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Contributions to the Theory of Integration of Special Libraries

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A significant change in the trends of the process of library work and library policy of the Miskolc University Library /Eastern Hungary/ has been made towards the co-operation and integration from the year 1971 on. Significant co-operation has been realized on the following fields:

- The Hungarian adaptation of the METADEX /USA/ computerized metallurgical information system in the form of co-operation. /In 1979 we also start the operation of the system "World Aluminium Abstracts"./ Both services are of national importance.

- Regional chemical co-operation in order to secure the joint acquisition of the special literature. /The University and the four large chemical works of the region entered into contract in 1971 to acquire the extremely expensive chemical literature at least in one copy by sharing the expenses./

- Regional Translation Office started working in the library in 1974. /Yearly 60,000 pages of translation of special technical text is made for the university and the industrial firms of the region./

Very efficient work is going on on all the three above mentioned fields. From the practice of the past nearly 10 years principal and theoretical conclusions can also be drawn. A great part of these can be of international value, can express rules and that is why their publication is justified by professional reasons.

The identity of interests

The organizing and concentrating ability of the integration is based upon the identity of the interests. These interests however cannot be identified by a list of artificial and over-explained professional suggestions; they must be real interests originating from the real information needs of the production and research work. These really objective interests can be classified as "recognized interests".

The interests can be realized
- in financial advantages
- in achieving results that are individually impossible
- in joint acquisition and application of outstanding novelties in the field of information work
- the multiplication of the own individual performance by making use of the joint means of the partners taking part in the co-operation.

We can not only observe these basic relations but we have to take them into consideration as well since they are rules controlling the practice of the integration process. Some examples:

- Within the chemical co-operation the interests were extremely identical e.g. the acquisition of Gmelin's series of handbooks

- The identity of interests can be also seen in the co-ordinated subscription for the Chemical Abstracts and its Sections. From financial point of view this action was mutually advantageous.

- The acquisition of the retrospective indexes of the Chemical Abstracts for more than 50 years, that otherwise would have been impossible, was made easy by the joint financing.

- The adaptation of the METADEX in co-operation is a good example for the advantageous introduction of a promising novelty.

- This at the same time can be interpreted as a change in the quality of the information service of the library towards the metallurgical departments of the university.

The integration as an allied system

One of the basic criteria of the vitality of the integration is the continuous change according to the needs. We must not stop fighting against the static state since it shortens the life of the co-operation. As we could see, one or two points of mutual interests cannot be enough for a fruitful and useful co-operation. The team, organized in order to solve crucial problems, cannot live long if the threads connecting them are not strong enough; in this case sooner or later it becomes a monotonous everyday routine. The preservation of the vitality and even the development of the alliance can be achieved if all the partners wish the continuous renewal. New and new tasks must be always found which give the co-operation new tone and new impulses. Manifold interests and needs must be discovered and the beginning of their satisfaction must be begun without hesitation. In case if it is possible the integration must be developed into an alliance of the partners. It must be an alliance in which the partners' interdependence is manifold but the interdependence is based upon real interests. This must be always kept in mind because not all the items of co-operation is important unanimously for all the partners. If the number of the items is little, then the ties can easily get loose, on the other hand in case of a many branched tie the damage of the single branches from time to time does not endanger the bearing capacity of the complete tie. Previously I have mentioned all the methods and actions that are able to keep up the vitality of the integration. We must not forget however that the maintenance of the living process requires much energy and trouble.
The problem must be continuously treated, without longer breaks, in order to avoid its becoming stagnant. If however it is done, then a library is not able to participate in several co-operations of different types. In accordance with its size and possibilities the Miskolc university library can successfully participate in not more than three systems of integration.

The problem of equality

The elementary condition of the balance of the integration is the equal rights of the partners. The "co-ordinate" harmony is a logical consequence of and inseparable from the "allied" structure because the real equality belongs to the essence of this latter construction. The principle of equal rights must be fully realized and on a large scale. The correct thing is that the contributors have equal rights in the course of the consumption even if the degree of the contribution of the single partners is not the same. The partners joining the co-operation later must be authorized to exercise the same rights exercised by the founding members from the beginning. On this basis the information sources acquired from the common financial fund can be fully used also by those partners who can afford only smaller financial contributions. Those who join the "alliance" later can also use the formerly acquired information sources. E.g. in 1971, in the first year of the chemical co-operation the contribution of the different chemical works was as follows:

- BVK /Borsodi Vegyi Kombinát - Borsod Chemical Works/: 250.000.-Ft
- ÉMV /Északmagyarországi Vegyi Művek - North-Hungarian Chemical Works/: 350.000.-Ft
- TVK /Tiszai Vegyi Kombinát - Tisza Chemical Works/: 100.000.-Ft
- The TIFO /Tiszai Kőolajipari Vállalat - Tisza Crude Oil Refinery Company/ that joined the co-operation in 1978 can contribute only 100.000.-Ft to the fund though the other three participants contribute 200.000.-Ft to it each.

In spite of this fact the TIFO is authorized to use all the literary sources acquired since 1971 as an equal partner. The application of this principle is suggested by the law of the uneven development and by the different economic possibilities of the firms. The practice shows that there are companies which cannot easily afford to back the co-operation financially. In our example the TIFO was still being organized in 1978, the investments were going on and no production work was done. Among these circumstances the 100.000.-Ft offered by them clearly expressed their willingness to take part in the co-operation. In other cases the representatives of the participants, who generally are the heads of the information centers of the companies, are not authorized to increase the yearly sum of the company's contribution. These problems and problems like these must be taken into consideration and treated flexibly. The power of community is able to bring along the emancipation of the partners by being able to bring the partners of more
moderate means nearer to the others. If, in the course of our activities, we take no notice of these aspects tensions may emerge and the entering of new partners would become impossible. One proper example to show this danger is that it would be perfectly unreal to demand from the TIFO, which joined the co-operation only five years later, to pay the more than 1,000,000 Ft, the sum paid by the other partners at once. If however the TIFO, this young and just starting company can use the full material without discrimination, the valuable help the company gets will inspire it to contribute to the co-operation intensively. Perhaps the most delicate problem of the integration is that of the hegemony. Concerning this delicate problem many Hungarian experience, or rather bitter experience and failure can be seen and overcoming them is rather a difficult task. No hegemony can be mentioned in case of any partners. The integration is a community, association, alliance and a friendly professional club building the future because it firmly stands on the floor of equality. Of course one of the members should be in charge of organization and control of the co-operation. In case if it is possible this task must be undertaken by the partners changing each other from time-to-time, if however the control is exercised by one of the partners from the beginning, then that partner must honestly and tactfully treat the sensitivity of the community. From the nature of the integration it necessarily follows that all the steps of the integration cannot be equally advantageous for each partner. In certain cases we have to reduce our demands, in other cases another partner's needs or proposal must be given preference even if they differ from our own interests.

The problem of the right of decision

The basic principles, leading motives and financial aspects of the integration should be put down in a general contract signed by the highest authorities of the participants. It is practical and worth being keen on because several later difficulties can be eliminated with the help of the higher management of the participating firms. At the same time while formulating the contract we have to take care that the contract really should be general, i.e. the person or the lower organizational unit in charge of the realization of the contract could act independently. In other words the representatives of the partners should be authorized to decide within the frames of the governing principles. If it is not so, the operation of the organization is paralysed. It is impossible to work efficiently if we always have to wait for the final approval of the highest bosses in case of necessary and urgent decisions.

The ability to provide solid services

The more developed the co-operation is the greater significance the vitality of the services has. It is obvious that each partner is willing to narrow its own fields of activity only if he gets the means he needs quickly and surely within the frame of co-operation. This means that the needs of the partner must be satisfied accurately, quickly and cheaply. The satisfying of the needs must never be denied. If objective difficulties occur then the willingness to help must be expressed in a different way with the approval of the partner.
Personal factors

In the process of integration the subjective factors can be continuously felt. It is paradox but it is a sorrowful fact at the same time that though the integration is based upon objective needs and interests, its realization depends on subjective inclinations and moods to a great extent. The subjectivity can be already found at the value judgement of the integration, i.e. whether a professional manager realizes and accepts the objective necessity of the integration and is willing to follow that way.

The integration inspires to quality work

The integration also acts as a controlling force within the sphere of information. This control improves the quality and capacity of the services, and it is easy to prove it theoretically.

It is well known that a part of the integration is realized in the division of labour. This division of labour increases the chances of the concentration and it can be taken as a rule. In this way because of the division of labour and the concentration due to it great powers can be concentrated in the individual firms to do the appointed or voluntarily undertaken tasks. This possibility automatically includes the preliminary conditions of the better, high quality work.

Due to the common, coinciding interests of the integration the integration controls and favourably influences the rising of the work to a higher level. The integration encourages not only the introduction of new technologies and techniques but inspires the rising of the level of the quality of the traditional works as well; i.e. after the partner’s undertaking the mutual obligations to do certain work phases and to achieve the proper results the professional reputation of the institutions and their own fairness make them do their best to fulfil their commitments.

The integration activates the reserves

The expansion of the integration of special libraries is desirable from the point of view of the improvement of the efficiency of the information service. Among all the elements and relations of the sphere of information the emphasis must be placed on the dynamics of the efficiency. Two further remarks however repeatedly must be made:

a./ the improvement of the efficiency is convergent with the elementary conditions of the development of the Hungarian economy and society.

b./ we are not in excess of the means encouraging the development.

The conclusion is obvious: the reserves must be found, exploited and activated. The reserves are of different types and here I mention only some of the most important ones.
Enormous reserves are available if the labour is made a good use of; e.g. a quicker development of the national, centralized services would free hundreds of professional librarians at the cataloguing departments of different libraries; or the concentration and co-ordination of the diffuse documentation activity also would free labour. This latter measure would rationally influence the printing costs and capacities as well. The financial difficulties of the acquisition of periodicals would be also eased by a co-ordinated acquisition within the frame of co-operation. My personal opinion, is, that the majority of the conditions of development is readily available and we only have to find them. Finding them however is more difficult than to claim new millions.

The methodological value of integration

The members of the alliance /not the persons but the institutions/ are on different professional levels. The information centres of the large enterprises are rather efficient. This statement covers now the engineering sciences belonging to the special field, the information service, the contents of the work of the library and librarians and the complexity of all the above factors. In other words the professional preparedness required by the information supply is good. The situation is different however in case of those smaller enterprises where only one or two persons work in the field of information service. At working places like this the possibility of including all the information sources is obviously excluded. The first problem is that while the information centers that are independent organizational units have three or four engineers and special translators on their staffs, in case of smaller enterprises no specialists are in charge of the information service. The minimum staff is confined to the librarian/s/.

But even the extending and renewal of the knowledge required to the professional librarianship is very difficult because simply there is no one on the spot to learn from.

The developed integration that is based upon a manifold binding among the partners creates excellent occasions to the streamlining of the practical work. After the official meeting e.g. the librarian participants of the regional chemical co-operation often stay together in the Miskolc university library to discuss the actual important and difficult professional problems they have to face. The clients of the regional translation office also connect the arrangement of the translation affairs with the solution of other problems. The items of the co-operation can be found on a large scale, e.g. printing of catalogue cards, registration of periodicals, library furniture, acquisition of reference books etc. Professional consultations like this can be considered very useful working relations because they are spontaneous, aimed at solving real problems and because they deepen the inter-institutional co-operation.

The conflict between the integration and the sponsoring institution

The sponsoring organs of the university library, the university, and the higher authority, the ministry, do not unanimously back the library service towards outer persons or institutions.
The different initiatives for integration and undertaking different jobs are usually followed by distrust. In the course of our activities I myself got caught on this obstacle.

The problem is not a local one. My stopping some years ago was made credible and thought-provoking by the experience I have collected since that time. The university librarian trying to widen the usual limits of the information service, even towards the university, found obstacles everywhere. The university is against the developing of outer connections first of all because it is anxious about its own interests. It is afraid that the widening of the services to outer partners causes the falling of the standard of the services towards the sponsoring institution to a lower level. The availability of the information sources acquired from the university budget will be more limited because of the more intensive "outer" usage; capacities in the field of information service and other library services will stand at the disposal of outer clients in spite of the fact that there is a shortage of these services within the university itself; reprographical and other technical equipments wear out to enrich outer partners in a period when the university itself has also difficulties in streamlining its own equipments or buying new ones respectively.

Summarizing the above problems we can say that the university is afraid of the uncontrollable outflow of its own spiritual and financial means to strange spheres of interest. This suspicion is realized in reservations and sometimes it is expressed in the form of violent protest.

In the fight of the librarian and the sponsoring institution the librarian can be victorious only in case if he can definitely prove that way of integration he has chosen is extremely advantageous for the university as well. He has also to prove that the satisfying of the ever increasing integration needs of the university cannot be satisfied in another way.

No prove is good enough if it remains on verbal scale. At a technical university only the language of reality and the power of the facts can win the battle.

Here I want to mention the surplus of acquired material originating from the financial sources of the chemical co-operation; or the extremely quick translation service for the university /in case of necessity translation can be made within 24 hours/; or the high standard information provided by the METADEX system. All these examples unanimously prove the up-to-dateness and the usefulness of the information policy offered to the university.

Giving preference to the sponsoring institution, its representation and the services to it must always be present in the trends of the library policy and the value of the obtained advantages must be continously proved. It will turn out that an efficient university management will back the integration and every really useful initiatives and efforts. Misleading statements and the emphasizing of pseudo-results must be avoided in the course of the realization of the integration.
The above described facts and problems come from our own experience but we were given a lot of valuable information and help by the IATUL and especially by its Scandinavian member-libraries.

References:


DISCUSSION

Slajpah: With relation to Dr. Zsiday's paper, I would like to describe the experiences about cooperation and coordination between the Central Technical Library Edward Kardelj in Ljubljana and 70 university and special technical libraries in the years 1968-1979. According to the Yugoslavian library law and the national standards for special libraries, the central university libraries have specific tasks with regard to the special libraries in coordination of the purchase of documents, and the provision of union catalogues and interlibrary lending.