

150 Years in the Service of the Medical Community: The Central Library of the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest. Tradition and Modernity

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Abstract

A unique institution through its structure, organization, collections and age, the Central Library of the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest stands out among the Romanian library organizations through the scope of its information activity dedicated to users in the medical world, but also through the co-operation actions with similar institutions. This paper presents some aspects concerning the evolution of this library and the changes implemented recently at the level of the services provided for users.

Keywords: the Central Library of the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest, structure, collections, services, changes

Introduction

The Central Library of the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest is an institution that stands out among the Romanian documentary structures both through its history – age, collections and personalities that were at its leadership (1) and through the dimension of its activities that materialize in information services provided for an extended community of users that includes students, teaching staff, researchers, physicians.

Its beginnings are interweaving with those of the Romanian school of medicine. Thus, the library was established in 1857 simultaneously with the National School of Medicine and Pharmacy (2), a higher education institution which had as main aim to train medical staff for the army and the society needs. It was formed by the gathering of a few collections belonging to smaller libraries. In 1884 it had less than 1,000 volumes (39 in Romanian, 212 in Latin, 160 in French, 28 in Greek and 267 in German). In 1890, when the first catalogue of the library was printed, there were 4,726 volumes, 762 being periodicals.

In 1869, the National School of Medicine and Pharmacy turned into the Faculty of Medicine and the library moved in 1870 in the premises of the University of Bucharest and from there, in 1901, in the premises of the Faculty of Medicine where it functions even today. (3)

Beginning with 1948, the Faculty of General Medicine has formed together with the Faculty of Dental Medicine and the Faculty of Pharmacy, the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest.

The Honorary President of the University is Prof. dr. George Emil Palade, Nobel Prize winner (1974) who graduated from the Faculty of General Medicine in 1940.

The University has 1,516 teaching staff, 7,401 students and 1,692 PhD candidates.

The Library's Structure and its Reading Rooms

At present, the library's structure reflects the university organization, that is:

- the headquarters of the library (the Central Library) that has two reading rooms, together with a Centre of Information and Documentation and Lending Centres, is in the same building with the Faculty of General Medicine and the Faculty of Medical Assistance and Midwives;
- the reading room and the collections at the Faculty of Dental Medicine;
- the reading room and the collections and the Lending Centre at the Faculty of Pharmacy;
- the 96 branch libraries that are at the level of the university departments, chairs and clinics spread all over Bucharest. These are libraries that have from 300-400 volumes to 40,000-50,000 volumes depending on the educational and research interests of the teaching staff.

The Library in Figures (Collections, Users, Staff)

- The library has now:
 - 383,665 booktitles, 5,485 periodical titles in more than 700,000 copies;
 - lectures, practical works, handbooks and monographs published by the teaching staff of the University;
 - specialized handbooks and textbooks published in Romanian or in languages of international circulation;
 - Romanian and foreign periodicals;
 - Ph.D. theses, master dissertations, graduation papers;
 - CD-ROMs;
 - atlases, dictionaries, encyclopaedias in Romanian and in foreign languages; reference materials.
- It has approximately 27,000 documents in open access.
- The library has approximately 11,000 users.

- The staff of the library is formed of 47 persons of which 41 are specialists.

Services

The library provides for its users reading and documentary information services through:

- Access to publications in the reading room;
- Document lending on long term;
- Access to databases;
- Bibliographical information and guidance for using the specific reference tools;
- Online references “Ask the librarian” at the address biblioteca@univermed-cdgm.ro

In what concerns the lending service, there is a special situation: the library lends textbooks and practical works for a whole academic year to all students in the limit of the available copies in the collections of the Lending Centres.

There is also a form of lending on short term, for a couple of days/one week, and this is for the teaching staff, Ph.D. students and researchers.

Databases

The Databases to which the library provides access for its users are:

- PROQUEST Medical Library;
- Science Direct – Health Science Collection;
- Ovid – LWW High Impact Collection;
- EMBASE.

The users have also access to the library own databases:

- The list of the books recently bought by the Central Library (CATALMED);
- The catalogue of the Ph.D. theses defended in public at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy - Bucharest;
- The paperworks of the teaching staff from the University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest;
- The repertory of the Romanian and foreign periodicals;
- The list of the master dissertations;
- The list of the graduation papers;
- “Bibliotheca Historia Medica” (now being organized);
- The List of the works on the history of Romanian and world medicine (approximately 1,700 titles);

- The History of the Romanian medical education;
- Original documents concerning the activity of Carol Davila, the founder of the University;
- “Bibliotheca Bibliologica” – the List of the library and information science works in the library collection – it is a donation for the library made by its current director (more than 1,000 titles).

Publications

The Central Library published works such as:

- The Yearly Bibliographical Bulletin;
- The Quarterly Bibliographical Bulletin;
- The list of the books donated by the British Library Bucharest to the Central Library (2002);
- The catalogue of the Ph.D. theses defended in public at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest (1959-1999, 2000-2002, 2003-2005, 2006-2008);
- Catalogue of Foreign Books (15th – 18th centuries);
- Paperworks of the teaching staff from the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy - Bucharest that entered the Central Library’s collections (1990-2000; 2001-2006; 2007-2008);
- The Repertory of the Periodicals that entered the Central Library’s collections between 2000-2002; 2002-2004; 2004-2006.

Changes implemented at the level of the services provided for users

The library has crossed lately a period of analysis of the services organized and developed for users in order to find the most efficient modalities for meeting their information needs.

Starting from the results of a questionnaire-based study undertaken by library which analyzed the users’ needs and behaviour in the process of information search and retrieval, a series of changes were implemented at the level of the information services provided for the medical community.

In supporting the academic research and education approach this library must meet more and more diversified and personalized information needs and the librarians from the Central Library of the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy-Bucharest elaborated and distributed a questionnaire among the main categories of users (students, teaching staff, Ph.D. candidates, researchers, physicians from the university clinics and hospitals). The questions aimed at the following aspects:

- types of information requirements;
- frequency of the usage of the information and documentation services organized and developed by the library;
- the user perception concerning the reaction speed of the academic librarian at the information and documentation requirements;
- specification of the user preferences for traditional information means and/or for the use of the new technologies of information and communication;
- identification of the preferences for the documentary search assisted by the librarian.

The purpose of this approach was to establish some clear criteria for the evaluation of the information services, and the results obtained emphasized a series of suggestions concerning the improvement of the information products and services provided by this medical library. This action is part of the process of periodical evaluation of the learning needs.

Different percentages of the users that participated in the study pointed out the following aspects:

- the young generations prefer the electronic resources that are available through the library;
- students feel the need for assistance from the librarian in the documentary research for writing their graduation papers;
- researchers and Ph.D. candidates appreciate the friendly access facilitated by the librarian to useful and valuable information, in some cases not only punctual, but also very specific to the research field;
- certain research factions require not only the access to online resources but also the presence of printed documents within the framework of the university chairs and clinics where they work.

The capitalization of the questionnaire and the daily library practice strengthened the librarians' conviction about the need for modernization and diversification of the services with direct access to public and for rationalization and centralization of the other services, changes that took already place in the activity of this Romanian medical library.

The modernization of the information services had in view the documentary base necessary to the education approach, on study years and disciplines. For this purpose, the Department *Public Relations, Document Communication, Methodology and Branch Libraries* elaborated a synthesis

paper entitled *Discipline Coverage*, in fact a guide of the university courses, practical papers and other publications included in the bibliography recommended by every professor and every university chair. In this way, the library could act for an efficient collection development.

The modernization aimed also at the information selective dissemination at the requirement of the teaching staff on specific themes of the research programmes.

The modernization aimed at the professional improvement of librarians in collaboration with the professional associations (the Association of Librarians in Romania – ABR), the speciality higher education and the authorized professional training providers (The Centre for Professional Training in Culture), the specialization on certain problems of information and documentation and a thorough knowledge of the work modalities in what concerns different databases and electronic resources.

The diversification of the services aimed at the users training through the organization of workshops and symposiums on current themes of information and documentation and access to online resources which address directly to young physicians in hospitals and university clinics.

Through the programme “Dare to know” – «Sapere aude», the library organized for the students initiation sessions for the use of the databases with the presentation of the work modalities in what concerns the information selection and refining through the use of different facilities offered by every database.

The library put an emphasis on cultural animation actions such as the organization of exhibitions of publications with historical and bibliophile value, anniversaries and commemorations of personalities of the Romanian school of medicine.

An efficient communication with students was possible through the organization at the beginning of every academic year of documentary visits in the library for the I year students with the explanation of the information and documentation facilities made available by the library and also through the organization of meetings with physicians that are also writers and/or journalists and with the presentation of their newly published books (in collaboration with the Society of the Writers and Journalists Physicians).

Rationalization. In co-operation with the other medical higher education libraries in Romania, especially the Library “Valeriu Bologa” of the “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Cluj-Napoca and the Library of the “Transilvania” University in Brasov, the project RoBiblioMed was initiated for indexing the Romanian medical journals and

for creating a database of bibliographic notes concerning the scientific contents of these journals.

There is a certain discrepancy between Romanian medical higher education libraries and their European counterparts caused by historical conditions, insufficient financial resources and a certain lack of experience in assimilating the new technologies of information and communication.

A solution with efficient results was represented by the mobilities within the framework of the EU programme Leonardo da Vinci, marked by the collaboration with the libraries of the Universities in Exeter (England) and Bergen (Norway) and with the Library of the Medicine Faculty in Tours (France) within the framework of CIDMEF (International Conference of the Deans of Medicine Faculties of French Expression).

The new technologies of information and communication impose a *new type of culture* (which we could call “*information and communication culture*”) and contribute essentially to *the change of the social and group relations*, and the academic environment proves to be very favourable to the communication changes tending to *a new institutional identity*.

Library activity doesn't have a deadline, but it must be organized in stages, rationalized, modernized and diversified in order to be adapted to the present times and to the more and more personalized and permanently changing user requirements.

Conclusions

Through the functions it accomplishes, the Central Library of the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest supports the educational and research approach of the university, providing access to the scientific information in the medical, pharmaceutical and dental medicine field, contributing to the assimilation of the intellectual work techniques and to the stimulation of creativity which are indispensable qualities for the future specialists.

Through the traditional and modern services which prove its evolution along the years, the Central Library of the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy – Bucharest meets at present the information needs of the Romanian medical community at all levels (students, teaching staff, researchers, PhD candidates and physicians) and prepares itself permanently for facing the challenges of the future.

Notes

- (1) From 1893 until today, the library was managed by:
- Alex. Tănăsescu, librarian and archivist (1893-1895);
 - Gheorghe Săuceanu, librarian and archivist (1895-1898);
 - Gheorghe Militaru, librarian (1905-1906);
 - M. Hebbberling, M.D. – librarian (1906-1909);
 - Victor Gomoiu, M.D. – librarian (1909-1911);
 - Iacov Iacobovici, M.D. – librarian (1911-1919);
 - Nicolae B. Ionescu, M.D. – librarian (1919-1938);
 - I. Stanciu, M.D. – librarian (1939-1946);
 - Traian Prodan, director – librarian (1947-1979);
 - Silvică Petre, director – librarian (1979-1986);
 - Filba Popescu, director – librarian (1986-1997);
 - Gheorghe Buluță, Ph.D. in LIS – librarian (1998-present).
- (2) The founder of the National School of Medicine and Pharmacy was the physician Carol Davila (1828-1884) who graduated from the Faculty of Medicine in Paris and who was a General in the Romanian Army and Head of the Military and Civilian Medical Service.
- (3) The building where the Main Library functions is a historical monument. It was built in accordance with the plans of the Swiss architect Louis Blanc beginning with 1903.

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