

# 21st century librarians' work in motion: snapshots and collaboration between 4 different countries

BRUNET, Céline; ÇAKMAK, Tolga; MIOČIĆ, Petra; RAYKOVA, Aneta

## Introduction

Librarianship is a multidisciplinary science and profession. Although at different levels of development, collaboration between libraries is vital for the progression of the profession. This profession is undergoing profound changes due to the growing use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), for example, Open Access, digital libraries, etc. In this context Library and Information Science professionals are wondering about their future in a changing world. In the light of this information, Intercultural Exchange Around the Profession of Librarian project supports intercultural exchange between LIS students about professional practices for librarians via a web based collaborative platform.

## Expectations and aims

Before beginning this project, we were asking ourselves some questions:

- Is there any diversity of activities by location and type of library?
- Is this a profession which is evolving with its time and resources?
- What are librarians' impressions and perspectives about their library services?
- Are there new techniques and technologies that are used in different libraries and countries?

The results expected were:

- To provide intercultural interaction between the related countries.
- To provide information about different library applications and approaches in terms of information services.
- To provide information about projects that are directed by different libraries for cultural heritage and public access to information (i.e. Digitization projects, etc.).
- To promote new information services of reported libraries.

## Methodology and Materials

Over one semester, 4 national and 2 international groups of students in Library and Information Science visited innovative libraries in their own country (France, Bulgaria, Croatia, Turkey) and reported back to their colleagues using a collaborative website ([www.docinfos.fr/culturex](http://www.docinfos.fr/culturex)). Concerning the International groups, they consist of National Libraries Working Group and City Libraries Working Group contributors from Bulgaria, Croatia and Turkey. While national groups were reporting their visits about innovative libraries, international groups posted their reports which were created as a result of their international collaboration.

This project is based on case study methodology within the scope of descriptive method that is mostly preferred for research in social science. Every report contains data which were provided via direct observations and semi-structured interviews with librarians. As a result of the used methodologies, every report is published on the web platform which is based on an open source software and every report can be freely accessed via the web platform.

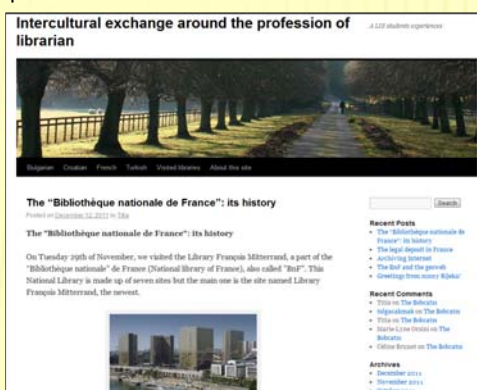


Figure 1.: A Snapshot of Web Based Platform

After visiting innovative organizations in related countries, project members can increase collaboration by sharing, commenting on, questioning and discussing their ideas, their findings and their experiences about libraries and library approaches which were reported on the platform.

## Results

During the project period, 4 reports were created: Sofia City Library, Marguerite Yourcenar Library in Sevran, Middle East Technical University Library (METU) and National Library of France (BnF). These reports were reflected approaches of academic, public and national libraries in related countries.

What impressed us most:

The legal deposit service at the BnF made us realize how much time and attention this mission requires. We also understood that the amount of documents must be huge: we perceived the greatness and the importance of the French heritage.

But despite technological developments and progress, there still are librarians who have to work in a difficult context like the one of the library in Sevran (unemployment, drug trafficking, multi-ethnic population).

Sofia's library is full of new technologies and historical things. As in Sevran, the social view is important because the library makes the minority feel at home. However, Sofia's Library enjoys the evolution of new technologies, unlike Sevran's Library.

Concerning METU, it is an up-to-date library with great mobile services like the use of QR Codes for books. This library develops new ways to index and search for books and made us wonder about the disappearance of call numbers.

With that exchange we saw that new technologies used in these libraries are similar, but their organization differs. Yet the most important services of each library are the same. Actually, what brings these libraries together and makes them similar is the social view of librarians.

## Problems and improvements

For next time, a draft of questions or problems may be drawn so the libraries would be viewed according to this, for a better collaboration: we would have the chance to really put forward the differences, similarities or complementarities between libraries and librarians.

We also sadly encountered difficulties in knowing our contacts and working synchronously (difficulties to understand and have organized discussions despite the electronic applications available to exchange).

## Conclusion

In the context of interculturalism and ICT, we saw that libraries work much in the same way. Indeed, it is often the profession of librarian which is different because of the size of the library, the public, the financial means and the cultural environment.

Thanks to this project, we learned from each other and we now have the tools to exercise our profession of librarian, by taking into account the other possibilities and projects we discovered.

The discrepancy of level between libraries made us realize that collaboration between them is important: being genuine and at the same offering the same opportunities to all, despite location, users, economic and socio-cultural conditions.

## Future Goals

This enabled exchanges and comments between cultures and practices. The online collaboration and sharing of information is a perfect example of how organizations could find new ways of collaborating. The website will remain open for all to see and expand, even after this specific project is finished.

## For Further Information

[www.docinfos.fr/culturex](http://www.docinfos.fr/culturex)

