E-publishing in Bulgaria. The Role of Libraries as an Active Partner in the Scholarly Communications

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Abstract.

The paper presents the role of Bulgarian libraries in the scholarly communications. E-publishing nowadays becomes a considerable part of library collections. The creating and managing of these collections supposed implementation of new ability for libraries and librarians. As a result they obtain a new role – publisher. The different Bulgarian libraries try to produce digital collections which contains "digital born" or digitalized resources. Many of them drafting projects with the main purpose to control the whole process of digitalization, archiving and provide open access to digital collections.

The changes in the global information society put the libraries in a new situation. There are many new appearing services that need to be included into libraries activities such an electronic publishing, building digital collections, preserving electronic documents etc. Bulgarian libraries slowly but confident become a part of these processes. The main problems would be seen into the different level of automation of the different types of libraries. According to the last survey[1] about the condition of libraries in our country we can see that there are many questions to discuss. Only 9% has got any libraries software and only 59% of libraries answered that there is an Internet connections in the building where the library is situated, but it does not mean that these libraries could use the access to Internet. The most of these libraries are small, with only one or two librarians, into small Bulgarian villages, but this fact, of course, is not a purpose for reassurance, because the users must have the same rights to access information wherever they are.

In this situation the main Bulgarian libraries try to keep themselves into the leading processes in library theory and practice. In the field of digital publishing libraries become a new role as Kate Wittenberg says "the expanding role of librarian and libraries in scholarly publishing is actually an opportunity for the whole field of scholarly communications in the digital age."[2] Librarians in the role of publishers are more opened and connected to the users. They know how their patrons search, how they accept information and what they need. Libraries enlarged the services they offered. We can say that nowadays the library not only provides access to the information, not only preserve the written knowledge, not only serve users but it is also publisher and active player in the field of scholarly communications.[3]

Academic Libraries

According to the national statistic in Bulgaria there are 11 university libraries and 4 specialized libraries with collections above 200 thousands.[4] They are the main actors among libraries, which developed new approaches in the sphere of e-publishing in Bulgaria. Academic libraries published e-journals, created e-collections with "digital born" materials and digitized documents. They also supported open access archives with publications of the members and the staff of the head institution.

There are some interesting projects prepared by university libraries.

The library on the New Bulgarian University produce own journal "Bibliosphere. Electronic journal of services, resources and technology in information science and library."[5] The journal is an open access initiative and presents not only the activities on university library but the novelty in library practice at all. The journal exists since 2001, and since 2005 is present by Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ) and Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek. Bibliosphere is the first Bulgarian journal accessible through DOAJ. The future steps for journal developing are connected to submit the content on English.

Until 2010 Bibliosphere has been published in twelve issues. The materials are presents under the headings of challenges, traditions and culture heritage. The authors are librarians, information and computers specialists from Bulgaria and abroad. There is also a library e-bulletin published by Bulgarian Information Consortium[6] but Bibliosphere is the only online Bulgarian library journal that offered open access to publications in library and information theory and practice.

At the same University the library managed scholar electronic repository "New Bulgarian University Scholar Electronic Repository".[7] It ensures free access to scientific e-publications. Authors are teachers and PhD students at the university. The repository is a part of the Open Archives Initiatives. The main goal of its creation was to encourage free exchange of information and knowledge. It is undoubtedly that the open access will spread the significance of the university in the country and abroad. Another important aim of maintaining this archive is to increase the citation by the authors. Library has organized seminars, "open access week" and other activities to explain the advantages of using and publicizing in such kind of e-collections.

The intellectual property rights are guaranteed by deposit agreement signed between authors and university. The statistics showed real interest in the archives. If in 2007 are deposed the first 25 publications nowadays there are 170 documents on Bulgarian and English languages. In 2009 the authors have been 76, the site visits - 914, and the unique users - 736 from 40 countries. The most visitors are from USA, Russia and UK.[8,9]

A similar repository has been developed by the Library at the University of Rouse. The library prepared and managed a project about creating an scholarly e-archive.[10, 11]

These two projects showed that the need of producing open access collections for Bulgarian researchers is realized from libraries and librarians and they try to answer to this challenge. It should be noted that there are some signs about drafting such projects by other academic libraries.

Another step in the providing the scholarly communications with information have been doing by the Library of Bulgarian Academy of Science (http://www.cl.bas.bg/), Library of the Sofia University (http://www.libsu.uni-sofia.bg/index_en.html) and the Library of the American University in Bulgaria (http://www.aubg.bg/library/). These three libraries create a project about building of National academic library and information system which was supported by The America for Bulgaria Foundation.[12] The most important purposes of the project are two. First is to digitalization of the traditional catalogues of the main academic libraries in Bulgaria. The

result will be a national union catalogue. The second is to build university libraries net which provide electronic access to their collections independent of the medium (paper or electronic) as well as to the rich collections of the world university net. With achievement of these goals Bulgarian students and researcher will be a part of the world information system of university libraries.[13] It is expected to join least fifteen Bulgarian universities. The three founding libraries possess some of the richest library collections in our country. This fact gives reason to believe that will achieve a rapid effect on the science communications. For example the collections of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences included 1 919 626 documents of all types and the collection of the University Library of the Sofia University is about 2 000 000 documents.[14] This means that the main science publications will be accessible through realization of this project.

Public libraries

Regional libraries

Another important approach by covering the science communication in Bulgaria is the different projects of digitalization. The libraries have made first steps with digitalization of old collections which intellectual property rights have expired. There are in Bulgaria twenty seven regional libraries. They are main libraries for the distinct region and have an obligation to manage the other libraries in this region. The regional libraries collect materials that are related to the area and they have unique collection regarding to history and developing of determinate region. At this point I have to say that the Bulgarian National Library is on the threshold of an implementation of a new library automated system. It will be a part of COBISS.Net, but this implementation delayed significantly and by the way the larger public libraries have made steps to automation of the library processes. In this environment was developed different projects for building of e-collections in regional libraries which will be the basis of fast access to the library materials and which will give opportunity to research history of our country, Balkans and Europe.

To this moment a part of our libraries created different projects for developing of digital collections. These projects are separated each other and there is a real risk of duplication the digitalized collections or a single documents. The libraries realize this problem and makes effort to avoid it. The main reason for this problem to me is the lack of coordinated centre which will take a care about materials, collections and mediums which will digitalized. This centre will be better to manage this activity not only between libraries but also among archives and museums.

Some of the well known Bulgarian projects are the developed by the Regional Library "Pencho Slavejkov" at the town of Varna. The library present two collections: "Varna periodicals 1880-1944" and "Post cards and photos from Varna 19-20 centuries". With these collections the Varna regional library is the first Bulgarian local library which become an aggregator of data for EuropeanaLocal and which will be presented in the Europeana.[15]

Other important projects are related to the creation of union regional catalogues for different type of documents – Books, Periodicals, Rare and precious books. These catalogues were built on equal software platform which is implemented by integrated library systems of above 150 Bulgarian libraries from different types. By realization of the projects was expect to digitalized periodicals published until 1944 (about 150 000 pages). Into the union catalogue of rare and precious books are included above 2500 bibliographic records, 2 700 digitalized object and 42 books. The partners in these projects are only regional public libraries.[16]

The presented projects are the most well known in our country. Of course there are other separated small projects which raise a question about the dangerous of duplicating the digitalized materials. Some of these projects only created digital copies of different documents without implementation of metadata and use of some standards of creating and preserving digital objects.

That mean we need quickly to produce good practices which will showed the right way for maintaining good digital collections.

Bulgarian National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius"

Of course in these processes own place has got the "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" National Library. It has responsibility for the preservation of national publications. This obligation is govern by law on legal deposit that define materials which must deposit. In the latest amendment of the law were included electronic resources with remote access that are publicized in our country. They must deposit in National library which have to create a digital repository for storage this type of materials.[17]

As was mentioned above the National library is in the process of implementation of integrated automated library system. The choice was about developed and maintained by Slovenian Institute of Information Science (IZUM) Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services COBISS. At the moment are ongoing processes of changing the software, staff training and automation of all library processes. At the same time National library builds a Centre for digitalization that main purposes are related to preservation, access and reveal of library collections. They included eleven special collections (e.g. Collection of Slavonic and Foreign Language Manuscripts; Collection of Old Printed Books, Rare and Precious Editions; Bulgarian Historical Archives Collection; Orientalistic Department Collections; Maps and Graphics Collection etc.) which are essential for Bulgarian researchers.[18] The priorities of digitalization concerned the national scope, precious, condition of the original, settled intellectual property, frequency of using, unique documents.[19] Some of the projects are "The European Library", "World Digital Library", "Digitalization and preservation of written heritage of Bulgaria", "Improving access to text".

Conclusion

Libraries have indeed been in the forefront of research into and implementation of preservation policies for digital resources. Part of them have taken responsibility for archiving research publications in specific field and other have preserve their own special collection materials. The Bulgarian libraries are made the first steps in developing and providing free access to the digital collections. In front of them stay the problems of saving the achievements. At the beginning more of the projects were made without necessary preparation and without knowledge about building good and usefully digital collections. Now we all realized how important are interoperability, standardization, well choice of the scheme of metadata, usability of collections. Bulgarian libraries slowly, but confidently improving and keeping their own place in communications between authors and users through implementation of new services and new approaches.

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[1] For the purposes of the Programme Global Libraries-Bulgaria in the period of June–August 2008 there were surveyed 2351 public libraries.
Програма "Глобални библиотеки – България". Обобщени резултати от анкетното проучване на обществените библиотеки в България (юни-юли 2008)
<http://www.glbulgaria.bg/upload/docs/Summary_Repport_LNA_BG.pdf, 18.04.2010> (Bulgarian only)

[2] Wittenberg, Kate. Libraries as Publishers: a new role in scholarly communications. // Searcher, Vol. 12, 2004, Issue 10, p. 50-53

[3] Wittenberg, Kate. Libraries as Publishers: a new role in scholarly communications. // Searcher, Vol. 12, 2004, Issue 10, p. 50-53

[4] National Statistic Institute. Society. Culture <http://www.nsi.bg/SocialActivities_e/Culture_e.htm, 23.04.2010>
Since 2002 the National Statistic Institution has been collect data only about libraries with collections above 200 thousands.

According to the Calimera country report in 2000 the libraries in Bulgaria are 6 942 – 3 877 public libraries, 2 599 school libraries, 381special libraries, 84 university libraries. <http://www.calimera.org/Countries/reports/Bulgaria%20-%20Country%20Report.htm#Statistics, 29.04.2010>

[5] Bibliosphere <http://www.bibliosphere.eu/, 18.04.2010>

[6] Bulgarian Information Consortium. Publications <http://www.bic.bg/i.php?s=5&p=1, 29.04.2010>

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[11] On 29th April 2010 there were only two publications and four authors. Русенки университет „Ангел Кънчев". Университетска библиотека. DSpace – електронен архив <http://dspace.ru.acad.bg/, 29.04.2010>

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