

# Contemporary Ukraine: An Essay on the Asymmetry of State Policy in the Field of Librarianship

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**Abstract.** It is necessary to establish a new paradigm of organization and functioning of the libraries within the context of globalization and information revolution. The basis of these changes is democratization of the national program of librarianship development in Ukraine based on modernization of libraries in all its forms: from library staff trainings to funding for the material maintenance of the library. Investment in library infrastructure is the contribution to human future. This paper attempts to identify vectors of the state policy and prospects for the improvement in the field of librarianship in Ukraine.

**Keywords:** universal information centers; libraries; public libraries; state policy on librarianship; information asymmetry.

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## Introduction

Information society emphasizes the undeniable benefits of massive disseminations of education, forgetting to stress negative points and even losses in this process. The matter is that education is often seen as a sum of facts: it is not necessarily indicates an appropriate level of culture and, moreover, true intelligence.

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in every aspect of social life encourages the development of innovative algorithms. However, the very foundation of IT technology creates the lack of consumers' motivation and raises the question: what social strata are interested in the information society? Cognitive-latent purposes of definitions "What? Where? When?" of the 20th century are being transformed into "rapid action" element of knowledge in the 21st century: "Now! Quickly! Result!".

A socio-humanitarian institution "library" – now a universal information center – is designed to accumulate practical basis of civilization information heritage. Public libraries are the part of Ukrainian cultural and information space. Their activity provides the preservation of historical and cultural heritage of the nation. Libraries contribute to national development through entering the realm of both national values and world cultural treasures. Over the last decades, "the infor-

mation society of new quality has been developed. It could be characterized by the rapid growth of the amount and variety of information, development of the conception of information as a commodity, formation of knowledge and information industry, development of the information and communication technology, the impact of information and its technologies on all spheres of life including the nature of learning and work as well as on the style of everyday life" [3].

Thus, modern libraries are becoming the significant players in the field of globalization. The process of transformation of its subject area is steadily increasing. Addressing problems in reforming of librarianship are predetermined by huge practical achievements. Library sector suffers from uncoordinated national program of development. Reducing the number of libraries; insufficient logistical support of the library sector; unsatisfactory condition of funds replenishment; low level of social protection of the library workers are the main issues of the modern public libraries in Ukraine.

The acute problem of the library sector is an obsolete, inappropriate approach to the new requirements and challenges of the information society demonstrated by government authorities. An important obstacle in the library sector is uncreative, formalistic approach to the functional revolution and emergence of a new type of public

libraries, new library information systems. This clearly reveals information asymmetry – the situation, in which information is available only to some and not to all market participants or, as J. J. Stiglitz stated, when “some individuals know something that others do not (in other words, always)” [9].

*Objectives.* This paper attempts to identify vectors of state policy and prospects for the improvement in the field of librarianship. Thus, our tasks are to define the basic components of the problem and its solving strategy, that is, introduce the new paradigm of organization and functioning of Ukrainian universal information centers/libraries.

*Methodology.* Exploratory research design is used for conducting this study. The study is based on secondary data which is collected from reports, journals, and periodicals.

## Result and Discussion

Library accumulates knowledge and experience of the nation and disseminates its essence and potential in the direction of perpetuating higher levels of communication. The concentration of social cultural, state-creative and information components of libraries opens up new perspectives of their functionality in the context of globalization. The necessity to outline approaches to the development of information society in Ukraine with a library as the intermediary opens new possibilities of enabling an effective social progress with a new social functionality. State – Library – User are the main actors in the origination of integral library information network in Ukraine.

The historiography of the problem shows that existing domestic research of national librarianship school deprived of social-humanitarian and political context is fragmented and unsystematic. All this does not provide a complete view and a permanent solution to the problem. Hence, the study of state policy in the field of librarianship in Ukraine is insufficient.

Rubicon of reforming the library sector is the state’s formal and unsystematic approach to its functional transformation that hinders the emergence of a new type of public libraries, the National Library and Information System in general. The public library is a social organism, in which

the material component (also important) is not a fundamental one.

More influential factors are freedom and democracy of public life. This is clearly demonstrated by international experience: democratic traditions are capable of neutralizing the possible negative after-effects caused by weak economic system. Crystallization of the ways of library development at the state level creates a new paradigm of changes related to new forms of theoretical and methodological development of the library system.

The birth of a new type of public libraries that includes the cooperation of the state, civil society and libraries, re-design of subject area, transformation of experience and sources should be a guideline vector towards improving the librarian industry in the XXI century.

The strategic objectives of the state policy in the field of librarianship are: to create an efficient library system, which should cover all regions of Ukraine and all segments of the population; to become a reliable part of the information system of the state that accumulates and preserves national memory and culture of Ukraine.

The Law of Ukraine “On Libraries and Librarianship” declares the opportunity to choose the source of recruitment to participate in various international programs and projects, to form professional associations, to become members of international organizations.

Our state is improving the system of different educational institutions. It is forming the infrastructure of the research progress that provides the increasing number of professionals-librarians. There are approximately 32 thousands libraries affiliated with different institutions. Nowadays the network of public libraries has 18 343 units, including 72 regional and 14 828 rural libraries [6].

Thanks to a number of cooperation agreements with American agencies IREX and USAID, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, more than a thousand of rural libraries were computerized in the framework of the program “Bibliomist”. Ministry of Culture of Ukraine reports that computerization of rural libraries provides wide access to culture, promotes the growth of the role of rural libraries and, accordingly, culture.

The Strategy on Librarianship till 2025 developed jointly with Ukrainian Library Association

and adopted on March, 23, 2016 is aiming at analyzing the current situation in the sector and defining priorities for libraries in terms of quality changes with detailed directions, tasks, and expected results. The document emphasizes some development components, namely: updating library and information education and training; providing professional development of the library staff as a focal point [5].

The implementation directly foresees an establishment of the system of knowledge and skills of the library staff as well as modification of the librarians' continuing education according to international standards [1].

The current difficulties of Ukrainian libraries: However, this task is extremely difficult through the lens of current realities. In particular, the most compact service covers the urban population, while there is one rural library in 3-5 (and even more) villages. More than a third of rural libraries (41 %) are not heated, and 3 % of them have no lighting. State's claim about computerization of libraries in rural areas may be seen as an odd bravado, because the number of these libraries is 14,828 and "over a thousand" were computerized [6].

The democratization of public libraries is moving very slowly because of lack of a comprehensive national program for the library industry development. Library funds cannot be updated due to insufficient financing. Only those library institutions that significantly raised its scientific potential, rebuilt corporate personnel policies, mastered new information techniques and technologies, reached a new level of information services and international relations have been surviving.

In this regard, the legislative base has to be updated. Readers avoid classic libraries in hope to meet their information needs through the Internet: today any citizen of our world is able to "visit" the library with its help. V. Mallapur and R. Naik pointed out that "the practice of walking to the library to consult the card catalogue and browse the shelves is moribund in developed countries, and this trend is quickly approaching developing countries as well. Academic libraries must embrace this scenario" [4].

It is necessary to apply an integrated approach to identifying the problems of state library sphere in Ukraine, in particular, such as: lack of a national program (strategy) of the development of librarianship; narrow sectoral approach to its

management; poor interaction and coordination of specialized central authorities on the activities of departmental libraries.

It is crucial to outline ways of adapting foreign experience of state librarianship to the terms of Ukraine in order to identify areas of modernization of public administration. The state and society should make a real commitment to overcome this stereotype. It is extremely important to encourage the Ukrainian public bodies to see the library/information center as a significant factor for the development of society.

The sphere of universal information centers embodied both on paper and in electronic form includes knowledge, experience and wisdom gained by many generations throughout the history of Ukraine. The core of it is the library that can be in full swing, and vice versa, depending on whether the society is economically (culturally) rising or declining. Extension of this huge potential creates the way to overcome the cultural gap between the generations. The main task of the state is to understand the unique transformation of public library institutions and the impact of globalization on the development of its various business segments.

## Conclusions

The problem of information asymmetry should be solved by both society (at the state level) and individual (at the level of enterprise/organization). The state policy and the needs of the community dictate models of libraries and information centers' development and set certain tasks, such as providing information sources, consultations, and services.

It is necessary to establish a new paradigm of organization and functioning of the libraries within the context of globalization and information revolution, that is, to: introduce the new information technologies; create electronic catalogs; expand the participation of libraries in research activities; establish the new principles of international cooperation; modernize library functions.

It is important to realize that the sphere of library culture as a spiritual domain and the sphere of material production based on technology do not intersect. Thus, the company faces the fact: they must learn to control themselves and their actions with respect to nature and humans, and the library plays a key role in this process

[8]. "We need to unite our efforts for the sake of human survival. It is only by a constructive and respectful dialogue that humanity will truly overcome mutual misunderstanding, controversy, and aggressiveness. As a result of it, people will realize that the world is much smaller than they previously imagined, and to preserve it the absolute value in the diversity of world civilizations has to be recognized" [2].

The urgent tasks of the state policy in the transformation of library institutions' activity are: development and improvement of the legal framework that regulates the functioning of the network of public libraries; strengthening inter-agency and international cooperation; library coordination for joint use of electronic resources; integration of Ukraine into the global information space.

The basis of these changes is democratization of the national program of librarianship development in Ukraine based on modernization of libraries in all its forms: from library staff trainings to funding for the material maintenance of library [7]. Investment in library infrastructure is the contribution to human future. Rapid and decisive steps towards the development of Universal Information Centers in Ukraine will become an appropriate response to an asymmetric information issue. It is important to remember that the modern public library is not a jar to be filled

or emptied – it is a national treasure that should be preserved and multiplied.

Among the priorities of public institutions in addressing its asymmetric policy in the field of library should be: the introduction of new information technologies; design of all-consolidated electronic catalog; increasing the participation of libraries in research work; establishing new principles of international cooperation; urgent modernization of library functions, its structural activities, the autonomy of the economic component of public libraries, empowering library institutions in economic activity according to the "Classification of economic activities" (CTEA) – the part of the state system of classification and coding of technical, economic and social information in Ukraine which is harmonized with the statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community (NACE), that in turn harmonized with the international standard industrial classification (ISIC).

The background of reform should be democratization of the national program of librarianship development in Ukraine based on modernization of library activity: from library staff professional education to their funding. Investment in library and information infrastructure is a significant contribution to the future of humanity. Establishment of universal library and information centers in Ukraine may be seen as an adequate response to the asymmetry of information.

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## Современная Украина: очерки по асимметрии государственной политики в сфере библиотечного дела

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**Аннотация.** Необходимо создать новую парадигму организации и функционирования библиотек в контексте глобализации и информационной революции. В основе этих изменений лежит демократизация национальной программы развития библиотечного дела в Украине на основе модернизации библиотек во всех ее формах: от подготовки персонала библиотеки до финансирования материальной базы библиотек. Инвестиции в библиотечную инфраструктуру являются вкладом в будущее человечества. В данной статье предпринята попытка определить векторы государственной политики и перспективы улучшения в области библиотечного дела в Украине.

**Ключевые слова:** единые информационные центры; библиотеки; публичные библиотеки; государственная политика библиотечного дела; информационная асимметрия.

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