

DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL LITERACY – THE ESSENTIAL TASK FOR LIBRARIES

(Introduction)

Digital era bring new goals, new challenges, new difficulties, but as well new opportunities to raise the importance of libraries in the life of every human being and society. Objectively social status of librarians grows too, but only those who meet demands of digitalization process.

One of such opportunities which now is underestimated yet, is increasing libraries participation in building mass-scale digital literacy, renewing and enriching of libraries education activity which has been initially inherent to libraries.

Libraries are creation, embodiment, and manifest of literacy. But libraries are its bearers, keepers, promoters as well. Libraries gained the fame of «culture home» since every literacy revolution (manuscripts, printing, electronic publishing) libraries replenish such a forms and methods of support and dissemination of literacy as ability to fix, to keep, to transmit, and to interpret information.

Literacy is the concept which is capacious one. In the course of history it has been permanently enriching its content and structure. The knowledge of letters, numbers, and punctuation, like reading, writing and counting skills, are the basic elements of literacy. For many centuries libraries did a lot to disseminate these knowledge and skills. Education was one of libraries main tasks along with accumulation, preservation and introduction of hand-written and printed literature into social usage.

Now in Ukraine, like in other countries, where secondary education is regarded as the norm, this task is not relevant already. But library activity called to support and develop other types and kinds of literacy, particularly new ones, is in demand. New types and kinds of literacy have appeared due to digitalization, with its instruments and methods which could be used for creating, processing, keeping, and using information. Now real actual literacy is impossible without competence in computer skills, usage various gadgets, digital home appliances, without basic overview of software and networks. At computer era dawn it was said that informatics is the second new education, but now it is obvious that it becomes the basis for new literacy.

Libraries as culture (education, information) centers must engage in multi-aspect process of building digital literacy. This process is long – like a version of «long-life education» for certain person and for the whole society – it lasts during digital era up to the next revolution in writing, which will make libraries to promote new type of literacy. So huge space for socio-cultural realization and raising their importance is opened for libraries.

Service sector, industry and leisure, education and art, medicine and management are filled with digital equipment. One who couldn't use them becomes unable to work, is non-competitive, feel constrained even in one's own home. So number of persons who would like to acquire skills which are in need to feel confident in digital environment, is growing. There are many such persons. And all of them are potential library users but libraries often do not take them into account.

We do not have at our disposal permanent system of digital education for adults. They learn digital sphere mainly themselves, with their relatives help or in different unstable computer classes. But this learning is spontaneous, superficial, and provides with only primary knowledge which is insufficient to be proficient digital equipment user. So, public demand for permanent system of digital education is evident.

The fastest and the best way to establish this system is to use libraries which are centers of knowledge, information and literacy. Libraries make an acting, extensive and elaborated system which has significant information resource, experience in education and appropriate locations. Libraries just have to use them to maintain structures to provide users with opportunities for digital education, re-education and re-training.

Many libraries already offer schools, courses, seminars, consultation services which help to raise users' computer literacy. It would be useful to make this in all libraries, in small ones as well as in large. Curriculum of such schools has to be compact but integral to serve users to become competent in computer, digital sphere, Internet, and information technologies. These units have to become centers of collective (librarian and user), mutual comprehensive thinking on issues of digital literacy development.

It should be borne in mind that this new literacy unlike traditional one, which involves knowledge of alphabet, nine numbers and «0», and reading, writing, counting skills, is not once and forever constant. Since it inextricably linked to computers and computer technologies which are in the process of quick and essentially changing, one who would like to keep it in working mode, has to re-educate and to re-train permanently. So, libraries will have boundless field of action if they won't waste this opportunity.

Computer networks are literally multiplying. They accumulate huge data collections. Libraries act as advisors in work with them. And this is libraries permanent task. Skills which could help to work with networks, are important element of digital literacy. Even special scientific trend «netology» has emerged. Libraries should adopt ideas, conclusions and guidelines which netology has elaborated. Further life undoubtedly will proceed in network society.

New literacy beside traditional writing instruments, digital equipment and technologies, involves estimation of information content, reasonable, rational approach

to its selection and using. It should be stressed especially nowadays, when we experience attacks of information noise, fake news. It makes the fight for objectivity, reliability, completeness of information and for its adequate understanding vitally important.

Libraries have been performed as a literature experts, initially for handwritten, later for printed, and now electronic editions have been added to them. Competence in information evaluation becomes practical criteria of the literacy, and further it grows more. And libraries become centers or hubs of information expertise.

So, forward-looking libraries establish information and analytic, reference, consultation services, prepare various expert manuals. In this way libraries contribute to strengthening content element of information literacy. Information literacy performs as the highest (as of nowadays) type of literacy because it presupposes not only instruments for information processing, but also methods to influence quality of its content. Libraries have the biggest opportunities to serve as an embodiment and bearer of such a literacy type. And this is libraries' top priority.

Digitization that exacerbated information explosion, has aggravated information crisis. The crisis consists in controversy between huge, unprecedented amounts of information and degree of really objective, useful, constructive information. Concrete thematic search is hampered. Internet often gives too many information on a given topic. Information crisis is permanent and global. Libraries could significantly contribute in easing the crisis and help to let us go through it. It is libraries that have great experience in searching information.

First of all, the attention should be paid to improvement of catalogs, systematization of searching, structure of collections, sites and portals. Special emphasis should be made on the need in essential improvement of library Internet navigation. Effectiveness and attraction of modern library to a great extent depends on its impact on user' orientation in World Wide Web. Internet-literacy is obligatory element of the new literacy.

Libraries role in building competencies in certain fields of science, science areas is well-known. Literacy often is equated with professional competence, so one is characterized as a person who has technical, economic, mathematical, political, law literacy.

Building of competences is a perpetual problem. Libraries objectively have to take part in its solving because their resource for scientific and information providing is the biggest. It is important for libraries to inform in initiative order common people on knowledge and values and to be interested in raising feedback. Libraries will be main institutes of the social process in rising competence, i.e. present and future generations literacy.

It should be focused on libraries tasks in support and development of language literacy according to present norms of literature language. First of all, it comes on the

state language, and, surely, different nationalities native languages. Traditionally, it is language literacy, the way one could speak and write, that is criteria of his/her education, culture, literacy.

Ukrainian libraries for all time have been performing as a treasury trove of national literature, centers of language national culture, promoting national word, national language memory. Language problem is rooted in library life, and it works for library image. To have language literacy is the desire of all conscientious people of all times. To raise language literacy means to work for strengthening of library role in society, to set the program for libraries long life.

Language is a dynamic phenomenon. It has been permanently replenishing with new words and expressions, it have an impact of foreign languages. Rules of grammar and orthography are changing. Libraries should trace it along with linguistic scholars, and to serve as a guide in language labyrinths and transformations.

For libraries, it is advisable to establish language literacy services, and to have channels which could provide an access to Ukrainian and international language databases and centers. All libraries, whether they are big or small, and regardless a profile they have, should form collections of literature on language studies, with special attention to dictionaries, manuals, encyclopedias, textbooks. But, first, it should bear in mind that libraries are the closest to people to help them to clear any questions in language literacy right there or with an assistance of any other library or language research centers' staff. This is real libraries trump card and libraries do not play it yet. People search for language helpers and they have to find them in libraries.

It's clear that not every library is ready for systematic everyday work on raising language literacy of modern type. Their equipment and financial side are insufficient, they lack of qualified staff. Society demand on informational literacy is weak, despite it is one of the most important element of one's intellectual potential.

Troubles are what would pass, but libraries' tasks remain. Libraries have to be ready to perform their social and cultural mission in crisis and in post-crisis time as well. Each library has to create own resource of knowledge in all areas and on all information storages, to harmonize information service in traditional and digital format, to rebuild the structure to work with digital human being in digital environment.

Recently, a lot is said on crisis of librarianship. So one could think that libraries fully accomplished their social mission and have to be replaced by digital integrators of information and computer networks. Crises in library area are not the same as internal crisis of library as socio-cultural institution. Library was generated by social need for ordered treasury full with knowledge, experience, values. This need will never run out of. Libraries are forever destined to be companion of civilization process. Only their forms and tasks could be changed, as well as some works on rebuilding according

to the new tasks, could be held. Now we face period of libraries re-building to meet digitization challenges.

Digitization has changed essentially modes of producing, storage, processing, preservation of information, and its introducing into social usage. We observe a kind of disproportion in attention which manuscripts and printed documents, on the one hand, and electronic ones, on the another hand, attract. It is digital information that circulates in modern society. But libraries for economic, technological, and personnel reasons can't collect electronic documents, which now are in great demand.

Meanwhile, libraries must do a lot of work to preserve manuscript and print collections which are seemingly not in demand but their value increases incredibly all the time. This is not the crisis, but new phenomenon, and libraries have to get used to it.

Now library user/reader/visitor, at least in big libraries, is virtual. Reading rooms are not filled with people. Distant service develops gradually. But the number of virtual users a hundred times, or even thousand times, more than real. And this is not the crisis too, but new phenomenon. A way out is to set a course for distant individual service, and as a result libraries socio-culture feedback will grow enormously.

Nowadays, library life is under pressure of double transformation. Society experiences transition to civilization of knowledge, and culture – one to digital literacy. Both processes are intellectual in its content and give libraries, as an intellectual center, top position. How library will fit into formation of new culture, new personality, depends on library community. Every librarian could become a participant of these historic civilizational changes.

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