

*Philobiblon – Vol. XVI (2011) - No. 1***Philosophical, Epistemological, and Scientometric Considerations  
On the Meanings of Library Science and the Profession of Librarian  
– Situating a Research Project –**

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**Abstract:** Starting from the problematization of the meanings of science and library professions and institutions, the paper surfaces and analyzes from perspectives equally philosophical, epistemological, and scientometric, the premises and conditions which situate – willingly or not – the project of a (any) genuine research which intends to study the Romanian literature on librarianship as it appears in books and periodicals. To this end, earlier researches will also be placed on the dissection table of analysis, but meanwhile the problematic and even symptomatic experiences that the editors of the journal *Philobiblon* and its Romanian anthologies by the title *Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria – Antologie Philobiblon* have to confront are also organically exposed. These experiences outline as well the issues that practically any present or future responsible research of this type should focus on, as also the neuralgic points and mental traps which – once identified – will have to be either avoided, or assumed in the course of these researches. These traps, resulting precisely from the functioning and environment of this literature – which is, or pretends to be, equally professional and scientific – are and can be dangerous in the future, yet also eloquent with regard to their publishing and affiliation institutions.

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This paper was born out of the experiences and current problems connected to the editing of the journal *Philobiblon*, more precisely of its sections centred on librarianship, but also out of the difficulties in conceiving the more or less regularly appearing, Romanian-language anthologies of the journal, entitled *Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria – Antologie Philobiblon*. Consequently, it is about problems and even symptoms which have persisted for fifteen years already. On the other hand, the present meditations are also occasioned by the hardships met during the articulation of an ampler and more recent project, the rethinking and revisiting, both synthetic and current, of certain already completed researches – although in parallel and at

different time periods – on the literature of librarianship in Romania. This research envisaged the Romanian literature on librarianship published in Romanian specialized periodicals (between 1990 and 1998),<sup>1</sup> and a similar research was carried out focusing on the books which formed the corpus of librarianship literature, this time for the period between 1945 and 2004.<sup>2</sup>

The two directions and aspects are naturally organically interconnected. This is so because the first investigation of the Romanian literature on librarianship (which took place in fact between the years 1996–1997) also analyzed it with the intention of articulating the *programme* and challenges of the *Philobiblon*'s section on librarianship. The idea of the anthologies was based – and is still based – precisely on the awareness and undertaking of the deficiencies and “gaps” rigorously revealed by the study in question, later continued and reshaped by a more recent research on books.

However, the literature now discussed is – or it pretends to be anyway – *scientific* and *professional* at the same time. This, consequently, could not only “occasion”, but also explicitly require a meta-theoretical and critical meditation on its *sui generis* meanings, and also the meanings of the professions and institutions to which it is most organically and... problematically connected. It is, of course, primarily about the problem of *encounters* and *confluences* between science and library, culture and library in general, but secondly also about the *encounter* of library science with the profession to which it is inevitably connected *institutionally* as well. Essentially it is about the questions: What is the library for science? What is the library for culture? And, ultimately, what is the library for the library and for the awareness and knowledge carried over its horizons?

However, according to certain opinions and convictions mostly prevalent in this literature (that we can generically call here “librarianship”) rather than in lively and applied science and culture, the library was supposedly considered traditionally a “storage place” that preserved the documents and results of culture and science for any occasion. These “documents”, including also institutional and archival documents, were then processed, systematically organized, and offered to the readers.

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<sup>1</sup> Florina Iliș, István Király, and Angela Marcu, “Bibliografia analitică, analiza de conținut și de gen a literaturii bibliologice din revistele românești de profil – Cercetare pentru perioada 1990–1997” (Analytic bibliography, content and genre analysis of librarianship literature in Romanian specialized reviews – Research for the period 1990–1997)”, In *Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria – Antologie Philobiblon I*, edited by Florina Iliș and Ionuț Costea (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană – Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga”, 1998), 83–175. At the end of year 1998 the material was updated, and an electronic database was created – with the exquisitely creative computing assistance of Olimpia Curta –, which was sold at that time, with the help of the Open Society Foundation, to the libraries interested in purchasing it. (It had the same title as the article).

<sup>2</sup> Ana Maria Căpâlneanu, *Factorul informațional în învățământ și cercetare în contextul modernizării documentării științifice* (The informational factor in education and research in the context of the modernization of scientific documentation), Vol. I-II., (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2008).



**Octavian Cosman**, *Double Sun – Mirage*, 154 x 83 cm,  
oil on canvas and wood, 1997

While avoiding for now the discussion of the fundamentally *erroneous* character of such a (pre)conception, we only point out that it was later simply declared “outdated” – primarily by this very literature as well – because of the evolution of institutions, theories, conceptions, missions, and professions of the library. As a result, library institutions have “lately” become the providers of services named “informational”, and addressed to – no longer “readers”, but – “users”. “Users” whose requirements and way of usage are today permanently dynamically changing, and on this account the provider of informational services is always challenged to pursue them in its initiatives appealing and dedicated to their satisfaction, and even prediction...

It is easy to notice that – despite what is so unproblematically called “paradigm shift” – the *same kind of schematism* is at work in the depths of both “paradigms”. This can be called the schematism of *external encounters*. That is to say, “the library” and “the reader”, the “info-documentary structures” and “the user”, namely – essentially – “the library” and “culture”, “the library” and “science” do not encounter *in both of these schematisms* except “externally”/on the outside.

In effect, however, this has never been, is not, and will never be the connection, the essential link between library and culture, the connection, the essential link between library and science. For never has the library been merely some sort of attachment or a simple “source” – used and then “deserted” – either for culture, or for science. Neither has it been merely a place, a space, an institution where the results and achievements of culture or science were “deposited” for the present and for the future, whether “distributed” within its walls, or extended by loans or cables and signals. Instead, the library was, is, and will be part of, that is, it partook, partakes, and will *partake in* culture and science. It exists thus exactly *within* culture and exactly *within* science. And culture and science were always made *in* the library. Even if it is about “home loan” or “distance” services, as mentioned before. Because, for instance, history, literature, and philosophy alike were and are written in the library, in the horizon of the library, and the library is always actually present in the horizon of any research and scientific experiment. And, of course, in the horizon of any experiment, regardless of whether it is achieved with laboratory equipment, or only “mentally”, or by “field work”.

Evidently, all these need to be – if not thoroughly detailed, then at least – raised and problematized in an essential way when approaching the literature of this field with the intention of studying it epistemologically, scientometrically, and, inevitably, also historically. The *stake* of such an approach is in fact the articulation of the way in which this literature *understands* – or does not understand – itself, its significance. And, especially, of the way in which it *can – could* – understand itself.

As any research, this recently devised one also has certain *hypotheses*, which are – as it usually happens – outlined, on the one hand, on the basis of the problems and deficiencies of previous researches, and on the other hand, on the basis of actual experiences, connected to the subjects in question. These suggest that the results of previous researches are, or indeed are rendered as, inadequate and outdated for explaining and understanding our current experiences and possibilities.

However, the studies under discussion have most consistently surfaced many problems, inequalities, confusions, misunderstandings, and distortions, which

are worth being revisited here in an interpretive way, because the hypotheses of the projected research must be constructed, as said before, upon these results, but also upon the varied experiences of those who are to conduct them. One must point out, however, that just as it happened with the placement of previous research – and the position of the journal *Philobiblon* and its anthologies –, the currently devised research (and these analyses also) are *not* made “externally”, but precisely with an attitude of involvement, serving lucidity... And as regards the line of current experiences, one of these is of course the one connected to the publication of the journal *Philobiblon* and the anthologies, as well as the regular meetings of the Workshop associated with the journal. This Workshop has recently been called – similarly to the anthology – *Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria*.

The previous research was all carried out on the basis of an *individual methodology*, created and elaborated by researchers exactly to the purpose of analyses at the same time thematic, and concerning the cognitive and epistemological (*scientific*) level of the literature concerned. This literature was also subject to statistical, bibliometric, and scientometric analyses. In an attempt to grasp the cognitive and epistemological level on which each piece of writing – article in a periodical or book – treats its subject, the researchers constructed a particular set of concepts, for which they coined the term “genre descriptors”. Obviously, these concepts were defined as rigorously and clearly as possible. We note that the research only included the articles in periodicals which in the period discussed and at the time of their writing had, at least theoretically, a national distribution.

The following genre descriptors were used for the analysis of the articles: report, documentary synthesis, commentary, debate, study, and essay. In what follows, we shall explain them, then present their operational definitions. As for the *list of genre descriptors*, the first necessary explanation is its *comprehensiveness*. It comprises the *totality* of the authorial articles of any periodical publication of this literature. This means that *any* and *every* article of a periodical subject to analysis will compulsorily be included into *one* and *only one* of the categories of genre description. This is so because the categories on the list are – and must be – *exclusive*. Therefore they allow for the pertinent registration of a unit only and *exclusively* into *one single* category. Then, going from simple to complex, the various levels of the list of genre descriptors comprise in fact the *various possible levels of intellectual approach to the subjects of the articles* in their treatment.

Certainly, the definitions of the genre description concepts are equally analytical and functional. These definitions are directly employed as *application rules* for these notions.

But let us see the definitions of these descriptors. *Report*: it draws attention to or presents an event, a process, an initiative, etc. on the agenda and/or taking place at the moment. (E.g. the report about a national or international conference, colloquium, professional meeting, etc.). *Documentary synthesis*: it presents a determined problem or set of problems, in the form it is analytically and synthetically configured at a given time *in its literature*, but *without* the author’s engaging into individual research or expressing an individual point of view. *Commentary*: it is the exposition, presentation, and analysis of a process or problem, made on the basis of the literature connected to it and/or the author’s experience,

also containing the annotation of this literature or problem. *Debate*: it is the form of expression by which a theoretical and/or practical subject or problem is *initiated* or *made part of a public debate*, and works as a consistent and well-argued *impulse* for clarifying and/or solving the given problem. *Study*: it represents the detailed analysis of a problem, a situation, or a process, accomplished both on the basis of specialized literature on the subject, and also *individual research*! The results of this research are then exposed with a theoretical and/or factual argumentation. A *Study* is thus only that kind of intellectual manifestation (scientific text) which – in an argued and verifiable way – brings to the surface *new information*, and/or *new methods*, and/or *new perspectives and interpretations* (of information already known or methods already practiced). And the *essay*: it is an initiative taken with a complete freedom of spirit to order, associate, explain, and interpret the data of a problem from a *personal* and often *individual point of view*, placing the problem discussed in its various theoretical, intuitive, and factual contexts, emphasized both hypothetically and with argumentation by the interior consistence and logic of the text.

This list also needs some synthetic observations and clarifications. It must be pointed out, for instance, that the “table” of genre descriptors represents in fact a passage *from simple to complex*. During this passage the line of concepts actually crosses *two* levels: one is preponderantly an attitude level, of *mentality*, and the other is preponderantly precisely a *cognitive-epistemological* level. That is, a matter of *standard*. It can also be observed that the *mentality level* is in fact *focalized* by the descriptor *Debate*, since it is the debate which undertakes the “ambition” of *problems* to appear in the space of public discourse. Whereas, in general, the actual *processing* of problems and difficulties in the space of public discourse is achieved – from the perspective of *mentality* – by bringing them to public light in the intellectual form of debates. Therefore the *proportion of the frequency of debates* in a literature is highly indicative of the characteristics of *consistence in mentality* (and even in uprightness) for the appropriation level of the problems met by this literature and profession.

However, the *cognitive-epistemological* level is *focalized* by the descriptor *Study*! The *study* is the most elaborate and adequate level and genre for exposing *truth value* in connection with a determined problem, approached with explicit, methodological, and systematic *research* efforts, which will be published in a specialized journal. Therefore the *cognitive-epistemological level of a particular literature* will be most accurately indicated by the proportion of the frequency of studies. It is thus natural that the analysis of literature should keep in mind (and even focus on) the *proportion of these two* genre descriptors. That is: the *debate*, indicative of the *mental profile of mentality and uprightness*, and the *study*, indicative of the *cognitive-epistemological* (in other words, scientific) *level* of a particular literature.

Apparently, the “assessing” character of genre descriptors opens a far too wide space for “subjective” interpretation. In reality, however, it is clear that, for instance, an article that contains *no individual research* of the author, and does not expose and interpret its results in an *argued and verifiable way* cannot be regarded as a *study*. While the initiators and/or participants of a *debate* usually specify their own reasons for raising the problems discussed in their contributions in public. It is

just as clear that the mere description of the events of a professional/scientific event is a *report*, while the synthesizing summary of the literature of some subject, *without identifying any of the author's own contributions*, must be considered a *documentary synthesis*. Then it is again clear that the *commentary* is the exercise of professional and specialized (in the *noblest* sense of the word) “good sense” in treating a bibliography or the observation of certain processes...

This work will revisit and present – in a schematic way – the results of the research<sup>1</sup> focusing mainly on the frequency and distribution of studies in periodicals. This – in a descending order – looks as follows: *Commentary* 61.36 %; *Report* 22.50 %; *Study* 8.62 %; *Debate* 6.19 %; *Documentary synthesis* 2 %; and *Essay* 0.58 %.

The mere reviewing of the distribution of articles according to genre descriptors shows very clearly how the literature we have to face here is dominated by *Commentaries* and *Reports* which together constitute approximately 84 % of the entire corpus. Whereas the *Study* – that is, the main indicator of a particular literature's epistemological and scientific level – covers only 8.62 %, and the *Debate* only 6.19 %...

The results of the research on studies are however in a strict – and sad – agreement with the results obtained from the investigation of books. Leaving aside the detailed discussion of genre descriptors and their definitions, constructed for the analysis of books on the analogy of *general auxiliary indices of form* of the UDC by Ana Maria Căpâlneanu, we only enumerate them here: *Treatise*, *Monograph*, *Documentary synthesis*, *Manual*, *Collective volume*, *Essay*, and *Reference works*. Obviously, the study on books also analyzes the thematic aspects as well as the epistemological-scientific level of this literature. The results of this research are worth being weighed and undertaken with special seriousness and attention.<sup>2</sup> Yet also with openness and honesty *towards ourselves!*

What must be emphasized first of all about the truths unearthed already by that research – which, as we have said, are in complete agreement with the results obtained by the research of the literature in specialized periodicals – is precisely the fact that, from the perspective of the *cognitive-epistemological level* (namely, the genres), it is dominated by *Manuals* (26.69 %), then *Reference works* (21.97 %), *Documentary synthesis* (19.51 %) and *Collective volumes* (16.02 %)! Whereas *Monographs* (13.34 %), *Essays* (2.26 %) and *Treatises* (0.21 %) – the genres which

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<sup>1</sup> Since it is more complete, in the presentation of the results we will primarily make use of the numbers and analyses contained in the database mentioned in the first footnote. However, for their wider verifiability, we also list here the percentages published in the study in the first anthology issue, which only encompassed the period between 1990 and 1997: *Commentary*: 60.8 %; *Report*: 24.9 %; *Study*: 6.7 %; *Debate*: 5.7 %; *Documentary synthesis*: 1.5 %; *Essay*: 0.4 %. Consequently, *Commentaries* and *Reports* represented even then an overall percent of 85.7 %! See: Iliș, Király, and Marcu, “Bibliografia analitică”, 172.

<sup>2</sup> See also István Király V., “Bibliografia ca instrument al clarificării de sine” (The bibliography as an instrument of self-clarification), In *Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria – Antologie Philobiblon* IV. ed. Ana Maria Căpâlneanu, Carmen Crișan, István Király V., Cristina Popa, and Raluca Soare (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană – Biblioteca Centrală Universitară “Lucian Blaga”, 2009), 471–478 .

are supposed to yield the *scientific-epistemological quality and substance* of a literature – are ranked on the very last “places”! And regardless of the more detailed analyses<sup>1</sup> of the proportion of the various *types* of *manuals* (materials of methodology, professional training, school and university manuals) within the evidently dominant category of this type of intellectual processing and assimilation of the subjects – which is imposed here precisely in the detriment of *Monographs* and *Treatises* –, this domination raises in its turn a series of extremely serious problems related to this literature on the whole.

Because, however much are we inclined – very superficially indeed – to perceive *Manuals* as an “impersonal” and/or non-authored genre, we must still ask the question: *where exactly are these manuals born from in a specialized literature?!* And in addition, how does it happen that these manuals are published in an ever increasing number every year? Moreover, in the evident under-representation of *Studies*, *Monographs*, and *Treatises*, the *Manuals*, primarily university manuals, in their majority cannot be anything else than mere *compilations*, lacking any foundations, roots, and *creative affinities*, and as a result, they can only be deficient in their substance and educational *motivation* for any such creativity. This motivation should be oriented towards the “learning”, guidance, and encouragement of responsible and *autonomous research* conducted by the very people they address. Since the overwhelming majority of these manuals, especially following 1989, are university manuals addressed to students, that is to say, the future “graduate” professionals and researchers with a specialized scientific training! Specialists who are thus clearly trained, more often than not, by manuals and “programmes” which are *not sustained* by the *individual* researches of their “authors”! Consequently nobody can probably learn from the majority of manuals and their “certified” authors what exactly an authentic research in this field is.

However much we submerged into the institutional and formal-bureaucratic agitation and ambitions pretended here also by the Bologna process, the *university* – the target for these manuals – still is and remains an institution where, to paraphrase Wilhelm von Humboldt’s substantial expression, science is taught as a live problem, namely, *being practiced!* While the practice of science is in fact *research*, and the *university* is precisely the place and space of people’s access to science ... *as science*. That is to say, as scientific research. Which, evidently, cannot be otherwise than creative, yielding new knowledge, new methods, and new perspectives.

Consequently, in want of this aspect – which can only and exclusively derive from the high number of *Studies* published in specialized periodicals, and *Monographs* and *Treatises* as categories of books –, any so-called “university” manual is not and cannot be anything else than a transvestite documentary synthesis, lacking however the honesty and “humbleness” of the latter.

The results of this research is then closely – and sadly – connected to the experience of conceiving and editing the two sections of the journal *Philobiblon* addressing issues that can generically be included into library science and

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<sup>1</sup> Ana Maria Căpâlneanu, *Factorul informațional...*, 254.



librarianship,<sup>1</sup> as well as, evidently, that of the editing of the *Anthology* volumes. The vast majority of the texts sent for publication in this “discipline” are – paradoxically – either mere compilations drawn up on the basis of the “most up-to-date” literature connected to the most fashionable topics on the international stage of the profession and/or science, or – the more consistent of them – are historical or sociological surveys, which rarely touch upon the timely or current problems of the profession and discipline of *Library and Information Science* in its proper and true meaning.

Considered in the context of the researches presented, it is now clear that all these signal, and are also most evidently associated with, essential and determined intellectual and mentality confusions, which – in lack of being critically explicated – still function in a tacit and deceiving way, both in this literature and profession.

The first issue arising is the confusion in dissociating the *scientific* and *professional* aspect or character of this literature and mentality. This confusion obviously impregnates the publications of the field as well. An eloquent example in this respect is the review *Biblioteca* (The library) which, in the mentioned period of analysis was at best a forum of general professional information, but which contained the word “science” twice in its subtitle for decades (*Revistă de bibliologie și știința informării – Review of library science and information science*)...<sup>2</sup>

It is true of course that the literature under discussion is, by the nature of things, equally professional and scientific in character. Just like many other literatures. Medical, for example... Here, as well as there, scientific research is inseparable from its consequences and professional impact. Still, no matter how inseparable they are, they are not and cannot be mistaken nevertheless! Professional literature on the one hand raises the problems of the implementation of scientific results (whether organizational, technical, or theoretical), and, on the other hand, offers problematic experience to be appropriated by systematic and demanding scientific research. While it is evident that in our professional-scientific literature these two aspects are permanently confused and obscured.<sup>3</sup> Only thus can it be

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<sup>1</sup> These sections are now entitled *Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria* and *Special Collections of the Library*.

<sup>2</sup> Even today, when this periodical is published by the Romanian National Library, the confusion remains just as striking. The review’s webpage informs that: “The review *Biblioteca* is a professional publication published since 1948, with a monthly frequency. The specialized review of the entire National System of Libraries reflects issues of interest in *library and information science*”. (Our emphasis, R. T. and I. K. V.) See: <http://www.bibnat.ro/Revista-Biblioteca-s224-ro.htm>, accessed: 22 March, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> To avoid any “misunderstandings”, and not to hurt “sensibilities”, we have to make note of the fact – if it is necessary – that this is not about “depreciating” or “disregarding” professional literature or publications focusing, for example, on problems of current activities, or those of professional associations, etc. On the contrary, we insist on the decisive importance of these publications and intellectual and existential efforts. What we note however is only and exactly the *confusion* that was created and – as apparent – persists here in this matter. We certainly also try to identify some of the intellectual and structural-systematic sources and elements of these confusions, as well as of their *persistence*. These confusions can and do contribute to the articulation of an undesirable image of our

understood and explained that for the authors and for many readers – or more precisely: *users* – of those texts certain documentary syntheses and mere compilations may “pass” as “scientific studies” and “monographs”, or even “treatises”! That is to say, as results of “authentic” scientific activities, on the basis of which then whole series of “university manuals” could be produced. Over which, later, not only careers can be built, but new generations of specialists will be trained, who, in their turn, couldn’t really help – even if they wished to – reproducing and deepening the confusions which meanwhile will have become *systemic*.

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It should be noted incidentally that, in parallel with the research done on the articles in periodicals, Ionuț Costea conducted in 1997 an extremely sensible analysis of the higher education in librarianship, recently restarted at that time in the form of Colleges. In this analysis he grasped many of the traps of the then already identifiable tendencies in the conception of this kind of training: “The relationship of the discipline taught and the orientation of research skills situates us in front of “parallel” approaches, especially in what regards the didactic discourse of librarianship. This is the source of the “low horizon” in the disciplines of librarianship, where the teaching efforts are based on everyday professional, empirical experience”.<sup>1</sup>

Next, the author enlisted the extremely varied series of *opportunities* offered then (also) through various international contacts both to the professionals of different directions of library science and to the new university staff for professional and scientific training and improvement via programmes and scholarships. An important number of professionals have indeed benefited from these opportunities.

In connection with this aspect, or more precisely with the *way* in which the majority of those involved understood at that time already the significance of their participation to these international programmes and contacts, another research conducted also at the Lucian Blaga Central University Library revealed certain essential and eloquent problematic aspects. This time we refer to a study regarding the “state of the profession” of librarians with higher education in this institution,<sup>2</sup> which surprisingly indicated in the questionnaire it employed that the majority of the professionals involved, of whom many became professors at the higher education

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profession both in a scientific, cultural, and an institutional medium in which we situate ourselves in accordance with the horizons, missions, and challenges of our essential significance.

<sup>1</sup> Ionuț Costea, “Formarea inițială în biblioteconomie – Cazul Colegiului de la Cluj-Napoca” (Initial training in library science – the case of the Cluj-Napoca college) In *Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria – Antologie Philobiblon I.*, 193.

<sup>2</sup> See: István Király, and Adriana Székely, “Studiu privind starea profesiei la bibliotecarii cu studii superioare din B.C.U. „Lucian Blaga” Cluj-Napoca” (A study on the state of the profession of librarians with higher education in the Lucian Blaga Central University Library Cluj-Napoca) In *Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria – Antologie Philobiblon I.*, 54.

institutions in librarianship established at that time, *had not passed* through this participation and experience, or consistent intellectual modifications; consequently – statistically speaking – neither did they acquire new structures or criteria of assessment and standards for the evaluation of their professional and academic participation in the process of restarting, reformation, and rethinking of library institutions and higher education facilities for the study of library science.<sup>1</sup> (Let us emphasize once more that, evidently, we speak here about statistical states and tendencies, and not about particular individuals).

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It is clear therefore that the confusion we have spoken about earlier is first of all accompanied by, and intertwined with, other kinds of confusions, this time derived from the previous ones. Of these *derived confusions*, the most important and visible is certainly the one that – on the basis of existing analyses, and also experiences previously referred to – we should straightforwardly define as the confusion of *mode* (fashion) with *actuality* (timeliness). Obviously we speak of “fashion” here primarily in the sense of “intellectual fashions”. Anyway, beyond those said, this confusion is each time overshadowed by the intention, albeit completely inorganic, as we shall see later on, of being “up-to-date” and “in line with” the ever wider and dynamic world of globalization.

Notwithstanding that – despite the misunderstandings and confusions – “mode” and “actuality” are two different concepts. As much in meaning and origin (that is, from an etymological point of view), as in their actual structure. The term *mode* (fashion) originates from the extension and instrumentalization of the classical Latin meaning of *modus*.<sup>2</sup> Which means: *measure*. A measure the unit of which (measurement unit) *is applied* to what there is to measure. Therefore “mode” is nothing else than a simple (or difficult) application (e.g. taking over or wearing) of something that has previously been determined to be a measure to apply... Only for a while, true, but still at a general level. Whereas the “application” itself – that is, the fact of being “up-to-date and in line with fashion” – does not mean or pretend anything else than the imperative of *adjustment* to the already established measurement units. That is to say, a shallow synchronism.

The term “actuality” (timeliness) means and is something utterly different, however. As we can see, the term comes from the Latin *actus*, that is, from *action*.<sup>3</sup> It does not mean therefore something to be *taken over* by the simple – or complicated – application of that what functions as a con-temporary measurement unit, but on the contrary, something which – most concretely and articulately – must be *carried out, put into action*. In other words, while mode is something to be *applied*, actuality is something to be *assumed*.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 67–68.

<sup>2</sup> See also the online Latin-Romanian dictionary: <http://www.limbalatina.ro/dictionar.php>, accessed: 23 March, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., accessed: 23 March, 2011.

Consequently, the assumption of actuality requires that this very assumption be – each time, explicitly – analyzed, *critically* studied, and guided in its permanently given and concrete contextual possibilities. Nevertheless, this is exactly what most often lacks from the texts of our literature on librarianship. In other words: in a literature that pretends to be professional and scientific at the same time, fashion usually works by the compilations of what is “most up-to-date” – whether conceived industriously or superficially –, while actuality by researches articulated and assumed as such. It is therefore equally important that, on the one hand, we should not confuse – but clearly dissociate – fashion/s and actuality/ies, and on the other hand, we should not confuse – but clearly dissociate – compilation or its kind and authentic research.

This also presupposes that we take a responsible attitude, that is, to take notice of, and adequately treat any tendency or pretension to a compilation which presents itself as a result of research. Namely, as a “study”, a “treatise”, or a “monograph”. Because such a thing is, for those who practice it, a mere deceit. Or for those who wish to conduct an analysis of this literature, it would be mere confusion and error.

Moreover, on a superficial level these confusions can be fuelled and even encouraged by what we should term here *technical appearance*. This appearance creates and supports the impression – completely superficial, let us repeat – of the “possibility” of an unproblematic leap in time... by the merely applicative takeover of equipment and techniques or programmes etc. as they are configured at the most *recent*, current state of their evolution. In effect, however, on a serious and organic level, as it is explicated already in the introduction to the first volume of the *Philobiblon* anthologies in 1998, and repeated (because *it is necessary* to do so) in an updated form in *each new volume*:<sup>1</sup> “... the continuous automation and modernization-evolution of the libraries confront us librarians, permanently and primarily, with ourselves. In other words, it proves to be a properly hermeneutic question and challenge, which urges – or obliges – us, while dealing with technical problems, to permanently define and redefine ourselves. That is, our very own general, yet always *actual* professional, institutional, and existential being, state, situation, and availability! With our gaze directed of course (also) to the future...”<sup>2</sup> It has been, and is about appearances, thus, which effectively function “... in neglecting the fact that the very information infrastructure of modernization carries with itself a certain *culture* and *mentality*. Without adopting, and adapting to, these, its “operation” cannot be either organic, or – ultimately – completely efficient. Namely, the fact that, on the one hand, not only the “professional”, “restricted” conclusions and consequences must be drawn and observed, but also the institutional, administrative, legislative, associative, and continuous training ones,

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<sup>1</sup> Entitled: “Re-Introducere sau: Dincolo de „teoria și practica” informării și documentării – Spre o hermeneutică posibilă și necesară” (Re-Introduction, or: Beyond the “theory and practice” of information and documentation – towards a possible and necessary hermeneutics), In *Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria – Antologie Philobiblon* I (1998); II (2004); III (2007); IV (2009).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

which derive from this process, and on the other hand by ignoring the fact that the adoption of this mentality means in fact the change, effective surpassing, and often even the explicit suppressing of the data of our present and prejudicial mentalities! These mental structures – which consequently must be surpassed – must therefore be *studied*, problematized, identified, and recognized then as “our own”, and at the same time as our own *brakes*, determinations, and *obligations*.<sup>1</sup>

The traps of this appearance and their encounter/symbiosis with the unfounded superficiality of all kinds of ambitions are further systematically encouraged by mental confusions and confused mentalities, produced, disseminated, encouraged, and reproduced in fact by the lack and ignorance of *criticism*. Or precisely by suppressing it (also) by the voice of the common, oversized and noisy professional opinion which more and more imposes itself day by day on electronic forums of “professional discussions” such as the *Biblos*, one of the most popular such forums in Romania. And also by the insufficiency and incompetence thus generated and encouraged in the “uprightness” of the public exercise of critical spirit.

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In conclusion, these are the main parameters in the context of which the research we problematize and project now is situated and structured. And which, unfortunately, although pressing, seems not to have any temporal “urgency”. Because it will have to inevitably re-ask the question regarding the state of that what is here as well, although perhaps too easily, called *Library and Information Science*. A name in which, it seems, a strange, complicated, and rather exigent term is still involved: *science*! A word which, if nothing defends it and nothing states it, remains exposed to *malpraxis*. And it is only after the revision, extension, and updating of research analysis that we shall see whether or not this quite serious word has an actual coverage, or on the contrary, it is most often used only superfluously...

The lack of “urgency” of this research simply comes from the fact that, by the way in which things are produced and reproduced, the die, hypothetically speaking, has already been “cast”... for at least a generation of professionals and researchers. That is, for 20–25 years.

But, and this is again part of the essential conclusions of our philosophical, epistemological, and scientometric meditations: the reposition and rearticulation of the question and research on the “state” of what is here called LIS and what it implies will certainly ask for – in a somewhat “privileged” and “exemplary” manner – the *current* revisiting of the essence and meanings of science, professions, and as a result, library institutions *in genere*.

Translated by Emese G. Czintos

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

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