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Systematic Approach Methodology for Studying the Library Collection

Abstract

The library collection is a necessary element of the library as a system and is a key system-creating component. Together with the library's other subsystems (such as users, librarians, and material-technical base), it ensures the effective functioning of the library through equal and reciprocal interactions. The collection performs a fundamental function. Like the other elements of the library, it consists of various models presented in the form of documents. Libraries, which have been serving humanity as a social institution since ancient times, continuously improve to optimally fulfill their wide functions in science, information, culture, education, and upbringing. They benefit from advanced practices, harness achievements from the latest innovations, and mobilize their potential to develop in line with the global demands of the information society. The article provides a certain scientific analysis and generalization on this issue.

Keywords: *Library Collection, Document, Subsystems of the Library Collection, Information User, Databases*

Kütüphane Koleksiyonunun İncelenmesinde Sistematik Yaklaşım Metodolojisi

Öz

Kütüphane koleksiyonu, bir sistem olarak kütüphanenin gerekli bir unsurudur ve sistemi oluşturan temel bir bileşendir. Kütüphanenin diğer alt sistemleriyle (kullanıcılar, kütüphaneciler ve materyal-teknik taban gibi) birlikte, eşit ve karşılıklı etkileşimler yoluyla kütüphanenin etkin işleyişini sağlar. Koleksiyon temel bir işlevi yerine getirir. Kütüphanenin diğer öğeleri gibi, belge biçiminde sunulan çeşitli modellerden oluşur. Eski çağlardan beri toplumsal bir kurum olarak insanlığa hizmet eden kütüphaneler, bilim, bilgi, kültür, eğitim ve yetiştirme alanlarındaki geniş işlevlerini en iyi şekilde yerine getirmek için sürekli gelişmektedir. Gelişmiş uygulamalardan yararlanmakta, en son yeniliklerden elde edilen kazanımları kullanmakta ve bilgi toplumunun küresel talepleri doğrultusunda gelişme potansiyellerini harekete geçirmektedirler. Makale bu konuda belirli bir bilimsel analiz ve genelleme sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kütüphane Koleksiyonu, Belge, Kütüphane Koleksiyonunun Alt Sistemleri, Bilgi Kullanıcısı, Veri Tabanları*

Introduction

The library collection is a complex concept. Identifying its essence directly, that is, by observing its multifaceted manifestations in real practice, is extremely difficult. Without understanding its essence, it is impossible to properly shape and manage its development. This task is solved with the help of a systematic approach. A systematic approach allows for identifying the most general and stable aspects of library collection formation. As a result, it enables the scientific substantiation of library-collection relationships by determining the main directions of the library's work with the collection. The most general aspect in relation to the studied system is called the external environment. For a more comprehensive study, the external environment can be divided into distant (external macro-environment), intermediate (external meso-environment), and close (external micro-environment) levels. In relation to the library collection, the external macro-environment is represented by the remaining elements of the library as a system. The external meso-environment consists of external documentary resources that serve as sources for the formation of the library collection. The external micro-environment includes various objects and processes that, in one way or another, influence the functioning of the library collection. The most rational way to study complex phenomena is to systematically divide them into components up to

a certain threshold—beyond which further division would risk the loss of their essential qualities. This ultimate unit of division is called an element.

1. Main part

The primary system-forming element in a library collection is the document. The concept of a system is as relative as the concept of an element. If we consider the collection of a particular library as a system, then its subsystems will be the collections of each structural division of that library or, depending on the purpose of the analysis, collections of specific content, form, designation, etc. In relation to a specific library collection, if the collections of other libraries are integrated into its operations, they appear as a supersystem. From the perspective of the totality of library collections considered as a system, an individual library collection, depending on the scale of the system, may turn into a subsystem or, in some cases, an element. The study of a system involves identifying its elements, subsystems, and the relationships between them, in other words, uncovering its structure. The characteristics and parameters that define the system are determined. These include the functions performed by elements (subsystems) both within the system and in its external environment, as well as their properties. These factors establish the system's relative independence by defining qualitative differences.

2. The Role of the library collection in the library system

The library system includes not only the library collection but also other subsystems. These include the user contingent (UC), library staff (LS), and material-technical base (MTB) (Ismayilov, Mahammadli & Khudiyeva, 2022). Apart from important subsystems, many non-essential subsystems emerge and develop in specific historical conditions, and in some cases, they disappear over time. From the perspective of the formation of the library collection, the most important among them are the search-reference catalog (SRC) or the model of the library collection.

Each of the subsystems performs specific, qualitatively specialized, and general system functions within the library system. Through this, the integrity of the library as a systematic entity is ensured. The library collection interacts with all subsystems of the library and the library as a whole. Direct (outgoing) and reverse (incoming) interactions are distinguished.

Direct interactions refer to the impact of the library collection on other subsystems of the library and the library as a whole. The number and content of documents in the library collection directly influence the characteristics of the user contingent – their number, composition, and needs. A large collection, which does not align with the interests of the users in terms of content, will not

experience frequent use of the documents within it. On the other hand, a collection that meets the information needs of users but is not very large may not be able to satisfy the entire potential readership due to long query queues. In general, any changes in the profile of the collection are immediately reflected in the user contingent.

Documents in the library collection may not always be available to users in their complete form (or in hand). In such cases, the required document can be provided from another library's collection without moving it physically and without adding it to the local library's collection, using communication channels. The necessity of matching the "document" and "user" elements is reflected in the library's motto, "Every book has its reader" (Stolyarov, 2015). This means that there should be no document in the collection that is unnecessary for the user, either in the current context or in the future.

There is an organic connection not only between the "document" and "user" elements but also between the "document" element and the "librarian" element. Accordingly, there are connections between the subsystems that form these elements. As social relationships between the document and the information requester develop, on one hand, a large number of documents emerge, and on the other hand, a broad circle of information users is created. Additionally, the content of the document generates various types of information users. The information producer, by nature, is discrete and heterogeneous. When the number of documents exceeds the capacity for them to be comprehended by information seekers, their independent selection increasingly loses its effectiveness, and in this process, the user may not know where the document containing the information they need is located or whether such documents even exist. They may also be unaware of the appearance of the most recent documents. In such cases, an objective contradiction arises between the document and the information requester. It is the librarian's duty to resolve this contradiction. Therefore, if documents did not exist or a collection of these documents was not formed, there would be no need for a librarian. The main task of the librarian is to know and recognize the book (document) and its requester (information user) and to ensure the establishment and dynamic development of interactions between them.

The relationship between the "document" and "material-technical structure," or more specifically between the "library collection" and the "library's material-technical base" subsystems, holds special significance. A document is characterized in two ways: as an object (item) and as a

material-intellectual resource. As an object, it requires special rooms and equipment for its compilation, accounting, processing, preservation, search, and use (İsmayılov, 2009). The volume and differentiation of the collection according to various characteristics directly affect the size and design of the rooms, which in turn influence the external appearance of the library. The volume of the collection remains a critical criterion for the architectural and planning solutions of any type of library building worldwide.

As a material object, the document requires specific temperature and humidity conditions, as well as technical, physical-chemical, and biological protection from damage and loss, which differentiates it from other elements in the library system. Machine-readable documents can only be used in aggregate form with the corresponding technical tools designated for their creation, storage, and use. In this case, the relationship between the "document" and "material-technical device" is so strong that neither the document nor the device can be used without the other. Conversely, new technical tools may often require changes in the document's physical form or its software layer. The rejection of non-perspective document formats leads to the abandonment of the corresponding technical tools as well.

"Document-document model relationship" Like other elements of the library system, the document has its own model within the library, which includes bibliographic records, accounting documents (inventory books), the document's passport, document indicators, and so on. The document's model is connected not only to its original form but also to other models. The library user (reader) form is one of the information user models, which includes records about the reader and the documents they request (read), the return date of the document, and other model elements. Therefore, the document's model is related not only to its original but also to other models.

The catalog-card system, figuratively referred to as the "collection mirror," plays a crucial role in revealing the composition of the collection, providing bibliographic information about the location and availability of documents, and serving as a component of the information retrieval system (Xələfova & Əliyev, 2022). The catalog (information retrieval tool) is an inseparable part of a well-developed library. The collection as a whole affects the efficiency of library operations, and a library cannot exist without its collection. The foundation of library operations is the effective formation of its collection. It is through the collection that the library gains the ability to realize all its social resources.

The existence of the collection allows the library to not passively respond to the conditions of the social environment that created it, but instead provides the opportunity to change those conditions from the moment of its creation. The presence of the collection enables the library to create a contingent of information users who are capable of actively and productively utilizing it. The content and form of the documents accumulated in the library collection help define the type and nature of the library as a whole. As a result, the solution to the problems of properly forming the library collection is critically important for the fate of all other components of the library as a social institution and for the library system as a whole. Alongside this, the documents (library collection) are also subject to the influence of other social elements and, accordingly, the impact of other system-creating components or subsystems of the library.

3. The influence of the user contingent

The characteristics of the library collection are primarily reflected in the activities of the user group (contingent), and equally, this activity is carried out solely through the use of documents. The number of users and their demands affect the volume and composition of the collection. When forming the library, the interests and needs of the information seekers contingent are considered as the primary factor.

In practice, during the development of all collection-related issues, indicators related to the user contingent and their reading habits—such as reading level, attendance, frequency of visits, literature provision, and the completeness of query fulfillment—are considered as key points (Kazym, 2011). When solving various problems related to the formation of the collection, many concepts from the theory of library services for information seekers (such as "demand," "interest," "query," "rejection," etc.) are used, and the "user"-"document" relationship is generalized and aligned with the well-known motto "Every book has its reader."

The influence of the library staff. The relationship between the document and the library user is not arbitrary but is regulated through the librarian. The librarian plays a key role in organizing adequate relationships between the document and the information seeker. The librarian's responsibilities include selecting and providing the most appropriate literature to meet user demands, regulating the relationship between the document and the user (through processing and placement), ensuring active and proper use of the literature by communicating its content through

the information and reference tools, and adhering to the core principles of library service culture. Guiding information seekers in their literature selection is one of the main tasks of the librarian.

The influence of the library's material-technical base. The library collection's activity is significantly affected by the material-technical base of the library, including the applied mechanization and automation tools (Mammadov, 2022). The size and configuration of library buildings, the nomenclature and characteristics of technical tools, and library equipment play a crucial role in the document delivery process (based on user requests) and in the operational opening of the collection to users. These factors also impact the collection's compilation, storage, preservation, processing, and placement, serving as an integral structural component in these activities.

Mechanized devices significantly ease the physical labor of humans in the processes of document processing, accounting, placement, delivery, and so on, while also saving time. Automated systems, in turn, form the essential material-technical and software base for library operations, facilitating faster information retrieval, document protection, combating theft and intentional document misplacement, remote document ordering, and more. These systems ensure operational efficiency and meet the demands of modern information society. Libraries are better able to fulfill their duties when the information seeker spends minimal time obtaining the document containing the necessary information, and when any geographical, linguistic, technical, or other barriers are easily overcome with the library's appropriate material-technical base and technical-program tools.

Currently, in modern libraries, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology, which serves as an advanced example of best practices for ensuring the stability, protection, and preservation of the collection, holds significant functional importance (Mozeva, 2010). The impact of the information retrieval system. The comprehensiveness and multi-dimensionality of the collection's accessibility to users is largely dependent on the structure of the library's information retrieval system (catalog-card index system), the level of search functions, and the system's ability to reflect the collection. The relationship between the library collection and the catalog-card system is realized through indexes and codes that identify the location of the documents within the collection "storage" and enable the identification of their positions.

Conclusion

Thus, the document (library collection) is in an inseparable dialectical relationship with the other elements (subsystems) of the library, and it is precisely through this relationship that its integrity and the uniqueness that distinguishes the library from other social institutions are ensured. The library collection occupies a relatively autonomous position within the library system, which allows it to maintain functions that are not attributed to it by distinguishing it from the other subsystems of the library. The collection is autonomous not only in its essence but also physically. An element is considered indivisible only at the level of analysis where it has been accepted as such within a given study. However, at another level, the same element can be examined not as a basic unit but as an independent system with its own components and relationships. In such cases, it remains just as complex and requires equally careful examination. In general, the library collection, when considered as a system, is also divided into subsystems based on various characteristics. These subsystems are further broken down into individual elements.

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