EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT
The text explores the principles of management and their application in library management, particularly focusing on university libraries. Management involves planning, organizing, supervising, cost calculation, and controlling activities and resources, which are applicable to libraries. Library management, as a subset of institutional management, addresses specific challenges faced by librarians and managers, emphasizing freedom of expression and good governance. It involves managing materials, equipment, and human and financial resources to achieve library objectives, and should be viewed as an integrated system managing acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, periodicals, and services.

University library management aims to create products and provide services, including digitizing materials and offering rapid information access. Key issues include defining tasks, understanding resources, setting goals, developing strategies, and evaluating results. Despite criticisms of high costs, excessive staffing, and inefficiency, these are countered by recognizing the university library's integral role and advanced resource management.

Management methods such as quality management, expense calculation, control, and marketing are essential for improvement. Libraries aim to profit by providing valuable information, though profit generation can be challenging. Emphasizing virtual presence and online promotion is crucial for efficiency and reducing physical overcrowding. Effective user orientation and accommodation services are vital, with examples like the Vancouver Community Library demonstrating excellence in user-friendly design and orientation tools.

KEYWORDS: *library management, university libraries, institutional management, resource management, good governance, information access, digital transformation, user orientation, quality management, virtual presence*
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1. INTRODUCTION

Over time, a series of definitions have been issued both regarding management as a general field and regarding the management of library units.

The general definition of management shows that it means planning, organizing, supervising, calculating costs, and controlling activities and resources. Even if this notion is mainly used in the economy, it can be very easily transposed to the public sector, or other adjacent fields, such as library management.

Library management is thus part of institutional management and involves focusing on specific problems faced by librarians and the managers of these institutions alike. This discipline is primarily based on principles related to freedom of expression (more precisely, non-censorship of information sources), as well as good governance (fundraising). The management of libraries practically assumes a sum that includes the management of materials, equipment, human and financial resources to be able to achieve the objectives of a library.

In another opinion, library management should be seen as an integrated system that is the basis for the creation of an IT system, a software that manages the database of a library. Thus, this integrated system must be based on the management of acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, periodicals, as well as that of the services through which all materials are made available.

As far as the management of a university library is concerned, it means the management of the activity oriented towards a certain goal, that of creating a product or managing and offering some services. These activities take place within the management of a university library because:

- "creating the product" consists in the transposition of written materials on electronic media, the multiplication of existing materials in various ways, etc.;

- managing a service and/or making it widely available to users refers in this case to the rapid transmission of correct information by the library.

The management issues that must be known when we refer to a university library are:

- definition of tasks and knowledge of internal resources (material and human resources);

- the orientation towards a well-defined goal, and when we refer to university libraries, as I explained previously, they fulfill multiple goals that will each require such a measure in advance;

- setting strategies to achieve goals. In this sense, there is a need for long-term strategies, correct means of quantitative estimation of the various needs, as well as the evaluation of the results.

There are many criticisms that have been leveled at university libraries, including:

- costs too high for both establishment and maintenance;

- too much staff;

- poor efficiency of the services offered;

- insufficient technical equipment;

- poor service to the beneficiaries.

In our opinion, these criticisms are not justified because:

- numerous reasons have been identified during the work, from which it follows that the university library represents the university itself, being only an extension of it. Thus, the costs of a university library must be included in the costs that a university assumes when it decides to modernize or expand its own buildings. In practice, a distinction should not be made between the headquarters of a university and its library, on the contrary, we have identified numerous cases in countries such as Great Britain or the USA, in which the university library represents the symbol of university campuses, being often positioned in their center;

- in terms of maintenance costs, or too much staff, the previously mentioned must also be considered, but also the fact that among all three types of libraries subject to the case study, the university library represents the most advanced form of management of library materials and so it is obvious that this can only be done at higher costs. However, they are justified for the same reason as that of its establishment itself, since only in this way can a framework conducive to the study and creation of tomorrow's specialists be created;

- regarding the poor efficiency of the services, this criticism of university libraries can hardly be justified as long as previously the same criticism referred to "too much staff". We have established so far, giving all the necessary arguments, that the university library is the most advanced form of libraries today, and all the measures to make library work more efficient that have appeared over time first came into existence within this type of library;

- the same argument can be made in dismantling the criticisms that refer to a deficient technical endowment or a bad service to the beneficiaries.

All that is done through the management methods is that through them a permanent improvement of the activity of the university libraries takes place. These management methods are:

- quality management (quantitative and qualitative assessment methods of library services in order to satisfy the demands of its users);

- calculation of expenses (management method by protecting resources and establishing convenient prices);

- control (setting objectives, tracking and evaluating them);

- marketing (discovering users' needs, adapting the library's activity to these needs, and then advertising the library).

The goal of any manager is to make a profit, especially a long-term one. The transposition of this objective in the case of university libraries takes place as follows: libraries possess information, the information must be oriented and/or adapted to a certain clientele so that this clientele pays to have access to this information.

Of course, two other particularly important mentions must be made, namely that:

- making a profit is not always possible, since the university library represents an extension of the university itself, the library's profit must either be correlated with that of the university itself, or if the library's activity is evaluated as an independent organization, then there is the possibility for it to generate losses. That is precisely why managers of university libraries are often put in a position to limit losses.

- university libraries allocate a lot of resources to information management. The process of selecting, preserving and capitalizing on this information is the most complex among all types of libraries. Paying users for the opportunity to benefit from this information, together with the general framework in which it is offered, can often be one not only in money. For example, a university library can organize an event in a separate space at its disposal, after which it can receive from the organizers either a new book collection or other sponsorships in means and technical equipment.

"Regarding the evolution of services provided by contemporary university libraries, it is essential to remember that the design of university library services must relate to the current characteristics and directions of evolution of users, collections and means (tools)."

There are certain stages and forms of library relations with readers. They could be grouped as follows:

2. RECEIVING OF USERS

Access to the new public of the library is done today through more diversified methods compared to those of the past.

a) user initiation service – welcoming users to the library premises is of primary importance because the first impression made by the public is decisive for its future attitude. That is precisely why libraries that have possibilities must organize a reception service as attractive as possible, whether it is electronic means of guiding individual users or collective visits organized in a programmed way. This last method has proven to be very effective most of the time, at the beginning of each academic year, "library days" are scheduled, the occasion for the opening of book exhibitions, cultural events, etc., all organized in the university library.

b) the service of identification and registration of users in the database - activity organized by the library secretariat, which is placed most of the times near the entrance.
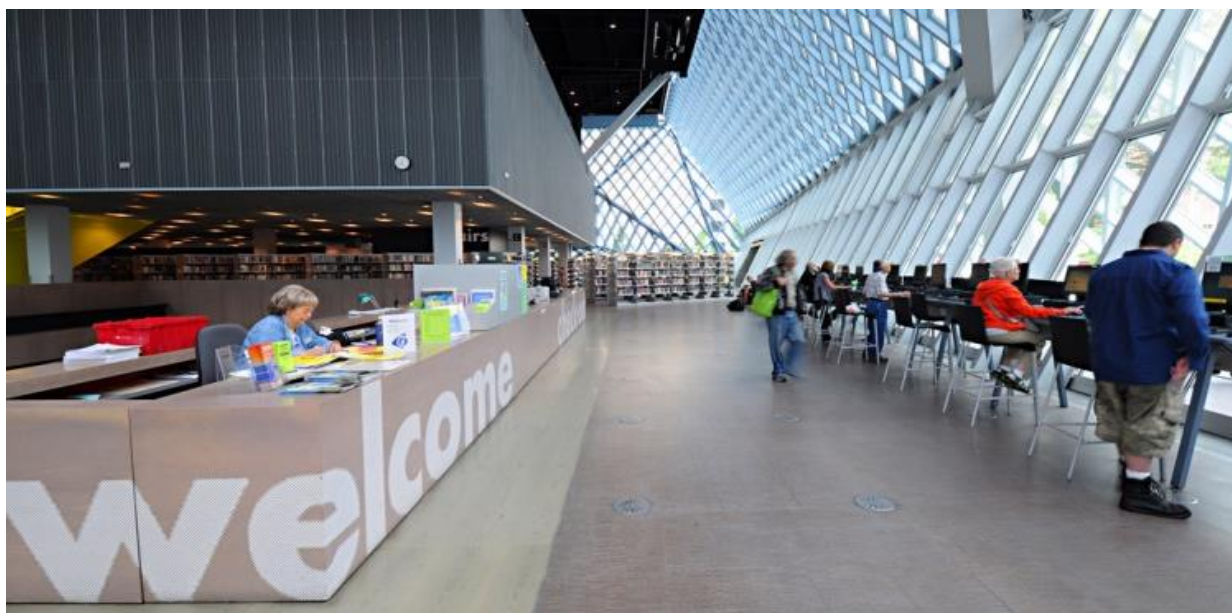
Reception desk in the lobby of the Seattle Library

3. USER ORIENTATION

The faster the initiation of readers is carried out, the more the library institution increases its efficiency, but immediately after this first step, the orientation of the beneficiaries must be done. That is precisely why any university library must have:

a) the orientation plan (or even the library model) – the orientation plan exposed at the entrance to the building and in each room where user access is allowed. The plan at the entrance will include the list and location of all library services, and the plans displayed in the halls will mark the arrangement of shelves, desks, electronic catalogs, etc.

b) the reader's guide – is a written document that summarizes the information given to the reader on his first visit or when he registers in the library. It must also contain all the data that the reader would like to have at a first contact with the university library.

c) the display panel – is an information tool with a permanent reception function. If the orientation plan refers to the architecture of the building and the services provided by it, the display panel can have a double function: either a plan-like orientation or a digital means of reference. Most of the time, modern display boards are digital means placed at the entrance to public rooms, so as to reduce traffic within them. For example, a new user looking for a particular bibliographic reference can contact the digital display panel with direct access to the library's electronic database, and may or may not find what they are looking for. If he does not find the reference, the performance of other activities (identification, registration in the reading room, etc.) is no longer necessary, and thus the overcrowding of spaces is avoided.

4. REFERENCE SERVICES MADE AVAILABLE TO USERS

Gathering and organizing in their collections, thus organizing a large volume of information, libraries require at least one room and/or several access areas where (newly digital) means of accessing a database are made available to users very well structured and easily accessible for reference.

More recently, all libraries choose to make public this database of info-documentary references that they have so that anyone can access the official website of this institution via the Internet, out of the obvious desire to avoid overcrowding.

Overcrowding of library buildings primarily refers to a few key places where this occurs, namely:

- at the information desks – because new users need additional information
- in the wardrobe areas - as the storage action takes time
- at the entrance to the reading rooms - because in their access areas there may be intersections of those entering and leaving during certain time intervals.

That is precisely why it can be said that the physical existence of the library depends to a large extent on its virtual existence, promotion in the online environment being one of the most effective means of promotion, with an effectiveness rate of over 38% among potential users. In addition, the expectations of academic clientele presuppose permanent, fast and quality access to the possible services provided by university libraries, therefore the existence of reference services that eliminate potential human errors are imperatively necessary both from the point of view of promotion and efficiency the activity.

5. OTHER USER ACCOMMODATION SERVICES

These are:

a) accommodation in the reading rooms - it is done through a special office/space intended to guide users by the library staff.

b) accommodation in research rooms, digital rooms, multimedia rooms and other rooms intended for study - is done in the same way as in the case of accommodation in reading rooms.

c) the use of other annex spaces - such as: toilets, hallways, changing rooms, loan rooms, event hall, public food area, etc.

User guidance inscriptions from the Vancouver Community Library

The Vancouver Library's user orientation inscriptions, as well as those regarding possible activities and visions for the future of the library, were the subject of an award of merit presented by SEGD (Global Design Award Program) to Mayer/Reed. The award was given for excellence in orientation graphic design, and 412 projects participated in the competition.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The text concludes that effective management practices are crucial for the successful operation and evolution of university libraries. By applying general management principles—such as planning, organizing, supervising, cost calculation, and controlling resources—libraries can address specific challenges unique to their environment. These include managing materials, equipment, and human and financial resources to meet their objectives, ensuring freedom of expression, and practicing good governance.

University library management involves creating products and providing services, such as digitizing materials and offering quick access to information. Despite criticisms regarding high costs, excessive staffing, and inefficiency, these are countered by the library's integral role within the university and its advanced management of resources. Effective management methods, including quality management, expense calculation, control, and marketing, are essential for continuous improvement.

Libraries aim to provide valuable information to users, and while profit generation may be challenging, they can often secure non-monetary benefits through events and sponsorships. Emphasizing virtual presence and online promotion enhances efficiency and reduces physical overcrowding. Ensuring effective user orientation and accommodation services is vital, with successful examples like the Vancouver Community Library showcasing the importance of user-friendly design and orientation tools. Overall, continuous adaptation and improvement in management practices are key to meeting the evolving needs of university library users.

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