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INFORMATION SERVICE AS A NEW LEVEL OF THE TRADITIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to analyse information service – is a new quality level of the traditional library service. As is already known, the 21st century has put a tremendously vital task – organization of information services – before libraries. Information service, which has a significant impact on economic, socio-political and cultural life of society, is a new type of service which differs from traditional library service in meeting the requirements of readers more thoroughly and promptly. In order to understand the goals and objectives of information service and comprehend its essence, it is inevitably important to apprehend the nature of information society influencing on its creation and formation and deeply analyse and study its structure.

Keywords: new information service, Azerbaijan, libraries, traditional library services

JEL classification: L15

Introduction

Two different terms are used in modern scientific literature to denote information society: “informatized society” and “information society” (see e.g. Djasko, 2002; Stolyarov 2005; or Shrayberg, 2006). Although the word *information*, which stems from Latin word “*informatio*”, was originally used to mean “explain, interpret,” it has long since changed its original meaning and turned into quite a complex process, which is applied to the life of society in modern world and which needs to be studied and systematized.

The 20th century was characterized as the “atomic age”, “the age of information explosion” and “the century of scientific and technical progress.” And, the 21st century has also become a century that ensures creative continuation and further development of all processes specific to the 20th century, it is marked by extensive use of new scientific discoveries and particularly the information technologies, ensures informatisation of the developing society, and is progressing towards an information society which is in fact becoming a new form of society representing a knowledge society.

Information and information production

It is in the 21st century that production, collection, preservation and dissemination of information are becoming the main production areas of society; information production is regarded as equal to production of material goods and attains great importance as a catalyst of material goods production and as a means of creating an abundance of material goods. The significance of information production and organization of all kinds of information services

and their position in the society are not limited to this (Shira, 1983). As the main basis for scientific and technical progress and scientific discoveries, information has become an important tool for development, formation, education and training of a new human – the leading force in organization of all societies (Strielkowski et al., 2012). Thus, it is important to use information for human science, culture and economic progress of states and societies and apply it to all spheres of society. However, even then many distortions are present – there are cases when information is used for wicked purposes like waging scientific wars or fighting with one's opponents (Vershina et al., 2017; or Molchanova et al., 2017).

In particular, by means of electronic information – the Internet, a wonder of our age – the latest achievements of all sciences, scientific discoveries and new technologies become the property of the humankind in no time. Thus, "information" gains paramount importance as a means of international communication. All this requires more effective organization of information service in order to accelerate the informatisation of society and the informatisation process in the modern, fast-growing and globalized world.

The meaning of informatisation

Informatisation is the organizational, socio-economic and scientific-technical process implemented to create the optimum conditions based on the formation, provision and use of information resources in order to meet the information needs of the bodies of state power and local self-government, all enterprises, institutions and organizations regardless of their organizational-legal forms and forms of ownership, all structures of society, citizens and their rights in this area (Klukhov and Lavrik, 2007; Klukhov, 2012; Khalafov, 2012).

From the above facts it becomes clear that informatisation as a very flexible and comprehensive process that can encompass the entire structure and all sectors of society and all the phenomena and regularities that occur in the base and the superstructure of society is an excessively large-scale and complex process providing the ground for the development of these phenomena and regularities. This process in its meaning and essence is the most crucial of all processes taking place in society and is a complex and multifarious socio-economic and political process promoting the harmonious development of society and organizing and directing the human activity.

Now let us try to reveal the essence of the information society, in which informatisation is applied on a large scale and with great success and pay attention to those aspects which distinguish the information society from the previous societies.

The information society has very specific characteristics. Scientists highlight two following features: The information society is a result of the global social revolution and is a new type of society, which was formed as a result of the information explosion of the 20th century during the synthesis of information and telecommunication technologies. The novelty of this society is associated mainly with accumulation, storage and transmission of information and production of new information using information technology and electronics (Victorovna and Abramovich, 2001). In such a society, principles of democratization inherent in a free society, ensuring citizens' right to obtain information, accessibility of information for each person and organization are of great importance. Ensuring universal access to information, in its turn, requires a thorough development of information technology and its rapid application to the process of information services. Ensuring universal access to information in the information society, availability of information "for all", production, protection, processing and realization of information, especially the knowledge, which is a quality area of information, require serious work of the majority of workforce;

Moreover, it is the information society is also a society of knowledge. Since this society is one of the basic components of innovations and changes occurring in today's world, it should

serve further systematization of knowledge and dissemination of knowledge in all fields. However, sometimes science becomes commercialized and money is being made on disseminating knowledge (see e.g. Strielkowski, 2017). Scientists distinguish three stages of modern society from the perspective of economic development: industrial society, post-industrial and information society. The vast majority of the world's countries are at the stage of industrial society. The most developed capitalist countries are in the process of transition from post-industrial society to information society.

Information society and Azerbaijan libraries

After Azerbaijan gained state independence, huge economic and socio-political progress took place in all spheres of the country's economy, industry, agriculture and, in particular, in the oil industry. The country is transitioning to a market economy at a fast pace. The economic growth of the country, in turn, creates favourable conditions for the development of science, culture and education. The development process taking place in our country creates a solid foundation for its joining the ranks of the developed countries and its fast transition from an industrial society to a post-industrial society, and then – to the information society. President Ilham Aliyev's high assessment of information society and his decrees on expedited application of information technologies in Azerbaijan and on transformation of our country into a country producing information technology gives a great impetus to building an information society and transitioning to the knowledge society in our country. In his speech at a scientific conference devoted to ICT, the President praised the enhancement of knowledge in our country as an important factor of social development. This once again confirms the correctness of our opinions stated above. Ilham Aliyev said: *"If we look at the experience of developed countries, we see that the main reasons for this development and progress are not natural resources or even any economic achievements, but knowledge, education and new technology - it is these factors that bring success, progress and modernity to the country"*.

Thus, the main product of production in the information society is knowledge. This society provides knowledge for each person, for each member of society, creating conditions for an unimpeded use of information sources and gaining experience. It is for this reason that in such a society, information, knowledge, information production and information services occupy leading places and information enterprises are rapidly developing. Information takes a dominant position in the development of production.

Information society is a global society, in which there is neither time nor space or political boundaries for information exchange. This allows the humankind and people to use common human resources, accelerates fusion of cultures, expands their scope of interaction, and creates conditions for each country and society to renovate, improve and enrich using the achievements of other countries and societies. Globalization is a process which has arisen as a result of integration of the world's countries and intensification of the system of international relations. Since this process creates favourable conditions for the countries formerly lagging behind in terms of socio-economic development so that they progress more successfully in a short period of time, the supporters of globalization see it as a natural and necessary result of the historical evolution of humanity spanning many thousands of years. From this point of view, the process of globalization on a world scale per se should be considered new. This process has continued in different forms and at different extents, and societies have gradually become prone to convergence and integration in key sectors of the economy, culture, trade and other sectors. Over time, this trend has led to an intensification of the globalization process and its growing to a vast international dimension. That is why the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations stated: *"We believe that the main task before us today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force in the lives of people around the*

world" (Djigo, 2011).

Types of networks at the libraries

Internet, which has emerged as one of the greatest miracles of modern history, is the most important means of influencing the progress and development of the process of globalization and the creation of a holistic information space. Internet appeared in the 1970s in the United States, which achieved great successes in the field of scientific and technical progress (Kartashov and Skvorchov, 1996; Khalafov, 2015). The English word "Internet" literally means an international network. Naturally, in this case the word network refers to computer networks.

Two types of computer networks, local and global networks are more widespread than others. Local computer networks operate within a single enterprise and facilitate exchange of information and shared use of information and peripheral equipment. Peer-to-peer and server-based local networks are widespread. In peer-to-peer networks, each computer has "equal rights" as others, i.e. there is no hierarchy among computers and each computer serves both as client and server (Kartashov, 2003). In server-based networks, access to shared data is performed through the system policy of the network administrator of the operating system.

The largest global computer network is the Internet, which is a worldwide collection of computer networks linking millions of computers working under the same rules.

Currently the Internet enables exchange of information and conduct of interviews, meetings and video conferencing. Everyone can work thousands of kilometres away from their offices, receive and send documents over the network. In other words, the Internet is a network of networks that allows you to organize communication between different computers around the world and ensures exchange of **information** (Zemskov, 2003; Kazimi, 2011). As a system of international communication, the Internet connects millions of personal computers. According to recent statistics, 20 million users in the United States and close to 60 million users in more than 100 countries around the world communicate among themselves on the Internet. Every month the number of Internet users is growing by 2 million people and every minute about 50 users are connected to this **system** (Khalafov, 2011a).

Figuratively speaking, computer networks have covered all countries of the world like a spider web, and with the development of information technology this growth spreads across the world very rapidly. The fact that the Internet has a universal value and has a great future is confirmed by the fact that today more than 60 million users and millions of computer networks are connected to this system.

In general, the formation of the information society through informatisation of the country is a process characterized by its own organizational, socio-economic, scientific-technical, technological, and, most importantly, political factors. Effective use of political, administrative, financial, human, technical and other resources involved in the successful implementation of this process ensures the correct identification of priorities and activities, and regulation and coordination of the work performed. In the transition to the information society, the state plays the role of a catalyst, allocates finances for the implementation of this transition, and creates a legal framework.

Libraries, which have valuable historical experience in organization of library, reference and information services, play a huge role in the process of informatisation of society. That is why, for the successful organization of the process of informatisation of society it is necessary to make full use of the library and provide the library work with modern information technology. Library is one of the key attributes of an information society and the key area of information enterprises. Since the libraries are a leading enterprise of information society, modern libraries cannot provide information services to readers without equipping themselves

with information technology. Existence and operation of modern libraries, fulfilment of social functions assigned to the libraries by the public, transformation of libraries into the main enterprise meeting the information needs of readers and the progress and development of society require computerisation and informatisation of libraries themselves. Informatisation of libraries implies application of information technology to library work, creation of electronic catalogues and e-libraries, and automation of traditional library processes. To this end, application of Automated Library Information System should be put in the forefront. Work on informatisation does not end there; the main goal is to build the work of providing library services to readers upon a scientific basis and to deepen this work in content and nature. Further improvement of library and bibliographic services, their quantitative and qualitative changes have led to the emergence of a new type of service - information services, which combine the essence of the library-bibliographic services, build on them, and meet modern requirements.

What is information service? In our view, information service is a new service, built on the foundations of library and bibliographic services provided to readers over the years, and reflecting all the best features inherent in these services and accumulated valuable experience. Hence, although information service may sound as a new type of service, content-wise it is a continuation of library-bibliographic services and their cornerstone. If we look at the law of negation of the negation of dialectics, it becomes clear that the process of transformation of library services into information services is a regularity that has occurred exactly in a dialectical way. In dialectics, transformation of one object (process) into another is a process characterized by the "death" of the first object, which paves the way for future development but creates conditions for preservation of all positive features of the past. The destruction of the old and the outdated events and processes and the emergence of the new leads to profound quality changes and transition from one qualitative state to another, more perfect state, which in turn opens the way for development and contributes to the preservation of the previously acquired advanced scientific knowledge. The past historical knowledge and moral values created by humankind manifest as part of the new knowledge in a new, more advanced, progressive and scientific form.

Information service is a unique type of service that moves to the global level with the help of the Internet based on the application and use of modern information technology fully meeting the information needs of readers, creates a huge information space for readers through electronic means, and transforms the treasure of human knowledge into the property of readers using virtual libraries.

A brief digression on the historical path traversed by humankind leads to the conclusion that in all civilizations, society made use of hundreds of different types and forms of services in order to provide services to people and meet their needs. It is gratifying that among these types of services the library, bibliographic and information services have always been in the spotlight of the members of society, people with very high intellectual, cultural and scientific level. These services always distinguished in their nature and substance, were handed down from generation to generation as carriers of knowledge and intelligence, served the creation and development of material and moral culture of society and the acceleration of scientific and technical progress, and earned great respect and love of people.

Thus, the modern information society is a very advanced type of service built upon the pillars of information, library and bibliographic services that serve the future of humanity, giving impetus to the further development of society. Information service is directly related to the activities of information agencies and libraries. As is well known, information activity includes accumulation of information, its processing, storage and organization of information services. In the process of information activity, individual elements of the object-information system interact, ensuring the appearance of bilateral relations between information workers

and information resources. This two-way communication results in accumulation of information, its analytical and synthetic processing. Bilateral and multilateral relations occur between information workers, librarians and users (readers), in the process of using material-technical base and information technology. And, during information services, direct interaction occurs between users and information resources. Over time, these relations expand and globalize and eventually Internet use occurs, resulting in expansion of information services. Internet is becoming one of the main tools of globalizing society. In the process of information services, relationship appears between the information activity and external environment. From this perspective, the analysis and synthesis of information services reveals the role and place of information activities in the society and cultural development.

The theoretical analysis of the information service shows that this service is a holistic system and an activity aimed at meeting the information needs of users (readers). As a holistic system, information service is a complex mechanism designed to meet the demands and needs of users and open the way for the dissemination of information and knowledge. It is the main phenomenon of culture and communication. Because the information service is directly related to social life, it covers all areas of services available in the society. Classification of information enterprises that have a broad network and determination of their place and tasks in society is very important. Principles of classification must ensure proper definition of the role and objectives of information in modern society and identification of the place occupied by each information enterprise in the society and its tasks.

Scientists recommend dividing the institutions providing the society with information into three groups:

The first group includes administrative institutions, pharmacies, consumer service providers and others. For these enterprises information services are considered to be not just main, but an auxiliary area of activity. These enterprises provide their clients with mostly advertising information about their activities.

The second group includes institutions of higher education. Information service in universities is an important component of their activities and an integral part of the teaching process.

The third group includes: institutions whose activities are directly aimed at meeting the information needs of society; institutions that guarantee the people's right to information; institutions designed to ensure freedom of information. To this category of institutions, the experts assign the institutions of scientific and technical information, archives, museums, statistical offices, publishing houses, book distribution centres and others (see e.g. Khalafov, 2011b).

These institutions, in particular libraries and institutions of scientific and technical information, which play an important role in modern society where information services have gained momentum, are also known as institutions producing information, along with meeting the information needs of the people. Since information is the most important asset of the 21st century, the enterprises that produce information are the driving force of the information society. Namely, libraries and other institutions that produce information are designed to carry out accumulation, storage and systematization of the means of information, and make them available for public use using the latest achievements of information technology. The processes performed by libraries and other information enterprises are directly included in the information service. Information service, the process of its formation and operation are among the most important attributes of a modern society, and therefore included in the structure of development of the society. Indeed, it is impossible to find a person in a society who would not be interested in this or that issue or would not need information about those issues. The need for information, an interest in something and the desire to learn something stem from the human nature, his psychological state and everyday contact with the phenomena of nature and

society. Human beings, from the time of their birth till the end of their lives, try to enrich their knowledge, expand their outlook, to learn something new and pass on their knowledge to others when needed. In other words, a person both consistently receives information and systematically transmits it within his knowledge and skills. Thus, every single person participates in the information space. Information interests of people, depending on their cultural level and intelligence, deepen and evolve over time from simple to complex as their knowledge increases. The circle of interests of a person always striving for development is unlimited. Therefore, the information needs of such people are constantly expanding. In order to meet their information needs, people turn to information enterprises, first of all to libraries. History of libraries shows that libraries, as a scientific and cultural treasure created by people, have always served the bright future of humankind and the cause of education, enlightenment, culture, science and education of the people, and were the means of progress of human civilization as a centre of knowledge, science and information. Even before our era, in Sumer, which is considered the cradle of human culture, in Assyria, Asia Minor, Ancient Egypt, Rome, Arabian and European countries, the libraries collecting and preserving books and other written information carriers and passing them down from generation to generation enjoyed great respect as cultural and information institutions having a great scientific value.

Conclusions

Libraries contributed to development of culture and economy and dissemination of technical knowledge and scientific discoveries by collecting and preserving scientific values created by humankind and making them systematically and freely available to public use. This important historical mission of libraries in the development of humankind and the importance of taking their activities into account in modern society put forward the need for identification of their status and their place in the information service. From this point of view, libraries are seen as institutions of science, information, culture, education and training. Recently, the application of information technologies to library work has led to such an increase in the communicative role and importance of libraries in the modern information society that it is impossible to meet the information needs of society without libraries. The extensive scientific and technological progress in modern times, rapid development of technological and technical processes and practical application of the results of scientific studies have led to an increased and dispersed flow of information. All these put before information enterprises, primarily the libraries important tasks such as processing and producing information flows and directing them towards the consumers who need them. In order to cope with these new challenges, libraries must restructure their work and rapidly apply modern information technology to library work, and in addition to traditional library services, carry out new reforms and master the methodology of modern services.

Summing up the above, we can say that information service is not a new type of service, but a new, developed, improved stage of library-bibliographic service equipped with modern information technology, which originated in the library in ancient times, passed a historical path of development and enriched over the time. To carry out the tasks set by the new stage of their development, libraries are required to restructure their work in accordance with the requirements of the information society and to achieve a qualitative improvement of information services.

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