

Josef Dzivak

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Ing. Jozef Dzivák
Bratislava – SUT

HOW SHOULD MODERN LIBRARY RESPOND TO NEEDS OF A UNIVERSITY?

Abstract

Making right changes in a rapidly changing world is extremely difficult. Since the middle of the 20th century libraries have adjusted to many changes in their environment and have been able to make these changes relatively gradually. The libraries have incorporated information technologies in all aspects of their activities. They have become familiar with virtual users and are building hybrid collections where many items are licensed and not owned. The libraries seem to have adapted to the changing environment very successfully. Nevertheless, the library as an institution is more vulnerable than ever. An ecosystem in which the existing libraries have been operating is dynamic and rapidly changing. There is a growing number of competitors trying to move to a fixed place traditionally held by the libraries. The threats are everywhere. Library budget is being revised and cut. Individual or whole groups of libraries are forced to close operations because of an insufficient financial support. The libraries are not needed by their founding institutions anymore because “everything is available online”. Although the libraries as organizations have undoubtedly adapted, the pace of change in the environment means that the niche that supported them for so long seems to be growing more inhospitable. The libraries were trying to survive by making more and more changes and now are entering a period when it is likely that a radical change will be required if the libraries as a type of an institution are to continue to exist. If the libraries will not be able to adapt to changes in their environments, they will disappear in the near future and will be replaced by other types of information organisations, which will be prepared better to fit niches available in the tomorrow’s world.

The topic of this paper are not electronic science and research books, rather it is focused generally on the issue of e-books that relate to education. The reason is that I find the given topic somewhat controversial.

As first, I would like to draw attention to an interesting article by Brian Sullivan¹, in which he deals with an „autopsy“ of an academic library which dies in 2050. Points he summed in the article, were as follows:

¹ Brian T. Sullivan: Academic Library Autopsy Report, 2050. Available at: <http://chronicle.com/article/Academic-Library-Autopsy/125767/>

- It is assumed that paper books will die and will be replaced by digitized books. New titles will be published in an electronic form only. We will be enabled to access these books via Internet, or download them to mobile devices.
- Library Information services are no longer needed because publishers will prepare the tools for working with information sources and books which are easy to use to such an extent that the services provided by the library are no longer interesting for users or not adequate for them.
- Furthermore, he supposes that the study literature will be integrated into training programs, ie. e-learning, presentations (using tools as PowerPoint, in 2050 possibly an utterly different progressive program) etc.
- Sullivan expects that librarians and libraries will disappear and will be replaced by IT departments, IT staff. Library as space will be converted into a study room, computer room etc. and the acquisition of information funds will no longer be performed by a library, but by universities themselves. In this respect, we have made a progress in Slovakia – the Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information (SCSTI) provides such services to our universities. Reference services will also disappear and will be replaced by search (retrieval) services which, in a combination with the use of social networks and helpdesk, are provided by ICT departments.
- Finally, Sullivan presents a common issue – from his point, economic aspect prevails, ie. libraries are not sufficiently profitable for their constituents.

We analyzed how the by Sullivan predicted future may reflect in the activities of the Slovak Chemistry Library. The question is whether e-books are the remedy for the library survival.

The TNS company conducted a survey in the Slovak Republic, which revealed that up to 78% young people own a smartphone, the equipment into which we are able to deliver an e-book. Those who do not have this equipment, are likely to buy one soon or will be passed an older one by their parents. The fact is that over $\frac{3}{4}$ of young people carry the e-reader with them. Stationary pc's are being replaced by popular laptops. 20% of people own tablets, another 20% would like to buy one soon. Youngsters spend 4 hours a day browsing the Internet, which means that the internet connection is not unusual anymore. They spend a lot of time with friends, which is not surprising. Considering how much time they spend in school or in voluntary work with their classmates and friends and chat or text with them afterwards, we find that the communication is much more important for them than in the past.

What concerns e-books, we may take a look abroad. On the basis of the published results of a survey focused on the global e-books market, current e-books sales present 20% of sales in the book market in the USA. In the UK the figure is slightly lower, in

Germany it is approximately 5% according to this survey, and the rest of Europe at 1-3%. In the Czech Republic, the current revenue of e-books sales is estimated to be at 1.5% of total revenues of the books sales. It is expected that this proportion will grow.

Preferences of users – analysis of survey results in the Slovak Chemistry Library in Bratislava

To complement the statistics I have to add an information on the proportion between the printing and copying services of the Slovak Chemistry Library (hereinafter SChL) because I believe it has a high explanatory value. In 2010, print constituted 60% and 40% represented the copying of print materials. It means that students were getting more than half of the study material from electronic sources, whether these were information databases, e-books, lectures, e-learning, etc. The number of printed pages from e-resources is rapidly growing every year and according to the most recent data from the first months of 2014, the proportion between printing and copying is 85:15. It means, the students prefer prints of digital originals as the study material. Textbooks, followed by academic or scientific journals are the most used items among the study literature. The most important fact for the Slovak Chemistry Library as an institution focused on technology is that the top study resource is the textbook.

We were also interested in fact how students of the Faculty of Chemical and Food Technology of the Slovak University of Technology perceive e-books – especially in comparison with paper books. We found that 82% of users prefer paper books. The change since 2010 is minimal. 39% of SChL users would buy a paper book rather than an electronic one. This figure, however, has slightly dropped since 2010, which is probably related to getting accustomed to mobile devices. 93% of users can figure that they will use the digital version. 56% of users would prefer to print an e-book before they use it. Furthermore, we were interested if users have any idea about book prices. 68% of library users have no idea what the selling price of books they use is. All of them supposed that the price of the book is less than € 8 while the price is more than € 8, actually. The survey clearly showed that users liked paper books.

What next? We raised key questions concerning the access to e-books in academic libraries:- Should or should not a library become a publisher? – What can we offer the users, if we want to increase the use of e-books? (What are other benefits than only a carrier replacement – shift from paper to screen?) – If the users like the paper version, may we suppose the „Book on Demand“ service will attract them?

Should or should not a library become a publisher?

What is a benefit for the library if it functions as a publisher and what the library loses if it does not function as one? At present the problems connected with copyrights persist. The discussion on this issue, which now takes place mostly in hallways but also

at professional events, is devoted to the problem that we have e-books, but we can not do anything with them, because we are limited by the copyright, copyright associations and publishers.

The second issue is the fact that the library budget does not grow but drops. On the other hand, the publishers' average revenue for a single scientific article is not low. This information was published in an article by a US statistician who evaluated income based on how many scientific articles there were published against revenues of those publishers which the articles published. Real average revenue per scientific article was \$ 5,000. It would be worth to become a publisher for such a revenue. So, what is the benefit if we become a publisher? Firstly, the publishing of new titles would be easier for us and we would avoid one of those symptoms on which we would probably die in 2050 - literature is included in the study programs; e-learning and presentations have often become the primary source of education due to the lack of titles in libraries. However, if the library took over the functions of the publisher, it would be able to publish the new titles crucial for its users. Furthermore, this would mean the reduction of the textbooks production cost. As shown in the above mentioned survey, students prefer the paper version of the documents. But if their attention is drawn to the economic advantage, it is possible that they choose an e-book instead of a paper book. The most important factor is the availability of literature!

Another important factor is that science's progress is incredibly rapid what results into continual authors' call for an innovative study material. If this is done by a traditional paper form, there is an economically long-term unsustainable situation. The Slovak Chemistry Library alone needs approximately € 120 000 per year for an innovation of textbooks for students. It's almost unpayable. If we start to publish textbooks, the library's significance begins to rise because it becomes a flexible information resource for our users. Ultimately, this will mean an increase in revenue. Furthermore, we obtain complete freedom of the management of titles under the granted license. We can not force all authors to accept Open Access license, but for a publisher it is possible to adapt to market needs or requests in a very flexible manner.

**What can we offer the users, if we want to increase the use of e-books?
(What are other benefits than only a carrier replacement
– shift from paper to screen?)**

What are the utilization possibilities of the book's electronic version? If we say that an e-book stored in the reader, or its paper version offers practically the same service, this is true only if it is a fiction, a novel, a short story, etc. But if it is a scientific or a technical literature, the reading of the text itself is not enough. It is necessary to work more with the text of the book. How?

Books can be used on mobile devices that a person has in his/her pocket. It should be borne in mind that people are losing interest in borrowing things. They want to have their own equipment and in the equipment they want to have everything what they use: email, internet, social networks as well as e-books. It is very important to realize that the distinction between digital books and digitized books is disappearing. The user should not distinguish whether something is digitized or digital. This means that the books that we digitize should provide the same service as books born digital. Since these are the books existing in an electronic environment, it should be natural that we are able to select texts, images and so on. Another advantage is that what we consider problematic in the age of paper books, e.g. full color, high graphic resolution, it is not a problem with digital books. We can afford any variation. Quotes, comments, sharing with friends or colleagues are another natural features. An interesting new trend is that books are aiming to be self-read. This means that we do not read books aloud and record their audio versions, but will be read aloud automatically as soon as we choose any part of the book.

Knowledge in this area advances so far, that the most recent settings that relate to Data Mining, should for example enable the search engine determine whether an article published in the newspaper is positive or negative on the basis of the context of this article. Experts are busy working on this feature already. Some other features that should be natural are the full-text search in collections of digital books, text highlighting (in situations when one tries to find a text, the feature should navigate not only to the level of the book, but to the level of its particular position) and the creation of personalized books. This means that, for example, the student will be able to select from some 20 textbooks that are relevant in that academic year only those pages that will be interesting for him and so he will be able to create his own book.

If users like the paper version, may we suppose the „book and demand“ service will attract them?

The survey has shown that users like paper books. It is therefore necessary to consider the „Book on Demand“ alternative. Until now, „e-Book on Demand“ was the trend, this means that users wanted us to deliver the book in an electronic form. However, from our survey it is obvious that we should be able to deliver a paper book on request.

In the Slovak Chemistry Library, we began to provide our „Book on Demand“ service based on this. At this moment, we are able to produce a paper book from its digital form in 5 minutes (we have a small time reserve until we deliver the book to the user). It means that the production takes 5 minutes and the delivery 24 hours. What concerns Open Access publishing, an interesting fact is that one of the rules of Open Access publishing is that books should be available in paper form at low costs. It would also

be interesting to allow users to print a limited range of pages from the digital original. As an example I can mention a service, which the Slovak Chemistry Library currently offers to our students - from the first e-books that we publish, we can produce 200 page book in black and white, A4 or B5 format for € 1,81. This is a very interesting price when compared to the common price of € 8, from which the current prices of paper books start. The student does not have to deal with a problem whether to own an e-book or a paper book. He will get an electronic form via an access to our digital library and if he thinks he needs more than this he can purchase the paper book.

How does making e-books available work in the Slovak Chemistry Library? We make no difference between digitized and digital books. All books are uploaded into a digital library and the user may find which book was produced by scanning and which was digitally published only according to the image quality. The access to the digital library is secured via an authentication service. Our registered users log on into digital libraries and in the digital library they can assign a print task directly to the printer. If they are interested in the whole book we are able to print and bind it upon request. We started to bring such an approach and ideas about services into practice three years ago. Users got used on these types of services quickly and services are becoming a natural and integral part of the library.

List of bibliographical references

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