Partnership Patterns at the National Library of Romania

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Abstract

The mission of the National Library of Romania is to collect, process, preserve and facilitate access to the national written heritage. Through its methodological function, the National Library of Romania coordinates the member institutions of the National System of Romanian Libraries and builds partnerships with publishing houses, local and international libraries. These collaborative actions follow the national library’s mission, and thus it encourages the association with cultural institutes, media agencies, and private companies.

Keywords: National Library of Romania; mission; national written heritage

1. Introduction

The National Library of Romania (NLR) is a fundamental institution for the cultural and scientific arena. Through its patrimonial function, the NLR organizes, processes, preserves, and makes available to the public the Romanian written heritage, placing itself in the reference role for Romania’s printed cultural and scientific heritage. The methodological function of the NLR supports the coordination role for institutions belonging to the National System of Romanian Libraries (NSRL) in order to align norms, standards, methodologies, rules, and regulations so that everyone should receive access to information in the most effective way. Along with its public function, the NLR acts as a public space, serving the community of users while hosting and partnering in various cultural...
activities. Through the educative and research functions, this institution sustains learning and research activities for both secondary and university education, including specialized research institutes. The partnerships established between these institutions are bound to the mission, the functions, and attributions of the NLR and, once set in place they aim to satisfy the users’ specific needs and expectations. Nevertheless, specific partnerships arrangements can be done considering the attributions of all partners involved.

2. The National Library of Romania and the National System of Libraries

Within the National System of Libraries, the National Library of Romania attests its uniqueness by integrating two complex complementary roles: the patrimonial role and the public role. NLR is the only institution responsible for the cultural memory of the whole country in its entirety and for making it accessible to the large public. Its public role distinguishes NLR from the other libraries as it is open to all the categories of users and ensures free and equitable access to culture and knowledge.

The National Library attributions are complex tasks regarding its patrimonial, documentary, and informational role, as well as the educative and cultural mission. As mentioned previously, the NLR has attribution towards the NSRL and that involves certain partnerships and collaboration activities. Libraries as much as librarians are considered internal specialized users, and partners of the National Library. Collaboration with the members of the NSRL is provided by the methodological attributions, and implies supporting them via the National Library Centre for Pathology and Restoration of Documents, compiling the national database for library science, and thus promoting the national library as the main service provider for Romanian libraries and librarians. Patterns for partnership and collaborative endeavors are uniquely established to represent each institution’s particularities so that the NLR barely complement them. The relation that NLR has with the public and county libraries is mainly focused on the patrimonial aspect, namely the relation between National Heritage and Local Heritage. The patrimonial aspects invites the NLR to liaise with the NSRL and allows supervision of and managing of the local publications, bibliographies, and other local research instruments, their transfer into valuable resources and their preservation for future generations. From this perspective, the following services are considered: International Standard Book Number – ISBN/ Cataloguing in publication – CIP; Legal deposit – national and local, National Bibliographical Control, National Bibliographies, National Shared Catalogue, and National Digital Library. Regarding the users, the NLR acts as a public library serving a vast typology of users, having the most diverse information and research needs – consequently the library develops its collections accordingly. The educational aspect targets school and university libraries, and this brings specific partnerships for the NLR which consist of providing access to the institution’s open space and conference areas for their educational, scientific, and cultural activities, supporting them logistically and allowing them access to the library’s information resources.

The professional aspect is focused on establishing working instruments, translations of standards and their adaptation, methodological guidelines in order to have homogenous professional sources for the local libraries’ activities. The methodological aspect of the NLR, promoted by the editorial work, is supported by the publication of National Bibliographies, reference materials like Abstracts in Library and Information Studies, Librarianship – Syntheses. Translations. Methodologies, Information and Documentation, The Romanian Review for Book Conservation and Restoration, Cultural Anniversaries, Library Journal, Romanian Review of Book History, and National Library of Romania Review.

A specific partnership of the NLR concerns the coordination of the National Legal Deposit. The NLR receives materials as Legal Deposit items, from publishing houses, which later are organized and registered. One item is deposited at the location for its own Legal Deposit, one is recorded for statistical reporting in the Current National Bibliography, one item goes to the International Exchange of Publications, and the rest get distributed to libraries (mentioned here as beneficiary users) as follows: Romanian Academy Library, “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca, “Mihai Eminescu” Central University Library in Iasi, “Eugen Todoran” Central University Library in Timişoara, meaning the libraries responsible with the organization of the local legal deposit. In Bucharest, the local legal deposit is organized by the Metropolitan Library which can also be the beneficiary of methodological support from the national library.

Over recent years, NLR has published a series of Guidelines for Legal deposit law, legislative amendments to modify the law, etc.
The traditional Legal Deposit directions have to comprise digital documents too regardless of their status of accessibility (either on or off line). It goes without saying that extending Legal Deposit in order to manage the Digital Legal deposit will bring big debates concerning copyright, preservation requirements, public access, collecting method, protection of the publishing rights, penalties, etc. aspects which can be settled by means of collaboration between librarians, publishers and representatives of the Romanian Copyright Office.

CASIDRO, the Catalogue of Romanian Information and Documentation Institutions, is one of the information products established by the NLR in partnership with the NSRL (public, university, and specialized libraries) and can be accessed via the institution’s website at http://www.bibnat.ro/biblioteci.php. Using this service, library users can identify specific information about Romanian libraries: their location, current address, contact details, webpage and working hours, information about their collections (size and typology: Romanian books, foreign books, periodicals, audio-video collections, special collections, maps, and so on) and the ways of accessing it in the library’s online catalogues or databases. This database is constantly updated and can be considered an important service created in order to promote Romanian libraries.

3. The National Library and other main Romanian cultural institutions

One could say that the logo of the National Library of Romania is represented by the democratic access to its collections; in comparison with museums, where the public has access to a selection of documents only, in a library the public has a permanent access to all the documents included in its collections.

Partnerships with public and private institutions in Romania concern the cultural, educational, and research aspects through which the national heritage is promoted and publicly represented. The main partners are schools and universities, cultural institutions – museums, performance companies, associations and organizations in the cultural and educational field, research institutes, media organizations, etc. The interest of the partner universities is related to the use of NLR’s documentary collections, expert guidance for establishing best practices for students in the social sciences field, allowing them to undergo professional practice in the library’s space, to present teaching activities for teachers and professors to showcase research and learning results. Secondary education institutions are interested as well in the documentary collections hosted by the library, willing to use the logistical support of the library to carry out their cultural activities, exhibitions, extracurricular teaching techniques, present intellectual work techniques, group projects, etc. within the library space.

The National Library has partnership arrangements with scientific museums and galleries, art companies aimed at highlighting each and every institution’s resources. The collaboration with museums concerns mainly the professional aspects of conservation, preservation and restoration of their collections, whereas the partnership with galleries and performance companies aims at boosting and promoting culture, library’s collection, and invites the public to access it, be it in a formal or non-formal manner. Other partnerships are established with publishing houses and editors which receive the ISSN and ISBN codes and CIP (Cataloguing in Publication) provided by the NLR, and various research institutes that are supported upon request in compiling bibliographical works or by providing access to documentary resources, locally hosted at the library, or by pursuing loan requests to other Romanian or international libraries. Also, press and media companies, financial agencies, foundations, and various organizations request the National Library’s support in accessing specialized information resources and ask for guidance regarding their retrospective documentation queries, as well as other specific products and services.

In the last years NLR developed close relations with other government institutions- the Ministry of Culture, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, National Archives, Linguistic Institute, the National Theatre, the National Theatre of Operetta, etc.

The number of programs and activities has been considerably increased: from 12 programs and 32 activities in 2011 to 71 programs and 221 activities in 2012, 136 programs and 421 activities in 2013, respectively. For instance, in 2012 there were 20 programs and 72 activities for age groups between 5-24 years old.

Among these we could enumerate: Dunce cap - a project for literary and dramatic education developed in cooperation with the Romanian Television TVR Cultural channel, and run between 2009-2011; Public lighting - a project for literary and dramatic education which was developed in cooperation with TVR Cultural channel in 2011; My national library - a project meant to promote NLR, developed in cooperation with TVR Cultural channel in
2012 and which produced a presentation film on the National Library, from its foundation to the moment of its moving in its new home; Literature class at the National Library - a literary education project, initiated in 2009, having as partners Bucharest high schools; Winter Guitar Concert - a project in cooperation with Kitodia Foundation, made in 2010-2012; Afternoon movie - in cooperation with the American Corner Bucharest, in 2013; Cinema EDU - dedicated to pupils, in cooperation with Macondo Association, Ion Creanga Theater. Live stage - dedicated to children, developed in cooperation with Ion Creanga Theater from Bucharest.

The role of the National Library in representing the Romanian culture as relating to other cultures has also extended, a fact which is illustrated by the complexity of the programs and activities run in cooperation with foreign embassies and cultural institutions (United States, Czech Republic, Republic of Moldova, Great Britain, Mexico, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Iran, Greece, Italy, France, Serbia). Thus, NLR has put into practice one of its cultural policy directions - that of strengthening the cultural relationship and creating stable partnerships.

4. The National Library and the international library environment

Along the years, the National Library had established partnerships with international libraries and institutions, promoting the Romanian culture and civilization worldwide. The main partners are national libraries of the European countries represented in the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL), as well as in The European Library (TEL). Together with many of these national libraries, the NLR has joined European projects in order to exploit its national documentary heritage as part of the European cultural heritage. Also, the National Library has developed bilateral partnerships with national and university libraries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Based on the Convention for International Exchange of Publications, the NLR has established more than 300 partnerships with libraries and research institutions around the world, thus pursuing its objective to transmit Romanian publications abroad, to expand the cultural, intellectual, and scientific heritage.

The NLR promotes collaborations with cultural institutes abroad as well as with the Romanian diaspora, to mention the most important: libraries and Romanian associations in the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia, Italy, Greece, Spain, Canada, etc. These are the main partners of the NLR and all have the same goal, to support the national identity of the Romanian communities abroad.

Since April, 2012 NLR is a member of the Executive Board of ISSN International Centre and under this quality, on 21-25 October, 2013 it hosted the 38-th Directors’ Meeting where 46 representatives of the member countries participated in.

Between 2010-2013 NLR has concluded bilateral agreements with several national libraries and information institutes from abroad (the National Library of Mexico, University Library „St. Kliment Ohridski” in Sofia, Scholar Archives of Science Academy - Bulgaria, National Library of Chile, National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan, National Library of Belarus, National Library of the Republic of Korea Metropolitan Library of Bangkok, National Library of South-Africa, École Nationale des Chartes etc.), with a view to establishing cooperations in order to support, promote and make accessible the cultural and documentary patrimony, through specific professional means in the national as well as in the international environment.

5. Conclusions

The continual changing technology creates a world in which the stocking up, the access and the dissemination of knowledge are irrevocably changed. The digital revolution raises new problems which still wait to be solved out. The complex social context determines the redifinition of NLR as well as its repositioning within the society. Accessibility, cooperation, innovation, creativity represent values that can sustain it in achieving its mission as entrusted to it by the state.

By making use of its patrimonial function, the National Library of Romania serves the society as a whole, making sure that the written and scientific heritage is collected, processed, and preserved. This contributes to defining the Romanian component within the European and worldwide heritage and promotes Romanian culture and civilization abroad. Fulfilling this task would not have been possible without collaborations and partnerships, formal and non-formal, with libraries, cultural institutes, educational and research centres, national and international associations and organizations.
References


