Regional activity of the Technical University for Heavy Industry in Miskolc concerning both the present time and the future

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The library that will be dealt with in the following is a technical university library. Its primary task is to serve the interests of the university, to satisfy its requirements. The fulfilment of even this fundamental task is in no way easy, because, in addition to its educational and special research problems, the university is attached with many links to industry. Research carried out here helps eliminate in a great number of enterprises defects in production, reduce waste, and develop new products. The value of this work might be assessed from the fact that about 28% of the operation costs of our rather large university are covered from research revenues.

Still this line does not yet determine, nor cover completely the library's tasks. As is laid down in a statutory provision, the library has to perform the functions of a special library with national scope of duties, mainly in the fields of mining and metallurgy. Besides this, in relation to North-East Hungary, it is a regional reference library, for in this part of the country, which comprises four counties, there exists no other important technical library. On the basis of the foregoing, the library has considerable regional tasks to fulfil. In this paper emphasis will be laid on this, disregarding the handling of national functions.

There are several reasons for my laying stress upon the regional function. The first of them is that I saw, as early as about 1968, that the library was unable to maintain from the state budget its operation level, and development became increasingly difficult. Help was needed, and the most obvious solution seemed to be the winning over of the nearby industrial enterprises as patrons. Then, on studying the English, Swiss, West German literature and consulting specialists, I was confirmed in my opinion that in the life of the library regional values represent real values even today (1).

I hold this opinion because here interdependance is stronger and more inevitable; personal relations are intimate, hence business management is rapid, elastic and successful. If that is true — and experience shows it to be so — then the field of force of local patriotic attitude may also turn into material force, precisely for the benefit of the library.

After many years of experience and thinking I have come to the decision that the library must be given a regional function, and this in the strict sense of the word. This decision may be interpreted as follows: the enterprises and research institutes within our sphere of attraction should recognize, and also proclaim, the stressed, regional range of activity of the library. Based on this, they should declare their claim for the library's services. In return, they undertake to collaborate, with pecuniary means, in maintaining the library's level and in its development. That is, we should be able to declare that ours is a library of the community (university and enterprises), and that this community provides manifold assistance for the library to keep it on its legs, as is customary to say. As for the library, it must, of course, return these objectivized acts, and in such a form that it promotes with every possible means the research and development activities of the enterprises.
It must be told openly that our greatest concern is the acquisition and financing of original literature. In 1984, for example, the number of periodicals in our library essentially remained unchanged, that is at the level of 2,200 but the cost paid was 27% above that of 1983. Obviously, the library is unable to increase its budget at such a rate. Besides this, the library would also like to increase, and to no small extent, the number of periodicals.

We have already got favourable experiences in this field, as, since 1971, four enterprises of the chemical industry have been versing considerable sums for our stock acquisitions. This I have already mentioned in 1975 in Zurich. (2) Thanks to this help we were able, for example, to subscribe to the journal Chemical Abstracts and to acquire all its indices; also, it permitted us to finance the Gmelin and Beilstein Handbook series. All these are known to be extremely costly publications, and we certainly were not able to acquire them without external help. Encouraged by this success, we are negotiating with four other enterprises in 1985: two of them belong to the metallurgical industry and one each to the mechanical and mining industry. The said enterprises are all big ones, each giving employment to over 10,000 workers. To be sure, they, too, had to bear the impact of the economic recession, and so we were obliged to wait till 1985. Now it seems the time has come to move.

It must also be mentioned that the library will get in the position to ameliorate its services, primarily through the application of the online technique, only by 1985.

The library has access to DIALOG in the U.S.A., to ORBIT and the Swiss DATASTAR. At the present it works with a borrowed terminal, but in June 1985 it will put into operation its own data terminal. After this, it will be possible to broaden the online literature service for the enterprises. In this context, I should also like to underline that the solution of interlending service constitutes a task which is in no way inferior to carrying out online operations.

To approach the enterprises, to get them down to talks with the leader of the university library at all, is, of course, a difficult undertaking, often an unpleasant one. Unfortunately, the enterprise first must be persuaded of the utility of the most up-to-date library services, so of the advantages of using the online services as well. As regards these advantages, first place is due, of course, to the possibility of getting rapidly acquainted, by way of the online service, with recent results in science. Next, it must be pointed out that by making use of our services the enterprise will make economies. It can spare the installation costs of a terminal, the continuous rent for the data transmission line, and it does not have to acquire thesauri and other auxiliaries, etc. And there are no wages costs, which are always difficult to meet. They must also be convinced that our proposals and demands do coincide with their interests. It should be noted that this is a question of principle, for it is impossible to establish relations and obtain pecuniary assistance without a concordance of interests. Because I like to use the language of facts (actually no other way promises success with technical leaders), I usually argument very factually when calling on the general managers of the enterprises. I tell them how many times they had sent us interlibrary loan demands in the past 1–2 years. This amounts to 100–120 cases per year, for each enterprise. If I happen to have some good material in my bag, I point out the sources from which we had furnished data specially for the enterprise in question, and call attention to the extreme costliness of such data. I also brief them of the number of individually registered engineer members on our files. They number 45–50 per enterprise. In order to make my argumentation trustworthy, I also lay on the table the list of the leaders and regular library customers in question. He — the general manager — will then study the list carefully, look up the names associated with development. — This way of approach usually proves to be the most efficient one in overcoming the enterprise’s „resistance“. —
However, I also use to tell them about our concerns and the direction we should like to follow in our development efforts, that is, about all that for which we needed money if we had any. If such a visit to the enterprise or its winning over promises to be especially difficult, then I shall look for a professor of our university who maintains good personal relations with the enterprise management, and we shall try to reach our goal together, with his help.

I must confess that even with the most careful preparation and the employment of devices thought most suitable for the purpose, such an undertaking is a very difficult job indeed. A lot of patience, perseverance, and thoughness is needed, and one has to work very hard to achieve success!

Still the pecuniary assistance received from the enterprises must by any means be returned. Such an attitude that we should fight out and obtain „grants“ and then keep tranquil, spending quietly the transferred money is out of the question.

The matter of services offered to the enterprises must be taken very seriously. Our rector is very particular on this point, precisely on account of the correct relations existing between the university and the enterprises. And the acquired authority of the library also compels us to live up to our responsibility. The term „patron“ is, therefore, used in its symbolic, rather than its old, classical sense. The promises and possibilities of the library are as follows:

- When increasing our stock consideration will be given to demands submitted by the enterprises, both in respect to those concerning the discipline as a whole and to those concerning individual titles if the latter represent very expensive publications, e.g. U.S., ASTM standards.

- The library takes it upon itself to realize foreign interlibrary loans for the enterprises, especially when the documents involved have an incomplete bibliographical description and they are unable to correct them.

- The library possesses an excellent stock of standards, which can be made very good use of by the enterprises.

- The library also lends out, for a short delay, to the enterprises materials labelled „unborrowable“ and which are unaccessible to other agencies.

- As from the second half of 1985, the enterprises will be permitted to use the library's online data terminal, which has connections with a number of large data centres abroad.

- The library undertakes to teach enterprise engineers in the use of the online technique.

- It is very important to fill in the gaps in parts of the enterprise libraries’ stocks, to transfer individual periodicals or their photocopies.

- Organized by the library, technical translations amounting to 50,000 — 60,000 pages per year are carried out for the enterprises.

One may put the question whether in the period of the revolutionary propagation of computer engineering and data-, text- and picture-transmission techniques there should be a place for such a way of thinking, for such a conservative attitude. I am convinced that in
the next 8 – 10 years no fundamental change in the present day techniques of information will occur. At least not in Hungary, I think.

I believe that if we greatly simplify the course of research, the chief links of chain will continue to be: preparation of bibliography, possibly in an online manner; connection of a part of the original literature following selection, and, next, acquisition of the missing part by way of interlibrary loan (which could also be made conventionally, with the aid of a telefax). On the other hand, I think that even in the era of electronic data information technical journals and conference materials in paper form will preserve their leading position, at least for some years to come.

All this I dwell upon because I can confirm, from this angle as well, the vitality of the regional programme. During the 24 years of my library directorship I have often expressed my opinion, and I repeat it even now, that it is only by delivering the original literature into the user’s hands that the library is effectively able to acquire authority and recognition. If a professor receives a well-selected bibliography, containing not too many items, he will, of course, be quite pleased with it, but if we are unable to complete it at once with some original material, he will refrain for a long time from visiting the library and indeed, at a suitable moment, he will degrade the library. Just for this reason we shall strive with all our power to uphold the level of the technical literature, and even to develop it on a small scale. This requires enterprise resources as well.

Here I should like to go back to my original point of departure, to that basic idea according to which the primary task of the library consists in serving the university. In order to be in the position to fulfil this basic function on an appropriate level, however, the library must constantly increase its performance capability. Since, however, the university cannot afford to provide enough money for this, external resources and supplements must be sought. These acts of glancing outward for help and these efforts to find patrons serve in the final analysis for the enhancement of our forces and means, above all for the benefit of the university. We can speak of a particular luck if this concept falls in line with the development efforts and library needs of the enterprise.

References


