

A Plea for Bibliography

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Abstract

In the contemporary society, in which the relevant factor is information, it is essential for both the librarians and the beneficiaries of documents, to be familiar with the steps necessary in the information process, the bibliography - with all its forms - having an undeniable role in the process of knowledge. Thus, the consciousness of the necessity of information and the fact that the accurate and complete bibliographic references are at the basis of taking a specialized decision.

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It is unquestionably important that the right to information is one of the most controversial freedoms in the nowadays societies. Used in a positive or in a negative way, this right is defended and guaranteed by various international instruments in human fundamental rights, as: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (article 19) (1): “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinions and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”, *The International Pact regarding the Civil and Political Rights* (article 19) (2): ”Any person has the right to freedom of expression; this right includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, irrespective of frontiers, through any media of the child’s choice” and *The*

Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization on Nov. 20, 1989 (article 13) (3).

There are a few main regulations on the individual's right to information. But, solving the problems regarding the need and the right to information does not mean only to proclaim freedom. The impossibility of reaching information can be caused by insufficient means, time or competence in selection of material or lack of financial resources to reach a complete information.

Since the beginning of time, the first signs made on various media (wooden, stone, animal skin, clay slates) showed man's wish to communicate in many ways. Writing means transmitting valuable information, continuing traditions and customs to the mind of the people in next generations.

The book issued as a natural phenomenon in people's life. Most of them began to write from their desire of leaving something behind, of sharing their own experience. Therefore, the book reflects its author, the whole world, the Universe. It is the creation of one individual and of the society he lived in which inspired him at the same time.

A relevant theory is supported by Albert Flocon in his work "The Universe of Books" in which he states that "a book is a reflection, a motor, a judge of the history. Friend and enemy, the book is endowed with all the qualities of a moral person. Created by man, it reflects the Universe and moves the world" (4). Therefore, one can speak of a sort of a "complicity" between the book and its author: the book offers a place to the products of man's mind and guarantees man's passing through time and space.

Since Guttenberg, books have no longer been considered as luxury objects acquired only by well-to-do persons. They have become accessible to everyone.

It is justified the fact that, at present, the informational explosion, regarded, first, as an accumulation of data, does not seem to worry mankind as reaching ready-made information does, its finding as a systematization outcome. It is, thus, the natural result of an evolution, not entirely predictable but framed nonetheless in norms. Beneficiaries of information and documents should be aware of what they should preserve or eliminate as a huge quantity of answers to one piece of information request is opposed to its quality. However they need to possess a lot of knowledge in the respective field to be able to decide what to discard as insignificant or recurrent. Meeting the needs of users, the work instruments such as: dictionaries, encyclopedias, indices, repertories, catalogs, guides, bibliographies, conventional or unconventional shall never be excessive.

Thus, the bibliographical works represent, still, the only real modality to supply the necessary information to the society without exceeding the requests imposed by the economy of time. The bibliographical contributions lead to an absolutely necessary acceleration of the cultural progress and civilization. (5).

It is obvious that the universal character of the need for bibliography is not emphasized enough, becoming, at present, a compulsory solution to a better development of the societies whose evolution lies in producing, exchanging and consuming information.

And, as a natural course of the informational approach, the bibliographic instrument takes the lead in the process of man's cultural formation and professionalism. It allows each individual to become intimate with that part of the scientific and cultural treasure created by his ancestors and contemporaries.

At the same time, one cannot overlook the exceptional role of a main auxiliary instrument for data evaluation of the bibliographical processing in humanities and, generally, in spiritual creation. It is a faithful ally to value and a cruel witness to imposture, a loyal friend of truth and a constant enemy to mystification. In fact, the approach opens the road to achieve a bibliography in the field of culture implying a wish for reevaluation.

To work in bibliography means to restore certain territories of the written culture for the contemporaries and for the posterity and to save some spiritual creations from oblivion. A compulsory auxiliary science for human beings, for any scientific or professional collectivity and for the society in general, bibliography has been playing the role of a vital instrument for the community, less known and financed as such by society”.

Looked upon as an edifice of the spirit and of human pragmatism, bibliography is “a token of the maturity of the written culture and proves, on the evolutionary scale, the steps of the intellectual thinking, the degree of specialization, the way the spiritual inheritance is taken over and put into value”(6).

The lack of bibliography in the elaboration of a work which implies a profound study transmits the idea “of a real throwing overboard” (7).

The recognition of the importance of bibliography, due to its practical use, bears a solid justification in reality. Usually, appreciations stop here. The fact that great scholars and men of culture (Nicolae Bălcescu, Al. Odobescu, Emil Racoviță, Tudor Vianu etc.) proved bibliographic preoccupations in their theories, often registered without being put into practice, underlines the most precious thing of its essence: action for the sake of knowledge and participation to the cultural phenomenon.

The remarkable fact is that man creates books and becomes their slave and bibliography comes to the support of researchers as well as to pupils, turning easier their search in various fields of knowledge. Talking about culture implies informing about bibliography as both of them are independent. Culture cannot survive time in absence of bibliography which confers a meaning and a practical use for all those who are interested in finding information connected to discoveries and knowledge of mankind irrespective of the time and space when it was achieved. Bibliography would miss an important role in case the whole culture may disappear. But as it is impossible to happen, we can assert that bibliography and culture are in a perfect symbiosis.

Putting together the terms of bibliography and culture before analyzing their closeness, is meant to open gates and, through this report, bibliography seems to win its correct position in the hierarchy of values. By joining these terms, an interdependence is created between notions, as culture stands, in fact, for an “assembly of specifically human artistic and intellectual activities” (8) and bibliography is the instrument which registers these values.

Members of the society should be educated to appeal to such sources of information able to structure fields and levels of interest and also to present, in an objective manner, documents which do not elude cultural values or other categories of values. Otherwise, information is short-cut because “when a society or an individual cultivates only one kind of values, we speak of a partial culture. A professional culture is defined in the philosophy of culture as a partial culture [...]. How could we distinguish between an individual culture, partial or total, and a partial or total culture of a society (social groups, from the smallest up to the sum of all which is humanity)?” (9)

It is of extreme importance the fact that, the individual as well as the whole society, in order to share a cultural point of view, first, needs to form a general culture bibliography as, starting from it, man widens his horizon in order to understand his fellow beings and all the phenomena.

Often is bibliography said to play an important social role. It can be explained by its capacity of including cultural elements having a social character and by its own character of a cultural product, developing in and for the society.

It is pure fact that any results of a scientific activity have been and will always be controlled by the methods used. Nowadays, research methods have reached a new value. Used in any research system, they ensure the necessary unity to reach the target, that is, the minimum of uncertainty in results and the least possibility of failure.

Therefore, users could get a quick and trustworthy information about any source of information which represents mankind's literary and scientific patrimony. The solution to the problem lies in using instruments specific to intellectual work called bibliographies or bibliographic repertories .(10)

Fundamentally, creating bibliographical instruments represents the result of an operation of certain schemes of bibliographic research. This explains why not all information stocked on any material can be considered an instrument unless it is easily found.

For instance, in a university encyclopedic library, the initiation in bibliographic methodology is far more necessary than ensuring the assistance by the reference-librarian/bibliographer- librarian.

"To inform the reader means to guide him towards the instrument that suits his search, making him understand that a research cannot rely on only one source, even if it should be an exposé or a seminar work".(11)

Moreover, "As the library classifies and organizes documents, the bibliographic research or the documentary research, be it hand-operated or digitized, or - a frequent case nowadays - both, it classifies and organizes the instruments it makes use of. The method of organizing documents and their logical progression reduces time wasting and helps the obtaining of the most adequate answers to a question ". (12)

Adopting automated means in research and in data processing follows a natural evolution and has become a need of the modern world, with obvious advantages. Using these up-to-date methods, bibliographies shall be more rapidly and more precisely elaborated, with higher possibilities of investigation. But machines shall never be capable of associating new ideas and penetrating the profound human mind.

This relationship between bibliography and culture shall not be achieved as it used to be as there will not be a direct connection between passion for research and the older or contemporary values. Bibliographers shall probably miss man's personal involvement.

But, as culture remains an open concept, without limits in the higher sphere of ideas, phenomena, processes, manifestations and works assimilated, analyzed and considered as defining and conferring importance to a society or a community, Dimitrie Macrea stated that "culture is not a state but a continuous becoming" (13), thus "bibliography follows culture in its changes of ideas, in developing certain preoccupations, in creating new fields - the retrospective bibliography and the current bibliography" (14).

Analyzing the conditions of culture, Tudor Vianu shows that they consist of those facts that form a cultural creation, being undergone passively by the creator of culture (15). Unlike them, cultural means "are

used in an active way by their creator, they are made by himself and used to achieve some specific goals". (16)

And having in view that Jesse Shera defined culture as "a dual process implying both action and thinking linked by communication"(17), bibliography is one of the methods of accomplishing communication. Bibliography has a part to play in the development of societies. If the "only value of knowledge lies in using it" (18), as they say, bibliography represents one of the ways of using it.

But, no matter their type, bibliographies are important as they represent "the first code in research"(19), as a reply necessary to the high quantity of human knowledge which has simply led to an immense world of books.

Louise-Noëlle Malclès brings arguments in favour of the special importance of bibliographies during research. Thus, L-N Malclès considers that bibliography "leads to a better mastery of the literary language, of what had been written or printed and what is written and printed each and everyday, it gives life and mobility to the book, it facilitates reading, creates emulation in thinking and in work. It reveals all the human productions, from the oldest to the most recent, which will ever be a source of inspiration to any intellectual". (20)

Bibliography stands for a cultural thesaurus, a common means of acquiring all the cultural values, which it makes circulate. Tudor Vianu said that "the sum of all the objective means (in realizing objective values) make up the technique which is the science of any human activity serving cultural needs. This sphere includes the industrial mechanism and the special methods used by sciences: chemistry, physics, biology laboratories, means of setting a museum, fine arts techniques, rules of founding, organizing a library, of spreading books, of using film etc.". (21)

More and more often questions are launched concerning the role of the bibliographies in the digital era.

The most frequent activities associated with bibliographies are those of selecting and acquiring resources, offering highly specialized services of reference and achieving cooperating initiatives. Therefore one could wonder whether these functions will need the same old methods or the experts themselves will simply vanish.

A bibliography as well as a catalog is elaborated on the basis of concrete data, having in view certain norms. A bibliography cannot innovate but it can distinguish itself by a good organization of its documents, by a sensible pointing out of the issue. An index of a review, in order to be complete, is requested to exhaust the matter. An annotation, to be relevant

should say much in a few, particularly limpid, words. Ambiguous or evasive annotations are not appropriate. Preciseness, accuracy and closeness to the source is as valuable as the force of rendering synthetic, the authority and selectivity. To raise the literary bibliography to the height of necessities, cooperation of all the factors involved seems to supply the best answer. Cooperation and coordination are the best policies to use to obtain limited and right-centered contributions on preset objectives. (22)

Achieving bibliographical instruments implies an adequate informational management both in a maximum exploitation of the funds in libraries and in a limitation of the "the informational noise" phenomenon.

Bibliographical instruments are the result of a correct informational management helpful both to a maximum exploitation of the funds in a library, this being the aim of making up library catalogs, and also to confer an exhaustive character to the bibliographical references, particularly in the case of general or specialized bibliographies.

Bibliographers offer distinctive knowledge, connected to some abilities of language, to the conversancy with some scholarly communication systems and to mastering the information market. Most bibliographers attend a specialized public, initially to "get it accustomed to the local collections" destined to students and researchers. This task has been extended meanwhile to elaborating conventional and electronic guides, organizing sessions, sometimes conceiving and offering courses on research strategies and resources.

It is obvious that, recently, the librarian-bibliographer has a special role to play in supplying documents, he is designed to guide the reader, to facilitate access to documents and thus, to information. It is exciting to have a view of both sides of the problem, the librarian's and the researcher's, and the way they cooperate and co-work.

Researchers put on airs sometimes, overestimating their work. Librarians should prove erudition in their work to be able to supply the most pertinent information to the researcher expected to obtain performance.

Researchers should have confidence in librarians' expertise and knowledge being a real help anytime on any matter.

Bibliographers have played a fundamental role in cooperating on collections and resources.

On a regular basis the goal is represented by the beneficiary the main principle being to assist him.

Sally Wood-Lamont (23), debating communication issues between librarians and users and the importance of feed-back, asserted that the dialogue between bibliographers/librarians and readers should resemble the one with a psychologist.

As a matter of fact, "The transfer of information depends on the participants in the process of knowledge, on the receptors' implication and on their quality". (24)

This transfer relies on the abilities of the expert/bibliographer in identification and selection of information. It is a well-known fact that fields tend to become vaster and vaster and any field is further divided into several specializations. Lack of communication leads to omitting essential aspects of a certain type of subject and an error in information can cost money and precious time.

A pertinent observation says that printed bibliographies are improbable to be discarded. Bibliographers are needed to exert a rigorous control and to manage an active development of some collections in areas of local interest where the book trade remains difficult. Printed collections have lost dominion over non-print media documents.

Having a keen eye on the social phenomenon, Marshall McLuhan notices that "instead of resembling an immense library, like that of Alexandria, the world has turned into a computer, an electronic brain, like in a naïve SF novel".(25)

On the remarkable importance and use of the computer, J. J. Servan-Schreiber says that, nowadays, the computer represents for mankind what the invention of print did five centuries ago. It produces radical changes in all aspects of life, with dazzling speed and unlocking forces often traumatizing". (26)

The diversity of documents in unconventional media have already formed, together with the old conventional ones, the object of acquisition and cataloguing by experts. Music libraries select, as usual, sound recording and scores and texts and the art libraries collect snap-shots and books. CD-ROMs and texts are often chosen for bibliographies. Decisions connected to online data bases and digital resources on the Internet, fall under the adepts' responsibilities who have taken control of the electronic market with all the technical, legal, financial and logistic assets.

Bibliographers shall continue to play their central part in developing collections of printed documents as well as of sources on unconventional media. They shall be called to provide assistance in reference services and their cooperation regarding collections turns them into protagonists.

But beyond the undeniable importance of this noble discipline in its conventional aspect" we can perceive a certain unbalance between the multitude of articles on activities on the edge of the info-documentary field, in library-user relationship (information, reference services etc.) and the extreme scarcity of interventions in favour of a complex and coherent

program of building bibliographic data bases, the only one to found and guarantee a significant and global optimization of all the public services in a library”.(27)

Thus, a study on the present informational phenomenon can conclude that the information media causes not only a change in the role of the specialist in bibliographical information but also in the matter of bibliographic sources. It occurs because one of the criteria of ordering the bibliographic information is the chronological one. There is an unquestionable inadvertence between the supply of the perishable information from the virtual data bases, incomplete, lacking the authority information and which can vanish any moment and a bibliography which has as an essential criterion of existence the most appropriate information of the reader.

Time shall, probably, solve these issues as well!

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