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Collection and management of collections in the academic library From the experience of Main Library of the Warsaw University of Technology

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Abstract: In the paper management of Main Library of the Warsaw University of Technology collection during last decade has been discussed. It was discussed matter of collection (in classic and digital version), their development, dependence and autonomy. It was discussed dilemmas about creating library collections. The issue was raised about books collection for academic society, especially for foreign student. The matter was raised about cooperation between the Library and Academy in order to improve quality of education.

Keywords: collecting of resources, management of resources, academic libraries, library environment, user support

A l i c j a P o t o c k a , A g n i e s z k a K o w a l c z y k

Introduction

Academic Libraries are a workshop for the academic community. Such a record also appears in the Statute of the Warsaw University of Technology (hereinafter: WUT). Section VIII of the Warsaw University of Technology Statute describes the Library and Information System (LIS) (*The Statut…*, 2015, pp. 29–31) and its tasks, including sharing, collecting and developing collections and information to the extent necessary to support and manage scientific research, studies and other didactic and information activities [...]. Libraries must grow to meet these challenges. Library organizations such as The American Library Association (ALA) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)[1], among others, deal with monitoring processes and directions of changes taking place in libraries, as well as with "suggesting" how to shape the academic collection.

The report of the ACRL (Research Planning and Review Committee, American Library Association) published in 2012 (*2012 top ten trends…*) shows that the library should be an active participant in the education process, i.e. support students in their studies and contribute to the success of scientific research.

The next ACRL report from 2016 (*2016 top trends…*) mainly focused on flexibility in collecting resources and adjusting the library's offer to users' needs.

An equally important document which shows the direction of changes taking place in libraries are guidelines developed by (IFLA) for libraries with regards to e-resources (Johnson et al., 2012), which describe issues regarding the policy of collecting, licensing and evaluation.

The documents listed indicate changes that have been observed in academic libraries for several years: the structure of library collections is changing, the number of traditional readers is decreasing, and the number of users using online collections is increasing.

This happens in the libraries of the Warsaw University of Technology. Employees of the Sharing and Storage Department remember the queues for picking up books. Currently, during periods such as the beginning of the academic year or examination sessions, although large groups of students still come to the library, they are not as numerous as in the past, when employees who took care of lending the books had to be supported by employees from other departments.

From 2013 to 2017, the number of available print collections decreased by about 30%. In the same period, the use of electronic sources from the

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[1] The IFLA member is the Association of Polish Librarians and the National Library.

WUT domain also decreased by 80%, and the use of electronic sources available outside the WUT domain increased by almost 100% (*Report on the activities…*, 2016).

The number of e-collections in libraries is increasing, the number of e-users is growing and integrated library systems are evolving (eg. ALEPH–ALMA). All this gradually changes the organizational structure of libraries and enforces new collection management so that they are optimally adapted to the needs of the academic community in their content and form.

Factors that in the past influenced changes in libraries are present today. New technologies, however, allow for better solutions, improvement/ /acceleration of library processes enforce different use of library space, resulting from changes in the structure of collections (books and e-books, magazines and e-magazines) and the need to add new devices (computers, scanners).

The number of documents and library users today is incomparable to any other period in human history[2]. Multidirectional education, variety of textbooks and new technologies both pose a challenge and serve as an opportunity for the library as an institution which has always had to deal with the management, storage/organization, selection and sharing of large collections.

Over the centuries, libraries have developed methods of working on large resources. These methods are currently still in use and work alongside the newest technological advancements.

The needs of users of the scientific library

User categorization

The academic community, which is growing every year (*Public Information Bulletin…*, 2017, p. 11), is diverse in terms of the level of education (full-time and part-time studies of the 1st and 2nd degree as well as the 3rd degree) and fields of study (there were 48 at the Warsaw University of Technology in the 2016/2017 academic year).

The basic categories of university library users are: full-time and part-time students, post-graduate students, doctoral students, and lecturers. In addition, when forming library resources it is important to take into account: English-language studies (in the 2016/2017 academic year conducted at 9 faculties of

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[2] In modern times, 129 864 880 books were published; quotation for: *How many books are there in the world? Google counted it!*, https://www.komputerswiat.pl/aktualnosci/internet/ile-jest-ksiazek-na-swiecie-google-to-policzylo/6g149pb, [accessed 20.03.2017].

Warsaw University of Technology), international student exchange and international cooperation.

Foreign students study at various faculties of the Warsaw University of Technology. The Main Library of Warsaw University of Technology is for them one of the University's calling cards. They constitute a small[3], but still the growing group of users, which is important in the context of the internationalization of the University.

For each category the library should have an offer prepared for the users.

The needs of users

The needs of users are the basis for shaping the contemporary collections of a modern library and a determinant of collection management, however, any changes in readers' preferences must be noted and taken into account as far as organizational and financial possibilities are concerned.

According to studies conducted from February 23, 2015 to May 17, 2015 in LIS libraries (Strzelczyk, 2016), it appears that the most common reason for visiting the library, over 80%[4], is borrowing books to take home. About 55% of respondents indicated the reading room as a place of work and study, about 31% came to the library to use computers and the Internet.

The results of the research show, similarly to the study carried out in other academic libraries, that the user expects the library to organize its access to documents (the information carrier ceases to be of importance), study space and the possibility of using services, e.g. copying devices (Dwornik, 2015). Other services offered by the library, from the point of view of the user do not have priority.

In the 2015/2016 academic year, 33 360 people studied at the Warsaw University of Technology, taught by 2514 teachers (*Public Information Bulletin,* 2016, p. 5). Comparing this data with the number of active readers (those who borrowed at least one book), which in 2015 was 24 364 (*Report on the activities…*, 2015, p. 29), presents how much work there is still to be done in libraries.

The books sought are more and more often available in the online version (IBUK Libra since 2008) and readers are increasingly eager to use this

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[3] In the academic year 2014/2015 at the Warsaw University of Technology studied 582 foreign students (*Public Information Bulletin…*, 2015, p. 12); in the 2015/2016 academic year – 920 students (*Public Information Bulletin…*, 2016, p. 11), in the 2016/2017 academic year – 992 (*Public Information Bulletin…*, 2017, p. 11).

[4] In 2015, in the libraries of the LIS were registered 24,364 active users (those who at least once borrowed a book) (*Report on the activities…*, 2016, p. 29).

option. In 2013–2016 the number of logins to IBUK increased from 17 058 to 39 467 (*Report on the activities…*, 2016, Annex 11).

Many of our users[5] do not use the services of e-publishing, which is most likely the result of misinformation of some departments – this can be seen in the reports on IP activity and the subject of e-borrowing.

A good solution in the promotion of e-publications would be to use the experience of the Library of the Faculty of Physics at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań which uses QR codes to promote and disseminate the library's resources and to create an information area for users, including a growing number of foreign students (Jeszke & Jeszke, 2014, p. 4).

QR codes are a reader-friendly combination of resources in both paper and electronic versions, now also available for download from the IBUKA Libra platform. This platform includes scripts and studies published by the Warsaw University of Technology Publishing House. The combination of books standing on bookshelves in the reading room with QR codes would help to promote publications in the online version and thus significantly reduce the expenses of LIS libraries spent on traditional publications, initially from the Warsaw University of Technology Publishing House.

Students learning in English need textbooks in this language, dictionaries containing general and specialized vocabulary. The editorial supply for this group of students is big. Foreign publishers offer textbooks written for a specific course with additional resources offered online, often containing additions and supplements. Due to the material, financial and organizational reasons it is crucial for academic teachers and librarians to work together, for only those who teach classes are able to recommend a textbook that is adequate to the subject at hand, and only library is able to provide access to it.

Such organized cooperation in the collection of textbooks and e-textbooks would influence the quality and comfort of education and the image of the library, which, by co-organizing the didactic workshop, would become an indispensable link in the university's educational process.

An example of good cooperation between the Main Library of the Warsaw University of Technology and the faculty library is the purchase of textbooks for students studying in English at the Faculty of Power and Aeronautical Engineering of the Warsaw University of Technology. The choice of paper or electronic version of the textbook depends on its availability on the market, the number of students participating in the course, prices, and suitability analyzes within 2–3 years.

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[5] In the 2015/2016 academic year, 33 360 students studied at the Warsaw University of Technology, there were 2515 academic teachers (*Public Information Bulletin…*, 2016).

The paper textbooks are bought and financed in equal parts by the Main Library and the Library of the Faculty of Power and Aeronautical Engineering.

Electronic books are bought by the Main Library and registered in the catalog. They are available immediately after purchase.

Academic teachers cooperating with the library, as described above, is an ideal situation. In the case of employees of other departments of the Warsaw University of Technology we observe a gradual weakening of cooperation with the Main Library. This was caused, among other things, by remote access to magazines, books, databases, students and employees being unaware that the comfort of work is provided to them thanks to the library and the work of librarians[6], as well as the possibility of purchasing publications financed from various sources (including grants, projects) transferred to faculty and institute libraries, where they are available on more convenient terms than in the Main Library.

Syllabus as a link between the student, the lecturer and the library

One of the forms of cooperation of libraries with academic staff and students should be a syllabus published on the University website (*ECTS Catalog…*). It contains a list of issues along with the applicable literature that the student is to master in order to pass the exam in a given subject.

The combination of the literature indicated in the syllabus with the library catalog, where it can be indicated for whom the given publishing house is intended, should be the area of cooperation between the lecturer, student and LIS WUT libraries. Information about textbooks saved in syllabuses should be an indication for purchase, thus justifying the spending of funds.

Currently, the situation in this area is bad, especially in terms of a reading list for students studying in English. Information intended for this group of users is posted freely on faculty pages, and therefore is dispersed and difficult to trace.

Lack of cooperation between the library and lecturers means that the recommended literature lists contain errors, new editions of the indicated publications are not included, and sometimes recommended publications are not in the collections of LIS libraries.

Another drawback of this situation is the lack of opportunity for a library to manage the publishers indicated shortly before the exam and the inability

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[6] Sometimes we hear this opinion: "why come to the library – after all, everything is on the Internet". Our retort arouses surprise: "the library took care of it".

to make them available in the reading room during the exam session (Dwornik, 2015, p. 2).

With poorly organized cooperation between the library and the lecturer, it is difficult to manage the book collection effectively, in particular the didactic books collection. It happens that the library, having no knowledge of whether a particular publication is recommended literature, does not acquire it or buys too few copies, which certainly does not affect the image of the library and user satisfaction positively.

In the years 2002–2010, the Main Library of the Warsaw University of Technology registered the reading list for individual faculties in the katalog (Figure 1). However, this idea was abandoned, stating the reluctance of lecturers to prepare lists of recommended literature as the reason. This reluctance remained, but syllabuses are still applicable and libraries cannot ignore them.

Fig. 1. Description of the publishing house recommended by the lecturer in the Central Catalog of the Libraries Collections WUT

1001	|a Paynter, Robert T.
24510	|a Introductory electronic devices and circuits : |b electron flow version / |c Robert T. Paynter.
250	|a 7th ed.
260	|a Upper Saddle River : |b Pearson Prentice Hall, |c cop. 2006.
300	|a XVIII, 988 s. : |b il. kol. ; |c 28 cm + |e 1 dysk optyczny (CD-ROM).
504	|a Indeks.
690	|a ELEKTRONIKA
690	|a URZĄDZENIA ELEKTRONICZNE
690	|a OBWODY ELEKTRONICZNE
941	|a eng
997	|a J04 |b Paynter
920	|a 0-13-171639-5
FRM	|a ks
FRM	|a cd
NAB	|a MEL0801
NAB	|a MEL0511
NAB	|a BG0512
NAB	|a BG0703
LEC	|a Wydział Mechaniczny Energetyki i Lotnictwa |b Instytut Techniki Cieplnej |z Zakład Pomp Napędów i Siłowni |c 2005/2006 |x BG
LEC	|a Wydział Mechaniczny Energetyki i Lotnictwa |c 2006/2007 |x BG

Source: own research

Maybe it is worth to return to the abandoned idea and once again undertake cooperation with lecturers in this regard? This would make it much easier for libraries to buy the necessary literature and certainly would be less expensive than buying publications which are not certain to be recommended by the lecturers. Or maybe the *Patron Driven Aquisition* (PDA) (Swords, 2011, p. 205) has a chance to become the solution that teachers accept?

PDA is a tool for shaping collections by library customers. They indicate which publications to buy – the library is the payer. Perhaps such an invitation to cooperate would be well received in the academic community and encourage them to cooperate with us.

The help offered by librarians for lectures, e.g. based on prompts about subsequent editions and new products in creating literary canon, would certainly have a three-sided benefit. Librarians cannot avoid making independent choices (after all, it is our profession), but the support of the lecturers in the selection of literature is necessary due to the presence of a large number of textbooks on the publishing market, often both in paper and electronic versions. Such cooperation with academics could facilitate the teaching process, because the LIS libraries would guarantee access to the reading list.

Summary

The new reality requires the library to build a coherent hybrid collection, i.e. one that includes all types of documents, regardless of the medium on which they appear, and consistent active information about its contents. This collection is the result of the evolution which library resources have been undergoing for many years. It is an educational support for a diverse, demanding and dynamically changing academic environment of the 21st century. Building the university's library, in addition to meeting the current needs of of users, must also include archiving the achievements of university employees, to which the library is obliged (*Order No. 3/2017 of the Rector…*, 2017).

New technologies give all these possibilities. With their help, a librarian can reach a large amount of information, which he should be able to select, evaluate and provide in a way that will be treated as support, not a problem (information overload).

This is a task for modern libraries, including academic ones. So far, this construction of the library's collection has taken years and has been largely shaped according to criteria set by librarians. Due to the development of science, the requirements of modern didactics and the demands of users familiar with new devices, such as a computer, smartphone, tablet, the time for reflection has come, not on collection policy, but on collection management, including optional accumulation and sharing of resources and e-resources in cooperation with other external libraries (cooperation in the field of login-logging, purchases, rentals and e-rentals) (Górny, 2002).

The skilful balancing of current needs, building of a valuable collection as a base for scientific research and teaching, securing scientific achievements for

future generations are difficult and responsible tasks for substantive and financial reasons.

However, libraries have managed to solve worse problems. It is important not to submit to indiscriminately tempting suggestions of easy solutions, e.g. support from external companies. The library is a unique institution that offers a workshop for students and researchers, it is a "coherent organism" that needs to be supported by the latest technologies, among others, but the selection must be made by well-educated librarians and practitioners guided by the needs of well-known users. No one will be afraid then that "users will be satisfied only with electronic sources of information?; What will happen if the above-mentioned projects prove that the 21st century academic libraries have lost their central function as a treasury of culture, data, information and knowledge?" (Karwasińska & Karwasiński, 2013).

The best experiences in library work combined with openness to new challenges should suggest how to act so that the library can become a place which the academic community cannot do without, and for librarians to become not only a workplace but also a source of professional satisfaction. For this to happen, we need to know the expectations, needs and preferences of the users and be able to recognize them, be one step ahead of them.

We should look at the library from the perspective of the user – customer. We are all customers, so let's put ourselves in the role of our reader. A sound answer to this question should give direction to appropriate changes.

New technologies are an opportunity to – once again – make the academic library a one of a kind place to acquire knowledge and a source of documents for scientific research. It is our time and it is important not to waste it, because, as Grażyna Piotrowicz notes, "professional organizations and groups are evolving much more slowly than technological innovations, therefore the survival of academic libraries during a period of dynamic transformation depends not only on their ability to adapt to changes, but also on how quickly they can do it" (2004, p. 220).

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