources.

The "English for Management" special courses -- which also serve the improvement of language and professional skills of students -- are held at the Veszprém University Library. A satellite dish furnished by the help of the British Council enables a group of students to take part in the course of the King's College in an interactive way. In addition to language training, the course gives the opportunity to disseminate management information badly needed by Hungarian experts. Students enjoy the use of advanced technology, and the interactive communication with the London studio and other remote student groups. The interesting subject-matter of the course and the special conditions of distance learning represent a strong motivation for students. Books, the technical background, and various services (fax, word processor, video, etc.) are provided for by the Library. The impressive progress of students can be demonstrated by the video-tapes recording each occasion. By the end of the semester each student can interview interesting people having a strong managerial background. Students and their teachers alike can be proud of the standard, and the contents, of these interviews. The King's College "English for Management" course can be counted as an interesting contribution to the development of human resources. The staff-members of the Veszprém University Library are glad to take part in this work. By the way, the London Interactive Video for Education Network could be utilized for the popularization of information services and for the training of librarians too. In order to achieve these goals, considerable efforts are made by Mrs. Magda Czigány and the Hungarian society of librarians.

CONCLUSION

Examples of the activity of the Veszprém University Library can prove that Hungary (and probably other Eastern European States) struggling with economic difficulties, deserve the support of the developed countries. Provided that these, now poor, Eastern European Countries (including Hungary) receive the necessary support, their human resources enable them to raise their economy and to achieve outstanding intellectual success. Without the support of the developed countries, however, they cannot activate their intellectual potentials. Remember the American saying: "If you haven't got any socks, you can't pull them up".