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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STANDARDS IN SPECIAL LIBRARIES IN SERBIA

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Special libraries, a traditionally vague concept

Focus on the collection

- o Departmental libraries in colleges and universities;
- o Collections of materials limited to narrow a subject field;
- o Business and industrial libraries
- o Libraries for people with special needs;
- o ...

Focus on the purpose and services

- o Putting knowledge to work;
- o Anticipation of user needs in advance of the actual need
- o Providing relevant information to decision-makers;
- o Reference services as the distinguishing feature;
- o Supportive role played by the special library;
- o …

Williams, Robert (Dec 2009). "Centennial Reflections on a Name" (PDF). *Information Outlook*. **13** (1): 16–22.
http://www.sla.org/IO/2009/Jan-Feb/InfoOutlook_JanFeb09_final.pdf

Types of Libraries - Article 13

According to the contents of their library, information materials, sources and the profile of their users, libraries are categorised into the following types: **national library, public library, school library, higher education library, university library, library of a science and research institute or institution, special library, and information centres within other institutions, organisations or associations**.

Standards for Libraries - Article 36

(1) Libraries perform their activities in accordance with national and international standards in accordance with which, types of operations and activities are determined, as well as requirements and resources.

(2) The **national standards for public and other types of libraries** are prescribed by the minister in charge of culture, as proposed by the National Library of Serbia, Matica Srpska Library and professional library associations.

Pravilnik o nacionalnim standardima za obavljanje biblioteČko-informacione delatnosti („SluŽbeni glasnik RS", broj 39/13)

» Public libraries;

» School libraries;

» Special libraries;

» Higher education libraries (at faculties and colleges) and university libraries;

» libraries of science and research institutes or institutions (i.e. research libraries).

* This by-law draws on the Guidelines for Special Libraries in Serbia, adopted early in 2010, which defined the minimum requirements.

Standards for special libraries define:

» Activities;
» Facilities and resources: space (sizes of individual spatial units are defined), furniture, devices;
» Staff (only the level of education and number of staff);
» Library holdings;
» Access to library holdings and services.

Standards for research libraries define:

» Activities;
» Facilities and resources (space and equipment, very generally);
» Staff (only the level of education and number of staff).

* Library holdings and the access to the holdings and services are not mentioned

Problems (the character of the standards)

» Unrealistic under the circumstances;
» Fail to address the essence of technological changes;
» Competency requirements are not addressed;
» The procedure for devising and adopting the standards was insufficiently transparent.

Problems (implementation)

» The standards are defined by the ministry responsible for culture.
» The parent institutions of special libraries and their funders do not consider themselves obliged to ensure compliance with the standards because:
  ◊ they are (often) beyond the jurisdiction of the ministry responsible for culture;
  ◊ parent institutions and the supervising institutions (libraries) are (often) not under the jurisdiction of the same ministry.
» There are no enforcement mechanisms and sanctions in place.
» The supervision is superficial and irregular.

Problems (implementation)

» One-person libraries;
» The activities of the library in the parent institution are marginalized;
» Insufficient (if any!) funds are allocated for library activities;
» Librarians are forced to perform extra duties (not related to the library);
» Library staff members do not have appropriate education and competencies (results of long-term negative selection);
» Inadequate equipment;
» No ICT infrastructure.

Initiatives

» Librarians' Section of the Museum Association of Serbia (unofficially since 2003/ officially since 2004; actively involved in devising the Guidelines for Special Libraries in Serbia)

» Librarians' Section of the Association of Serbian Institutes (unofficially since 2010 / officially since 2012; defining research libraries as a distinct type in the LIS Law; http://www.itn.sanu.ac.rs/sekcija/)

Possible solutions

» Standards based on specific library profiles and services, and not merely on the legal status of individual library types;
» Paying greater attention to competency requirements for library staff;
» (Frequent) revisions of the national standards that are not necessarily associated with the revisions of the LIS law;
» Regular compliance evaluations.

Competencies for librarians in special and research libraries

SLA Competencies for Information Professionals, SLA, April 2016,
https://www.sla.org/about-sla/competencies/

Librarians' Competencies for Scholarly Communication and Open Access, Joint Task Force on Librarians' Competencies in Support of EResearch and Scholarly Communication, June 2016,
https://www.coar-repositories.org/files/Competencies-for-ScholComm-and-OA_June-2016.pdf

Librarians' Competencies Profile for Research Data Management, Joint Task Force on Librarians' Competencies in Support of EResearch and Scholarly Communication, June 2016,
https://www.coar-repositories.org/files/Competencies-for-RDM_June-2016.pdf

More: https://librarianship.ca/resources/competencies/

QUESTIONS?

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