Searching for a Lost Identity: Serbian Librarianship at the Beginning of the Twenty-first Century

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Abstract

There are three related aspects of the problem of identity that beset Serbian librarianship after 1991: 1) *identity as survival* during the war crisis and subsequent sanctions; 2) *identity as change* during the time of a global information and communication revolution; and 3) *identity as self-awareness* during a time of change in status, social responsibility, and professionalism for library personnel. Judging by the difference in the conditions under which libraries operated in Serbia during the 1990s and 2000s, the two decades can be characterized as the antipodes of each other. At the same time, they are also two sides of the same whole, in that the old system of librarianship collapsed and has not yet been replaced with a new one. This paper offers a survey of the situation in Serbia through an analysis of the present state of the difficulties currently besetting the various activities of Serbian libraries: automation, digitization, communication, scientific research, and continuing education. The need to develop a new discourse on librarianship in Serbia is crucial so that librarians may have a voice in the processes of formal and public education and the acceleration of economic, scientific, and cultural growth in Serbia.

Introduction

The phenomenon of identity manifests itself at the levels of the individual, family, and group, and these correspond to identities that are also created by occupational, cultural, and national values and qualities. The role of libraries in the process of creating these identities can be considered from different points of view therefore: on the one hand, libraries contribute to the building of personal and collective identities by preserv-

ing and passing on past, present, and future experiences and notions; on the other, librarianship itself faces the challenge to define its own professional identity during a time of turbulent technological and social change. After 1991, Serbian librarianship underwent a transformation of its own identity into one that is more modern and professional by virtue of changes to library funding, programs, and services.

FOUNDATIONS OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY: LIBRARIANSHIP IN SERBIA, 1948–1990

Serbian librarianship in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first can be defined as the attempt to find and recover lost professional identity and to revitalize professional values. The beginning of this period was marked by Yugoslavia's political break from the Soviet Union and from other socialist countries in 1948; the end of this period coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation. Sociopolitical and economic circumstances in Yugoslavia and in the biggest of its six federal republics, Serbia, were quite different from those in other socialist countries. After the conflict with the Cominform in 1948,[1] Serbia began the process of reviewing and critiquing the model of a centralized, socially planned economy and the bureaucratic model of the Communist Party. Serbia's search for its own identity led to the idea of self-governance, economic liberalization, and the democratization of social and cultural life. The country was modernizing rapidly and opening itself to Western values and influences, which created the preconditions for the later modernization of librarianship as well as the creation of new, professional library standards.

During the reconstruction of the war-torn country, the predominantly agrarian Serbian population was subject to a rapid process of industrialization that instigated a migration toward urban centers. Free education resulted in a rapid increase of educated Serbs, and the ideological separation of the Eastern bloc states created a climate of openness toward Western Europe and the United States.[2] For the first time, Yugoslavia began to enjoy an international reputation that surpassed its relative size and economic strength. Furthermore, as the founder and leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia provided Serbia with a solid framework for the later development of its own educational and cultural institutions.

There are three distinct periods during the time between 1948 and 1990 in which the course of development and modernization of librarianship in Serbia and Yugoslavia occurred:

- The first period, 1948 to 1960, was characterized by attempts to rapidly establish a system of state-run educational and cultural institutions with the intention of increasing popular literacy. Data accumulated by the Ministry of Science and Culture reveals an increase in the number of

libraries and in the availability of books in many different locations. In 1948, there were 9,772 public libraries in Yugoslavia, of which 3,335 were in Serbia, which held a total of 1,250,245 books and supported 631,181 documented readers (Radovic & Pitović, 1950, p. 9).

- The second period, 1960 to 1971, was one of formulating organizational and professional frameworks and strengthening the connection of municipal libraries with their local patrons. This period is also notable for the adoption of two federal laws governing library activities, as well as the setting of standards for all types of libraries in Yugoslavia. For these reasons, this period can be characterized as a time of integration, stabilization, and normalization.

- The third period, 1971 to 1991, ends with the start of the Yugoslav wars and the subsequent fragmentation of Yugoslavia. This period was characterized by establishing networks between municipal and national libraries, which was achieved by adopting common standards for processing publications and executing other professional functions using updated computer equipment. There was a great amount of theoretical discussion and practical effort to establish a modern, automated library-information system during this period. By the end of 1991, the networked, bibliographic database contained approximately 500,000 electronic records; more than fifty Yugoslav libraries were involved in the creation of this digital catalog. Due to the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992, this networked cataloging system fell apart, unfortunately. This system, while physically located in Maribor, Slovenia, functioned as the central system for all of Yugoslavia until 1992 in terms of the way in which it operated and the way in which it was constructed. Not only was the information infrastructure financed with federal, Yugoslav funding, but a significant number of information professionals and librarians had been recruited from the largest libraries throughout the Yugoslavian region in building it.

The political and social upheavals that occurred throughout the period between World War I and the Yugoslav wars provoked great changes in libraries. In the years immediately following World War II, Yugoslav libraries defined their objectives according to the Soviet model, which the Communist Party organized and controlled, not only as the "intellectual," ideological authority, but also as the driver of Yugoslav economy, society, and culture as a whole. After 1948, the bureaucratic model of the party was abandoned to make way for the democratization of social and cultural life. A more liberal flow of books, ideas, and information from abroad engendered a receptivity of Serbian librarianship toward European and international standards, trends, and professional values. International influences have, therefore, actively shaped Serbian librarianship as well as the professional organization of work with Serbian libraries and related library associations. However, the Yugoslav model of "self-managing

socialism" during the mid-twentieth century failed to overcome the weaknesses of previous "real socialism" via the political monopoly of the Communist Party, demonstrated by the restriction of freedom and of individual initiative, by an undeveloped market economy, and by the confederalization and disintegration of the Yugoslav state. The crisis experienced by librarians throughout the former Yugoslavia was truly a consequence of the crisis of meaning and legitimacy experienced by those involved with and subject to the former political system but was also a consequence of the inability of the library community to achieve professional unity and supremacy over these external pressures and influences.

Identity as Survival: Librarianship in Serbia in Times of War and Economic Crisis

The problem of identity for Serbian librarianship in the period that has followed the upheavals of the early 1990s up to the present time has been distinguished by three interdependent characteristics: survival during the crisis of war and political sanctions; change during a time of revolution in information and communication technology; and self-awareness with respect to status, social responsibility, and professionalism. The disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began both formally and legally with the proclamation of independence of Slovenia and Croatia on June 25, 1991. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established on April 27, 1992, as a union between Serbia and Montenegro. Armed conflicts flared between the formerly federalized units due to their failure to separate peacefully, and exploded into a short, ten-day war on Slovenian territory and a four-year conflict in Croatia that lasted from 1991 to 1995. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina began on March 1, 1992, and ended on December 14, 1995, and was the largest military conflict that had occurred in Europe since the end of World War II. On May 15, 1992, the United Nations Security Council imposed international sanctions on Serbia that, in addition to completely isolating the country, brought severe economic crisis and hyperinflation. The disintegration of Yugoslavia ended with the signing of the Dayton Agreement, which provided for the creation of five new countries within the geographic territory of the former Yugoslavia: Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (comprised of the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Yugoslavia. Later, after sanctions that were reimposed in 1997 and the NATO bombing of Serbia, which lasted from March 24 to June 10, 1999, the Serbian province of Kosovo became an international protectorate of the United Nations.

Since the victory of the democratic opposition against the regime of Slobodan Milošević on October 5, 2000, the citizens of Serbia have demonstrated a resolute commitment to democratic reform and Europeanization of the country. On February 4, 2003, the Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia was restructured and renamed as the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. After a referendum held on May 21, 2006, Montenegro became an independent state, and on June 3, 2006, it officially declared its independence. Since then, Serbia has acted as an independent and sovereign state, and adopted its own constitution on November 8, 2006. The Kosovo Parliament unilaterally declared the independence of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metochia from the Republic of Serbia on February 17, 2008, but the government of Serbia and the Serbian Parliament annulled this decision.

Although the literature is vast on the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the reductive, oversimplified interpretations of the causes of and representations of the nature of the regional conflicts that have dominated the media, politics, and society are but stereotypes regarding the clash of communism and democracy. The world has been fed the trope of East versus West, "good" versus "bad" nationalism:

> However, despite the empirical evidence and theory-based interpretations that point to the complexity of the Yugoslav drama, international, especially [the] Western public was won by fragments of the truth that was promoted by politicians, media and an impressive number of members of academic circles. A bloody image was engraved, thus typical for the Balkan area, as it is widespread, mingled with the Cold War Manichaeism about the clash between good and evil, democracy and communism. Practical political and military steps that have been undertaken in resolving the Yugoslav conflict, as well as the current attitude towards this area, particularly towards Serbia, which figures as the major culprit, were based on these simplified premises. For these reasons, partial truths, half-truths, must be subject to systematic exposure, because they have far-reaching consequences, both in terms of the international status of Serbia, and in terms of its internal consensus and the identity of its citizens. (Nakarada, 2008, p. 16)

Dissolution of the key elements of the Yugoslav library-information system—cooperation between experts and professional associations, the obligatory exchange of materials, and automated, shared cataloging—began along with the disintegration of the formerly united states of Yugoslavia. In 1991, the National Library of Serbia and the Matica Srpska Library stopped receiving, and reciprocally exchanging, materials with the national libraries of Ljubljana (Slovenia), Zagreb (Croatia), Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Skopje (Macedonia). Since the bombings of 1999, the National and University Library in Priština (Kosovo) has not functioned as part of the library and information system of Serbia (Stokić Simončić & Vukadinović, 2009). The National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of the eight major Yugoslav national libraries, burned during the siege of Sarajevo that occurred during August 25–27, 1992. Its devastation has become a tragic symbol of the destruction of cultural heritage that occurred during the wars within the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

In 1992, as might be expected, the automated, shared bibliographic cataloging system stopped functioning completely. The database had over half a million records at the time, and more than fifty libraries had been working cooperatively using this system. The Institute of Information Science (IZUM) in Maribor had been serving as host and had led the database's development of information services. Serbian librarianship needed more than a decade to restore this system and to once more place the development of the library system on a unique informational platform. It was not until 2003 that the technological support was again provided by IZUM. In February 2003, the database COBIB.SR that contained 1,346,035 records was formed; it served as the first and most important step of the new Virtual Library of Serbia. Databases of the Matica Srpska Library containing 738,137 bibliographic records, the National Library of Serbia containing 263,593 records, the University Library Svetozar Marković containing 63,305 records, and the Yugoslav Bibliographic Institute with 281,000 records were the basis of the central electronic catalog. The Center of the Virtual Library of Serbia was established in the National Library of Serbia in 2003, with the task of providing "the conditions for the realization of the Virtual Library of Serbia as a comprehensive systemic solution of coordinated construction, and the development of a unique library information system with unique information technology in the Republic of Serbia" ("Agreement on the Establishment of the VBS Center," 2012). Thus, the preconditions were provided for the inclusion of all types of libraries in the revived cataloging system. Today, the shared database contains nearly 2.5 million records, and 125 libraries are included in the system.

On the Day of Librarians of Serbia, December 14, 1993, there took place the convention of librarians held on the topic "Librarianship of Serbia under Conditions of Social Crisis and International Isolation." In his introductory speech, the minister of culture pointed to the dramatic situation in the field of Serbian cultural communication with the world, at a time when eighty bilateral agreements on cultural, technical, and scientific cooperation were suspended:

> If we were looking for a formula that would briefly express our aspirations and our form of existence, I would have said that it is: survive by means of culture, survive by means of culture as we have survived during the Turkish invasion, as we have survived in other periods as well, as we have preserved our language, our customs, as our church has survived, our alphabet, and so on. Our task is to survive now. (Stojičić, 1994, p. 37)

The convention presented data on the devastation of Serbian books and libraries during the 1991–93 war. In repositories of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 229 manuscripts, incunabula, and *srbuljas* were destroyed,[3] as well as two eparchial libraries with more than 8,000 books. In church and

municipal libraries, 57,790 books and 1,010 liturgical books were missing, as well as more than sixty archives, registry books, and chronicles. In the places with a predominantly Serbian population, more than a thousand Serbian local-history collections were destroyed, as well as 128,717 books and over 530 titles of magazines and newspapers (Barać, 1994, pp. 42–43).

In 1993, according to the official statistics of the National Library of Serbia, not a single book was purchased by Serbian libraries. Since then, the acquisition of library materials has been one of the most important topics in the library field. In 1998, library acquisition policy was discussed at the two gatherings of librarians. The acquisition policy of public libraries was the topic of a roundtable in Čačak of twenty library directors organized by the publishing company Clio, while 1990s acquisition policy found its way onto the agenda of the Community of Academic Libraries of Serbian Universities. At the first gathering, the roundtable, two devastating facts were revealed: even in the most successful libraries, according to library standards, the number of users did not exceed 10–12 percent of the total population of the local community; and 10 percent of the funds that the state annually allocates to the libraries was being consumed by the acquisition of library materials. The second gathering showed that, after 1993—a black year for the entire Serbian people and also for its libraries—academic libraries struggled with a constant lack of funds, and their faculties were satisfied if they could obtain even several dozen foreign titles a year (Stokić Simončić, 1998).

We can say that, in spite of everything, Serbian librarianship survived even in times of war and sanctions, but with consequences, the depths of which have never been entirely reviewed nor evaluated. And by that we refer not only to the professional interruption of communication with the world, the low quality of information services given to users, and gaps in the collections of foreign literature, especially periodicals, but also to some consequences that fall under the symbolic domain and the domain of values. Both culture and librarianship faced the problem of overall degradation of moral and spiritual values, and even the degradation of elementary taste, in the conditions of long-term social and economic crises. Due to hyperinflation, the National Bank was continuously printing banknotes that were almost instantly turning into worthless paper. However, the great figures of Serbian history and its most important institutions were persistently appearing on the banknotes, thus quite unnecessarily devaluing their reputation. For example, on the front of the 500-billion-dinars banknote, there was one of the greatest Serbian poets, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, while on its reverse side was the National Library of Serbia.

During the period 1991–2011, the system of librarianship that had been built up in previous decades was collapsing. In these transitional times, the overall legal and regulatory framework for organizations changed slowly. Additionally, libraries and librarianship, publishing and bookselling, as

well as museum, archival, theater, film, concert, and gallery activities, were faced with traumatic circumstances. Instead of systemic solutions, there were individual initiatives, projects, and actions testifying to the disintegration of the state-bureaucratic model of cultural politics but also society's difficulties in creating a new model of cultural relations. Still, the orientation toward European integration brought a new concept of organization and communication to Serbian society. Serbian librarians, who at that time did not have a strong professional organization and clearly defined status of the profession, nor even the minimum of necessary visibility in society, had a reason to take this general European framework as a great opportunity.

IDENTITY AS CHANGE: SERBIAN LIBRARIES IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Automation, digitization, and Web 2.0 have coalesced in Serbia in recent years. Delay in processes of automation caused by isolation and poverty, disproportion in the level of economic development of certain regions, and the need to catch up with the developed world meant that these processes have been taking place almost simultaneously and intensely. In the domain of library and information activity, Serbia has become a country of contrasts. Paradoxically, during the period 2004–2008, 44 percent of school libraries in Serbia had computers, 3 percent of school libraries had the possibility of using e-mail, and 1.6 percent used the internet (Mitrić, 2010), while public libraries in the capital city were already using Web 2.0 applications (Djukic & Vuksan, 2008). The National Library of Serbia, which built an international reputation in the processes of automation and digitalization during the 2000–2011 period, was not thinking strategically, failing to encourage a more balanced development of Serbian libraries.

Digital libraries appeared about two decades ago. Since then, there has been a huge interest among the scientific and professional public regarding the possibility of preserving cultural and scientific heritage by electronic means, as well as for the terminological and cultural determination of this phenomenon and its social implications. Although in Sweden and the United States, national initiatives for digitization were adopted as early as 1993, at the very end of the twentieth century, there were still debates about whether the digital library is an institution, a service, or a database (Borgman, 1999).

In Serbia, the first cultural-heritage digitization project is considered to be Project Rastko, which launched in 1994 and has had a presence on the internet since 1997 ("Project Rastko, E-Library of Serbian Culture"). Within libraries, efforts to digitize parts of cultural and scientific heritage have been underway for about a decade. The Digital National Library of Serbia has been developing continuously since 2003. In 2004, a document was adopted on priorities for digitization, and a department was

established for the development of the digital library, the only one of its kind in the country. Nowadays, the Digital National Library of Serbia contains more than a hundred digital collections, offering access to nearly 2 million digital documents. In July 2005, the National Library of Serbia became a full partner of The European Library (TEL) project, and since 2009, its digital collections have been included in Europeana—the European Digital Library. Since April 2008, the National Library of Serbia has also been a full member of the World Digital Library (WDL) project.

Since 2003, when the public library in Kruševac started digitizing old postcards and photographs from its homeland fund, other public libraries in Serbia have adopted this form of preservation for their homeland heritage, even though they could not rely upon any recommendations, guidelines, or standards for digitization. Differing approaches and views regarding priorities in digitization led to irrationality and the duplication of work: "It can be concluded that in Serbian libraries practice precedes theory when it comes to digitization, as the practical results are more developed than the theoretical foundation on which the proper practice should be conducted" (Trifunović, 2010).

The National Center for Digitization opened in 2003 as a research project that engaged a large number of scientific and cultural institutions.[4] Additionally, the preliminary drafts of the strategy for digitization (2007–2008) and the new Law on Library and Information Activities (2011) in Serbia stipulate that the digitization of library materials and information resources is the obligation of libraries. In spite of all of the above, there is no national strategy for digitization (Butigan-Vučaj, 2010). The need for such a strategy is reflected in the effort to establish guidelines and standards and to obtain a better-organized and more systematic approach to the process of digitization. The strategy, for example, could insist on completing the process of digitization and on the digital collections that are not only sets of scanned images but also consist of digital objects, metadata that describes the objects, and at least one interface that provides them with secure access.[5] The digitization strategy would also have to start the process of overcoming the lack of infrastructure and communication among the cultural sector, the civil sector, and the government in order to establish a clear division of responsibilities among actors in the process; require the appropriate training of personnel engaged in the digitization of cultural heritage; foster the collaboration of libraries, museums, and archives; pave the way for the formation of different types of open repositories; and, generally, set a framework in which a more complex and better electronic environment can be formed.

According to a survey of the situation as it existed in mid-2010,

> the website of the National Library of Serbia has 365 visitors per day, who spend, on average, four minutes and seven seconds on the website. It tells that all the visitors spend about 1,500 minutes on the website on

> a daily basis, which also means that, on average, at any time there is only one user on the website. Also, the time of four minutes is not enough for reading digitized content, so it can be concluded that most of the visitors do not use digitalized documents. (Ljubić, 2011)

The most used system, KoBSON (Serbian Consortium of Libraries for Coordinated Acquisition)—established in 2002 with the objectives of obtaining subscriptions to as many sources as possible within the limitation of available funds, and making available all of these sources in accordance with the requirements of modern users in modern libraries—gives a different picture. From the initial collection of journals of one publisher (Academic Press), one aggregator (EBSCO), and one citation database (Web of Science [WoS]) in 2010, databases of seventeen publishers, three aggregators, and three citation databases were made available through KoBSON. With its offering of more than 35,000 journals and more than 50,000 books, KoBSON meets most of the research needs of scientists and academics in Serbia (Kosanović, 2010). According to the data from 2011, KoBSON has an average of more than 3,000 visits a day, which is a remarkable number if one bears in mind that the scientific community in Serbia numbers around 12,000 researchers.

In an environment that does not take advantage of all the possibilities provided by the internet, whether in terms of e-government, e-commerce, or e-education, Serbian libraries have launched major digitization projects for a society that, in general, is not trained to use digital resources. The way out of this situation must be sought in strengthening the information society. From its technological, legal, and regulatory assumptions, to assumptions related to the information literacy of citizens and their awareness of how human knowledge is organized, knowledge of how to find the right information and how to use it effectively improves the quality of life of citizens.

IDENTITY AS SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS: STATUS AND PROFESSIONALIZATION OF SERBIAN LIBRARIANSHIP

The problem of professionalization of library activities on the one hand and the problem of the comprehension of librarianship as a "science" and verifying the role of the professional library community in Serbia on the other appear to be the key issues of the moment. Despite the presence of all the elements of professionalization—organized higher education; a normative, legal, and regulatory framework; a code of ethics; a focus on users; and a professional association—librarianship in Serbia does not enjoy the status of a publicly recognized profession, in the sense that performing professional work in libraries requires formal higher education by librarians. Over the past two decades, three educational and scientific research institutions have dealt with the higher education of librarians. The beginning of this period was marked by the establishment of the De-

partment of Library and Information Science in the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade. The two-year interdepartmental program of study in librarianship grew into a four-year program in 1990, and in 2006–2007, Bologna Process criteria were adopted. In 2010, within the study program Language, Literature, Culture delivered by the Faculty of Philology, the curriculum of the Department of Library and Information Science was accredited in accordance with the Bologna Process (Vraneš, 2010).

In the Republic of Srpska (part of Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Department of General Literature and Library Science was established in the Faculty of Philosophy in East Sarajevo in 1997–1998. As Srpska has embarked on the path of European integration, so the teaching, since 2006–2007, has begun to adjust to the requirements of the Bologna Process. The program was officially accredited in 2011 (Maksimović, 2010).

In the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, in addition to two four-year study programs, a three-year program emerged. In 2005–2006, the Faculty of Education in Sombor (part of the University of Novi Sad) commenced educating school librarians. This program was accredited in 2009 (Vučković & Trajković, 2010).

The fact that all three programs were launched in one of the most dramatic periods of Serbian history speaks for itself. The different profiles of these educational programs testify to a variety of views regarding the development of librarianship, but they also result from different sets of circumstances, especially organizational contexts and those related to finding and employing teaching staff: "Therefore, education of librarians is in the strategic interest of both the profession and society, while the framework of its content is an indicator of vitality of ideals which they proclaim in the area of science, education, information and culture" (Stokić Simončić, 2001).

In a country where some library staff are still recruited from teachers and writers (who prefer not to be referred to as librarians), some are employed on a political basis almost regardless of their qualifications, and others simply found a sinecure in the library, it is not easy to accept that librarianship is a profession. Faced with this situation, the conscientious segment of the profession has difficulty in building objective and reasonable criteria that represent responsibility, commitment, and loyalty as supreme values. Since it is in a minority in the library world, the conscientious segment is forced to continuously compromise.

CONCLUSION: FUTURE TASKS OF SERBIAN LIBRARIANSHIP

There is no doubt that peace, a stable political situation, and economic prosperity are preconditions for the successful work of libraries. In addition, there must also be a democratic attitude toward the processes of educating and informing citizens. Furthermore, strong professional library associations, a growing scope of services, an increasing number of

library users, and the backing of philanthropic initiatives like those of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation demonstrate the importance of professional effectiveness. Such effectiveness is derived from professional education, commitment, responsibility, and sophisticated internal (among librarians) and external (with users and potential users) communication. In response, the general public gains awareness that libraries offer the widest opportunities for lifelong education, information, and entertainment and are thus prepared to help strengthen libraries and fund them generously. The model that American libraries, for example, offer to the total corpus of world librarianship today is based on the acceptance of the knowledge society as the new social paradigm, on the development of the concept of *library* as a learning organization, and on the strengthening of all modes of public relations.

In Serbian librarianship, however, on the basis of numerous indicators, we can unfortunately speak about fragmentation and division. On the one hand, the wider community does not recognize the library as a key institution of the knowledge society; as a result, the state, in its strategic documents, does not give a significant role to libraries. Also, within the profession itself, there are individual interests that leave little space for concerted and far-reaching action to strengthen the social visibility of libraries and librarians. It is quite certain, however, that a contemporary discourse of librarians in Serbia will be created only after Serbian librarians agree on their past and present achievements (Kuhn, 1974), and when librarianship demonstrates its effectiveness in the processes of formal education, lifelong learning, acceleration of economic development, and scientific and cultural growth.

From the point of view of the authors of this work, the question of consent can be reduced to these basic tasks:

- In the field of the history of books and libraries, it is necessary, on the basis of detailed and meticulous scientific research, to record the development of Serbian libraries, to assess the importance of particular cultural phenomena in the history of Serbian librarianship, to place the development of Serbian librarianship within the context of development of librarianship as a whole, and to evaluate some of the published sources and determine the competencies for research. The results of such research should be incorporated into the general corpus of historical and cultural knowledge but also into the conceptual framework of individuals, which is based on memory as a necessary prerequisite for the formation of identity. The complete and reliable history of Serbian libraries, as common memory, could become the basis of the professional identity of librarians.
- In the domain of library management, it is necessary to agree on the national development strategy of the library system, to develop the

modalities of protection from political interference in libraries, and to establish transparency of work and mechanisms of control. Job evaluation, decision-making processes, measuring impact, budgeting, fundraising, and public relations are just some of the areas that need improvement. In the library world generally, all of these activities are a regular and standardized practice.

• In the area of professional education, it is necessary to attain agreement on the roles of both institutional formal education and informal education, about the relationship between theoretical and practical engagement in librarianship, about the status of librarians, and about the provision of scientific, professional staff members. Modern professional identity involves the widest opportunities for specialization and professional progress, but it also has to be founded on a sense of belonging, responsibility, commitment, and readiness. These values enable libraries to address challenges, pave the way for changes, and become more adaptable.

• In the domain of professional association, it is necessary to reevaluate the role and importance of library associations, the mutual relations of professionals in the field, the relation of libraries toward the associations, and the relations of library-management structures to the professional associations as well as to the modalities of voluntary work. It is necessary to uproot old habits, according to which most librarians expect professional associations to provide something for them; instead, they must add to the associations' strengths with their activities and volunteer work.

Despite the dilemmas about the place and role of formal higher education in the formation of professional library staff, it can be concluded that the new Law on Library and Information Activities, the Law on Obligatory Copy of Publications, and the Law on Old and Rare Library Material, all enacted in 2011, created a good normative-legal framework for the development of a unified library-information system in Serbia. Serbian librarians, who, during the second half of the twentieth century, failed to complete the process of professionalization of their activities, will continue to confront this problem in the future. After the severe fractures that Serbian society has passed through during the past twenty years, the measure of librarians' success in this process will be determined by commitment to the principles of equal access to information, democracy of reading and education, rationality, intellectual freedoms, privacy, and knowledge management as enduring values of librarianship (Gorman, Macura, & Vraneš, 2007).

NOTES
1. Cominform (the Communist Information Bureau) was founded in 1947 with the purpose of coordinating the activities of the communist parties under Soviet direction. The initial seat of Cominform was located in Belgrade, which at the time was the capital of Yugo-

slavia, but the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was expelled from the group in June 1948 after Stalin accused Tito of nationalism and moving toward the political Right.

2. Radina Vučetić (2012) coined the phrase "Coca-Cola socialism" as a way to critique the impact of the United States on Tito's Yugoslavia during the 1960s. Because of the cultural openness toward Western influences, the mid-twentieth-century citizens of Yugoslavia had far more freedom than people in other countries of the Eastern bloc in terms of available literature, motion pictures, cartoons and comics, avant-garde theater, rock and jazz music, and style of dress. It was a hybrid of consumer culture that was, although socialist, marked by many obvious similarities with the consumer societies of the capitalist West, which made Yugoslavia a "crypto-capitalist" or "quasi-capitalist" country. Yugoslav society benefited from this "Americanization" during Tito's leadership, but his regime benefited also because it was thanks to the cultural, social, and economic abundance, which was completely atypical for countries behind the Iron Curtain, that his regime was better accepted by the citizens of Yugoslavia. It was a specifically socialist-consumer society fashioned after the US model that, as Godard said, gave birth to "the children of Marx and Coca-Cola" (see Vučetić, 2012, p. 234).

3. *Srbulje* is the common term for manuscripts and printed books in the Serbian redaction of Old Church Slavonic (comprised of the Serbian Slavic language and the Cyrillic alphabet), which had been in use since the beginning of Serbian literacy in the eleventh century up until the first half of the eighteenth.

4. Some of the founders of the National Center for Digitization were the National Library of Serbia, National Museum in Belgrade, National Archive of Serbia, Yugoslav Film Archive, Mathematical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Faculty of Mathematics of the University of Belgrade, and Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia.

5. Digital objects presently found on Serbian library websites generally lack metadata.

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