CONTEMPORARY TENDENCIES AND CHALLENGES IN CREATING THE NEW PROFILE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

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Abstract
The librarian profession with its rich tradition through the centuries of its existence has been in function for humans, but it has been changing in accordance to the changes in society, adjusting to the demands of the new users. The changes in the society had dictated the need for changes in the schools, and with that, the need for change in the classical school libraries, in accordance to the educational and cultural needs of the contemporary school. With the alignment of the librarian work with the contemporary positive changes in schools, there is successful development and fulfillment of the socially valorized needs of the users of schools libraries from all areas (educational, upbringing, cultural and informative). The successful management with the school libraries in the contemporary schools can lead to increase in the quality of education. There are a few researches for the school libraries in general in our country, which means that this important segment from the educational-upbringing process in a marginalized position. This approach of insufficient attention towards the school libraries can influence the decrease of their role in the educational-upbringing process, i.e. it can decrease the degree of use of school libraries and the quality of services it can offer to its users.

Key words: libraries, school, librarians, education

Introduction
The contemporary world is now more than ever build upon and functions on the basis of a large quantum of information and knowledge which are transferred almost immediately at the same time (moment), from any place to any other place. The new revolutionary changes in the world of information and knowledge unchangeably challenge deep transformations in the manners of functioning and preservation of the contemporary libraries as one of the most significant landmarks of civilization. The libraries and librarians in the new century would inevitably transform into successful, relevant and dynamic factors in the age of information. The technological changes in the information field inevitably will represent one of the most serious challenges for the libraries and librarians in the following period. The power of the civilization in the developed digital world depends on the speed of transfer and usage of information.

Contemporary libraries, and in that context – the school libraries, represent rich and indispensable treasury of human knowledge, wisdom and culture. At the same time, the school libraries represent a place where the students can reach out to needed information and

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knowledge in an organized manner. They are the medium and focal point for enrichment of
the intellect and strengthening their personalities.

In its essence, the school libraries – as centers for knowledge and culture, in a very subtle
manner, unite the tradition and modern age, presenting a link of a time vertical, because it
follows the latest educational and informational needs of its users. These libraries present
functional connection of several sources of knowledge (books, audio and video-tapes, movie
tapes, computers, contemporary audio-visual means), which underlines the multimedia
approach when performing the educational content.

**School libraries – focal point for informational sources and knowledge in the function of
the educational processes**

The essential feature of each well organized and functional educational process is the
reference towards the book as a constant source of professional and scientific knowledge. As
an analogy to that, the school library becomes an informative center where there is
continuous access to new knowledge and new contemporary conclusions.

Nowadays, in all contemporary schools the library has its place as an important informational
focal point, as a mean for modernization of the educational and upbringing work, as a source
and core of the educational information and possibilities for studying, self-education and
progress. Well thought and organized library that will be efficiently connected to the
educational process and with the entire upbringing process will represent an important center
where the rich pedagogic instructive work will take place. 19

Creating reading habits and using the books becomes most significant feature in the process
of education and self-education. In it essence, the usage of the books and all sources of
scientific and professional information and conclusions are in the function of accomplishing
more valuable cultural, upbringing, educational, scientific and other goals of the school
population.

The books and the remaining librarian material in the school libraries should serve for the
continuous addition, expansion and promotion of the educational process for the teachers and
students. The education with help from the book means to organize the work of the student
with the book. 20

The school libraries towards the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century take
more central place in the securing the informational sources that aid the educational process,
as well as a central place for a personal and social progress of the students. In several
contemporary countries, the informational resource centers of the school libraries begin to be
acknowledged as part of the states informational network. In this context, the conviction that
the basic aim of the school libraries is to ease teaching and studying is being strengthened.
Their function in underlining the meaning of the studying skills, acquiring the abilities and
skills for research and use of information is being accentuated. 21

The contemporary living in the world underlines the connection between the librarian and
informational occupation with the process of education and the need for lifelong learning. Its
future is seen through the “digital knowledge”, because if “knowledge is power” (Francis

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20 Школска медија тека, Радмила Шуљагич, Београд, 1984, стр.8.
Bacon), then “digital knowledge is even bigger power” (Martin Delon). Even though the education is moving towards the path of the industry of knowledge, the libraries of the future should provide more direct access to knowledge under equal terms for all users. The current principle for management with information should be immediately be transformed into knowledge management. Do the libraries in this new “confrontation” with the internet have the chance to keep their position, surely changed according to the new contemporary challenges, depends, largely on the professional development of the librarian staff that represents one of its important components, if not the most important for the entire development of the librarian occupation in the XXI century.

In this context, we can conclude that there isn’t good educational process without well lead school library which is in function for realization of the contemporary educational programs.

For complete efficient and successful realization of the educational, cultural and occupational needs of the students, in this cultural-educational process we cannot deny the indispensible role of the school librarians. They need to continuously plan and think through the process of work in function for accomplishing of these noble causes. The school librarians should learn and teach the students to discover their own developmental possibilities, to activate their potentials and their love for books and knowledge in the course of the entire process of their permanent education. The librarians, through their conversations with the students, which should be planned, indented and conscious, can influence the behavior and thinking of students, to convince them, teach them and ask from them to always to more and better in this field. The students should develop their habits and culture for keeping the literature materials, their due diligence in returning the books, as well as the polite and civilized behavior within the library as well. The school librarian, which is a part of the educational system, by the means of the pedagogic – informational work introduces the students with the librarian occupation, with the books (compulsory books for reading, fiction, non-fiction, scientific, vocational and other sources) and their use.

Today, when the educational process is perceived as a communication-interactive process where the process for cooperation of all subjects (students-factors) is most meaningful, it becomes even more important to underline the cooperation between the teacher and the librarian.

The school librarian in the contemporary educational-upbringing process should be profiled as a professional and expert – informational, librarian and pedagogical. The encouragement and accomplishing of these skills, in a large merit, are very obvious in the contemporary education, which, without a doubt, brings the library and the informational services in the focal point in the learning process.

The education of the librarian staff as an indispensable factor for successful and entire accomplishment of the librarian occupation in the new century is constantly and objects for a special attention in all developed countries in the world. In the contemporary world, the connection between the librarian-informational occupation and the process of education and the need for the life-long learning of the librarian staff is being accentuated.

The school librarian is a professionally qualified staff, responsible for planning and managing the school library, with support of other qualified persons, and with cooperation with other

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22 Види поопширно: SLA Competencies for special librarians of the 21-th century.
http://www.sla.org/professional/comp.html. 30.05.1998.
http://www.sla.org/professional/comp.html. 30.05.1998

members of the collective in the school and connected with the national, public and other types of libraries.

**Analysis of the current condition with the professional and competency improvement of the librarian staff in the school libraries**

To determine the continuous professional improvement of the librarians in the school libraries, the Institute for librarian work from the Faculty of Pedagogy “Saint Kliment Ohridski” – Skopje, has made a research in the elementary and secondary schools in the city of Skopje.

From the entire number of analyzed schools (89), a large number, or more concise – 68 or 76.4% are in the category of elementary schools, while there are 21 or 23.6% of the secondary schools.

Also, it is important to underline the data that in 6 schools or 6.7% of the analyzed schools, there isn’t a school library, while in 83 schools or 93.3% certain school libraries exist.

These data, generally show that the principal condition with the placement of the important network of school libraries is respectable, however insufficient, regarding the fact that there shouldn’t be a school in the XXI century without appropriately organized and functional school library.

When answering the question: “Have you had training for working in the library?” which regards the education and training of librarians for successful realization of their librarian work, the fact that gives concerns is that 41 librarian (or 46.1% from the entire number of librarians in the research) have not had a training for working in the library. This value is identical with the entire number of librarians – 42 (or 47.2%) who had visited some forms of training necessary for their professional librarian work.

The data that less than half of the working librarians have attended an appropriate training, undeniably speaks about the lack of care from the appropriate institutions about the enabling the librarians who work in the school libraries to put their professional work in the function of accomplishing efficient work of the school libraries, which is necessary for successful accomplishing and enrichment of the entire educational-upbringing process in the elementary and secondary schools in the city of Skopje.
On the basis of the extensive analysis, a very clear, precise and complex presentation of the current conditions is being created, and it concludes the system and other serious weaknesses and problems in the organizational positioning and in the functioning of the analyzed school libraries in the area of the city of Skopje.

With the in-depth and entire analysis of the organization and the work in the school libraries (in elementary and secondary schools) an indirect estimation is being made for (non)fulfilling the librarian occupation as a public service.

This system should be well thought through, in a manner where in the course of the entire process of education of the young people- students, it will raise interest for independent studying, which is in function for enabling for lifelong acquiring of knowledge, either with reading books, or with using the rest of the medias that are offered by the informational and telecommunication technologies.

It has high probability that, in even more drastic form, this negative condition is transferred in the elementary and secondary schools outside the capital of our country.

In the function for successful surpassing of these worrying trends in this field, it is necessary for an appropriate strategy for continuous education to be build, for entire improvement of the working staff in the field in the elementary and secondary education.

**Conclusion**

The librarian experts must adapt towards the new surroundings of electronic information, and to begin to keep up with the new technologies and to take the focal point in the “new libraries”.

The librarian as a main carrier of the entire librarian work, should be able to accept in its entirety and to answer positively on the new challenge in the age of informational society. For completion of the librarian’s personality, besides this impressive collection of needed professional and human features, the quantum of knowledge and skills acquired in the educational process must be added.

In the period that follows, the need for the librarians to acquire their informatics literacy will only increase. It is logical in the following period to expect more knowledge and skills from the informatics experts than in the other occupations.

The transformation and the adaptation of the librarians towards the needs of the users in the new age when the knowledge in its entirety becomes most significant economic resource, is of an utmost importance for successful walking in the XXI century and for efficient functioning of the libraries in the age of “informatics society”.

The libraries and the librarian work will acquire appropriate staff only through education, a staff that will be able to answer to the challenges of the XXI century in this very significant, useful and necessary field.

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