

Information Literacy at the University Library “Svetozar Markovic” in Belgrade

Belgrad “Svetozar Markovic” Üniversite Kütüphanesinde Bilgi Okur Yazarlığı

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Abstract: *The Scientific Information Department at the University Library in Belgrade has a relatively long tradition in information literacy education (IL) – over twenty years. In this paper we describe the steps in the introduction of IL in Serbian Universities. During the last ten years of the 20th century our approach was ‘one instructor–one user’. In 1997, the Academic Computer Network connected via the Internet all the state universities, with numerous faculties, research institutes, libraries and some medical institutions. The next very important moment was the establishment of the Consortium of Serbian research libraries for Coordinated Acquisition (KoBSON) in 2001. Our University Library is one of the founders. In 2003, KoBSON started presentations of available e-services to the researchers in many academic, cultural, educational and medical institutions all over Serbia. Librarians from the University Library “Svetozar Markovic” were included in those activities from the beginning. Our activities in user education have influenced the constantly growing services usage at Serbian universities, especially since 2007, when we introduced courses for postgraduate students.*

Keywords: *Information literacy, library skills, higher education, University Library Belgrade*

Öz: *Belgrad’daki Üniversite Kütüphanesi Bilimsel Bilgi Bölümünün 20 yılı aşan görel olarak uzun bir bilgi okur yazarlığı eğitimi geleneği vardır. Bu bildiri de Sırp üniversitelerinde bilgi okur yazarlığının tanıtılmasıyla ilgili olarak atılan adımlar tanımlanmaktadır. 20. yüzyılın son on yılında yaklaşımımız “bir eğitmen-bir kullanıcı” idi. 1997’de Akademik Bilgisayar Ağı Internet aracılığıyla tüm devlet üniversitelerini, çeşitli fakülteleri, araştırma enstitülerini, kütüphaneleri ve bazı tıbbi kurumları birbirine bağladı. Bir sonraki çok önemli tarih 2001’de Eşgüdümlü Sağlama İçin Sırp Araştırma Kütüphaneleri Konsorsiyumu’nun (KoBSON) kurulmasıydı. Bizim üniversite kütüphanesi kuruculardan biridir. 2003’te KoBSON Sırbistan’daki birçok akademik, kültürel, eğitimsel ve tıbbi kurumlardaki araştırmacılara e-hizmetler sunmaya başladı. Bu etkinliklerde “Svetozar Markovic” Üniversite Kütüphanesi kütüphanecileri başlangıçtan itibaren yer aldılar. Özellikle 2007’de yüksek lisans öğrencileri için başlattığımız derslerden beri kullanıcı eğitimi etkinliklerimiz Sırp üniversitelerindeki hizmetlerin kullanımının sürekli artmasını sağladı.*

Anahtar sözcükler: *Bilgi okur yazarlığı, kütüphane kullanma becerileri, yüksek öğrenim, Belgrad Üniversite Kütüphanesi*

Introduction

Over the last several decades, the number of definitions of information literacy (IL) has increased constantly. Definitions as a part of the theory are a key point for practical work and they are important since information literacy in some opinions will become a crucial discipline in the 21st century. According to the convergent model, web literacy (evaluation and production of web information) and research literacy (data mining, information retrieval, evaluation of scientific sources, research skills in writing, making bibliography) are united into information literacy (Mackey & Ho, 2005). It seems that research literacy, as a component of IL, will be a significant theoretical platform for the next phase of user education in academic institutions.

The Scientific Information Department at the University Library in Belgrade started in 2003 to prepare for systematic user education-presentations, workshops, lectures, etc. During user education, the favorite theoretical approach is the SCONUL Seven Pillars model, a very simple but comprehensive theory which updated its explanations in 2008 but the seven basic postulates did not change (SCONUL, 2008). During the nineties of the 20th century, individual users were trained to use the electronic catalogs and off-line databases on the library computers. Only some professors teaching social and humanities sciences at the University of Belgrade brought groups of students to the library for training on library resources use.

The crucial change happened when the National Library of Serbia, University Library “Svetozar Markovic” and four other research libraries, with the help of eIFL, established the first Serbian library consortium KoBSON in 2001. “At first KoBSON provided access to EBSCO aggregator and ISI citation indexes. Every year the number of available resources was growing in accordance with research population wishes and Ministry of Science budget.” (Kosanovic, 2008) At the moment members of the consortium have access to 35,000 full text e-journals and 40,000 e-books.

IL Instruction

Professors, Researchers and Student Education

Since 2003, librarians from the Belgrade University Library and the National Library of Serbia have conducted more than 200 presentations for university and institute researchers about usage of available electronic services and other library activities supported by KoBSON. Thanks to those presentations and pressure from the Ministry of Science to introduce new standards in evaluation of Serbian journals, researchers and institutions, researchers have started to use electronic resources much more.

From 2007 we started with courses for PhD students, at first students who have Ministry of Science scholarships. The course consists of 6 classes and was organized in 3 university centers in Belgrade, Nis and Novi Sad. We trained students to use online catalog, e-services, and citation databases. We also explained the principles of scientific performance evaluation, copyright matters and Open Access resources. It was a most successful education project, with very positive evaluation from course attendees. “A textbook for the course is available in Open Access on the KoBSON and University Library websites. The textbook is updated annually.” (Filipi-Matutinovic, 2010)

After the course, we asked the participants to fill in online questionnaires concerning their evaluation of presenters and presented materials. Out of 350 questionnaires, we received 296 answers. The results of evaluation show that only a few students were not satisfied, and that about 90% rated the lectures and presenters with grades 4 and 5 out of 5. In Table 1 are presented the results of these anonymous questionnaires.

Table 1. Results of lectures evaluation by PhD students

Level of relevance of lectures (1=lowest to 5 = highest)	1	2	3	4	5
Communication in science and KoBSON	1		7	45	243
e-books and e-theses and dissertations		3	14	66	213
Database search		2	14	43	237
Citation indexes (WoS, Scopus, Google Scholar)	1	4	16	72	203
SCIndeks (Serbian citation index)	2	4	17	88	185
Open Access and Copyright	4	5	24	98	165

Because of the great success of those courses, in 2009 we decided to offer them to all postgraduate students from the University of Belgrade, and we had another 150 participants. In March 2010 the Senate of the University of Belgrade recommended to all faculties, to organize those courses for their postgraduates, conducted by the librarians from the University Library “Svetozar Markovic”. In 2010 we have already given seven courses to 250 participants, and it is planned to have 31 more – one for each faculty of the University in Belgrade.

Academic Librarian's Education

Library and IT skills are constantly changing and it is therefore necessary for academic librarians to keep their knowledge up-to-date so they can help the users. At the University Library, we have organized dozens of courses and workshops from 2002 onwards on searches of online catalogs, electronic databases and services, citation databases and evaluation of scientific performance in Serbia according to bibliometric indicators used by the Ministry of Science.

Discussion and Results

Librarians are supported by the Ministry of Science to organize training for lecturers, researchers and students, to promote the usage of available electronic resources in Serbia. The number of downloaded articles for a six-year period from full text e-services doubled, as Figure 1 shows. Besides the efforts of the Ministry of Science, one of the key factors was education and promotion of electronic services performed by librarians through courses, presentations, library websites, professional meetings, and public media.

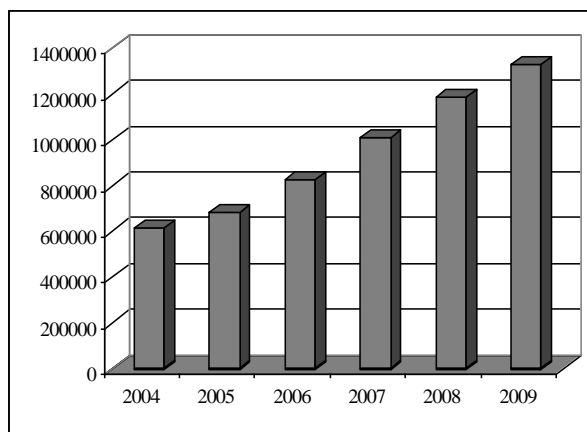


Figure 1. Downloaded articles per year

Librarians are necessarily involved in the learning process at universities. They are there to help both teachers and students. Trained users easily reach relevant information, publish their results in journals with high impact factor and are cited more. Since the evaluation process of scientific achievement in Serbia is based on bibliometric data, it is important that academic librarians understand the process of communication in science and explain it to the academic population on a daily basis. Librarians from the University Library, having more experience with the subject than their colleagues in other academic libraries, share their experiences and knowledge both in daily communication with colleagues and in professional meetings of members of the Serbian Academic Library Association.

Conclusion

It is essential that new generations of researchers, lecturers and students gain knowledge about all available information resources and the basic concepts of the communication processes in science. Therefore we are going to continue our educational efforts, continually adding new contents and communication tools. In short, as Luo wrote: “We will prepare different kind of levels education of patrons for large scale “classical” Web 2.0 technologies and, for “digital natives” generations, integration of Web 2.0 tools will improve methods in education and increase level of knowledge into new experience” (Luo, 2010).

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