

UNESCO SUPPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES

Elena Macevičiūtė

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – realises the programmes in librarianship in the whole world. These programmes include the impact on the formation of the government policy in the field of library work, the education and training of librarians, the coordination of the activities of international library organizations. The aim of this article is to analyse one of the trends of UNESCO activities in librarianship. It should serve as the source of the new ideas for the librarians in our country.

UNESCO programmes are usually implemented by its member-states. However some of the projects are carried out on the territory of the member-states by UNESCO itself. Sometimes the Organization joins in the work of the institutions of a country. This kind of activity may be arranged by UNESCO only at the request or by consent of the local authorities. The support may be rendered in various forms: meetings, training courses, research work, consultations and so on. UNESCO may carry out its own pilot project on the territory of some member-state. The pilot projects usually have complex character and perform several functions: set standards of work, implement new methods and means of work, serve for training of the specialists or updating their knowledge. During the period of realization of these projects UNESCO renders a member-state different services: financial assignments, fellowships, publications, consultants and so on – according to the requirements of the project.

The preparation and implementation of a pilot project has two objectives: it enables UNESCO to test its principles, recommendations and the methods of implementation in practice; successful

results of the project put in practice set an example for the country of realization and for the other ones meeting similar problems or having similar conditions. Therefore the pilot projects are considered as regional ones though they may be carried out in a single country. It is very important to find suitable surroundings for the successful realization of the project. That is the reason for a thorough selection of the country of implementation. This process usually takes a lot of time. The country and the project must suit each other.

The pilot projects in the field of librarianship are programmed for 4-5 years but sometimes they take longer time. After the realization of the project UNESCO hands the work over to the local authorities and the further effect depends on their interest in its continuation. UNESCO works over 3-4 librarianship projects at a time. Usually they take place in the Asian, African and Latin American countries and are meant for the improvement of library services in the developing states.

The first UNESCO pilot project in the field of librarianship was created in 1951. It was the establishment of the Delhi Public Library in India. Its experience was used in Medellin (Colombia, 1954), Enugu (Nigeria, 1959), Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire, 1961). Therefore the four public libraries in these cities have much in common. The main object of their establishment was to prove to the governments in different regions the necessity of the library work, to urge the foundation of similar libraries.

The public libraries founded by UNESCO are centralized ones. There is a central library and its branches in different districts of the towns. They have one or more bookbuses that serve the readers who are living in distant places. All of them have legal deposits of corresponding countries. They store not only printed documents but the audio-visual material as well.

The Enugu Public Library is the centre of the bibliographical work. It coordinates the activities of all public and special libraries in Nigeria. The Medellin Public Library pays special attention to the childrens' services. This group of users as well as handicapped persons are served by all these libraries. The common feature is the

service to the new literates. All the libraries have become the centres of culture and education.

The UNESCO Public Libraries are managed by special councils. Those are formed of the representatives from different regions of the country. The UNESCO experts are the members of these councils as well.

At the beginning of the projects the local authorities allocated the premises. UNESCO equipped the buildings, acquired necessary book collections and financed the libraries during the first period of their existence. The local authorities didn't assist the libraries then and their condition was rather poor. The assignments of UNESCO didn't cover all their needs. At the same time UNESCO was greatly concerned with the training of specialists: fellowships were assigned, the courses and study trips were organized in Europe and the United States. However there was a constant lack of qualified specialists in the libraries for some time. Even at the end of sixties only 9 from 45 employees in the Delhi Public Library were trained librarians (1).

The UNESCO Public Libraries were established according to the "western models" as the UNESCO expert F. M. Gardner put it (2). Their projects were designed by the representatives of American and West European library schools (C. V. Penna, S. Horrocks, F. Gardner). According to them the libraries had to ensure the free usage of library collections by everyone who needs them (3). However some specific conditions of the countries of realization were missed in these projects: the illiteracy and the need for education programmes, the shortage of publications in local languages, the low possibilities to use the imported books in foreign languages. Those were the main reasons for which the local governments were not interested in the activities of these libraries after UNESCO stopped financing them. It took some time and efforts of the librarians and UNESCO experts to pass through this crisis. At present the libraries are provided by their governments. They have developed their services and became very important institutions in their countries, especially the Delhi Public Library. However, the goals of the pilot projects were not fully achieved. The libraries haven't "infected continents", or stimulated the

development of libraries in respective countries though occupied proper position there (4).

The establishment of separate public libraries was not very effective. Therefore UNESCO started projects comprising networks of public libraries. The Organization has implemented some pilot projects in different regions: in Asia – Shri Lanka (Colombo) in 1967–1972; in Latin America – Brasil in 1973–1976; in Africa – Benin and Seychelles in 1977–1982. Those projects have common characteristics as well. They were designed as the result of the regional meetings and the Intergovernmental Conference on Planinig the National Information Infrastructure. The work of public libraries was related to the literacy and education programmes. That was the reason to choose for the implementation of the projects the countries with a nuclear of libraries and running literacy programmes. According to NATIS (National Information System) conception the work of public libraries becomes a part of planning the national social economic development. Those projects had to demonstrate the ways of rational use of library resources in the remote rural districts of the developing countries. At the beginning of their realization (the first two years) the experts designed a plan and established the corresponding libraries. UNESCO assigned money for books and equipment. Besides the Organization allocated the fellowships to the citizens of the states where the projects were carried out. Thus the specialists were trained for the later period. The use of the audiovisual material for the patrons service was stimulated in Brazil. After the experiment in Shri Lanka was over, special manuals were written for the specialists from other Asian countries.

The pilot projects for school libraries are closely related to literacy and continued education programmes. UNESCO started the work with these projects in the beginning of sixties. At that time UNESCO declared the priority of education in its activities. One of the projects was carried out in Lagos (Nigeria) in 1964–1968. It was designed as the continuation of the work of the UNESCO expert from the Great Britain G. Bonny. He took part in establishing libraries in the pedagogical colleges, secondary and elementary schools, and trained librarians in 1960–1961. UNESCO and Nigeria

signed an agreement concerning the organization of library services in the schools of Lagos. The Pedagogical library – the centre of the school libraries – was opened at the same time. A similar project was carried out in 1967–1972 in Honduras. This project covered the whole country. Its objectives were: 1. the development of the school library work; 2. the training of school librarians for all the countries of the Central America making use of the possibilities created in Honduras.

A new experiment of the school libraries development was started in Oceania in 1985. The new school libraries were opened on Tongo, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Tuvalu islands. They had to be connected into the regional network. For the first time the lectures for the librarians were transmitted from Australia by the satellite communication. The project for the elementary school libraries for African countries was started in 1987.

The results of the pilot projects for public and school libraries were different. The African librarians expressed the negative attitude towards the UNESCO projects carried out until 1977. The main reason for their discontent was the fact that libraries were modelled upon European examples, that is – designed for serving literate inhabitants in the cities. The national specific features and needs were overlooked again (5). Similar conditions occurred in Sri Lanka though local authorities were interested in UNESCO work there and took the lead (6). The libraries of the Central America evaluated the projects from another point of view. In the seminar held in Bogota (Colombia) in 1961 they decided that the work of school libraries must be planned together with education development and they hold control over the experiment in Honduras from the very first days. The project was discussed and appreciated at the meeting of experts in Guatemala (7).

UNESCO took into account the reproofs and changed the way of the designing and realization of the projects. It started with sending two experts for the public libraries to Benin, Brazil and Seychelles. One of them represented the country with high level of library service, the other one had to be a specialist acquainted with the specific needs and character of the region. Benin was visited by the representatives of Great Britain and Senegal, Brazil – by the

librarians from the United States and Spain, Seychelles – by the specialists from Swiss and Kenya. The school library project in Oceania was put into practice by the local specialists. The idea of the application of European library experience throughout the world as the only and the best way of development was characteristic of the conception of the europocentrism which made great influence on the early activities of UNESCO. The pilot projects in librarianship proved that this conception serves no purpose. From the beginning of seventies when NATIS conception and programme were adopted the pilot projects were implemented according to the local conditions. Their results satisfied the needs of the member-states better than earlier ones.

One of the first complex pilot projects was started in Equador in 1966. It concerned the development of library network. The research of the state-of-art of libraries was carried out in 1963–1964. During the work over this project the main attention was paid to public and school libraries. The permanent representative of UNESCO in Kito was working as the adviser during the planning period and consulting the local specialists during the realization period.

A similar project embracing not only libraries but archives and information services as well was presented to the Carribean countries. The main aim of this plan was to develop the national information systems in this region and include them in the network of information in Latin America. The libraries received the modern equipment, the specialists were trained to work with it.

The other point of view at the network of national information systems was revealed in Malaysian experiment in 1975–1978. The university libraries of this country were stimulated to create their network on the basis of voluntary cooperation and coordination. The experts from UNESCO prepared the plan of cooperative system. Later the National Library and other large libraries should join this network. This system should demonstrate the possibilities of cooperation for the other Asian countries, become the example of the pooling the information recourses for development. The system served as the basis for special research of the use of telexes for the needs of Universal Availability of Publications in 1979–1980. A new

experiment "The implementation of UAP methods" was mentioned in the draft programme for 1986-1987. However this project was in preparatory state (8).

In 1984-1985 UNESCO started essentially new complex projects that should integrate the activities of libraries and information services. They took place in Asia (1984 - Goa Oceanographic Institute), in Latin America and the Caribbean (1984 - The University of Antilles, Saint-Ogušten), in Africa (1984 - Sachel Institute, Bamako), the Arab countries (The Information Systems of the Arab League). According to these projects the wide network of libraries and information services for satisfying special needs must be established. The modern technical devices and traditional library work are combined within this network. The specialized and regional data basis must be created within its frame. UNESCO will help the implementation of the projects rendering all the usual services (9).

Recently UNESCO has made the project concerning the creation of the library of Alexandria. In 1986 the Egypt government applied to UNESCO to study the feasibility of reconstruction of the ancient library. The experts J. P. Clavel and J. Tocatlian suggested to create the centre for the research of the Mediterranean history and culture which will become the equivalent of the Alexandria. The government of Egypt allotted a plot, UNESCO organized the architectural competition and started the fund raising campaign for financing the building of the library. It must be opened in 1995 (10).

UNESCO helps to realize not only its own pilot projects but the projects of UN Development Programme, projects financed by other organizations and countries. Usually they concern the developing countries and their national information systems as well. UNESCO supports the development of national libraries that way (in 1985-1987 - 11 national libraries in different countries received the equipment, books, financial aid, consultants). Great attention is paid to the university libraries (6 projects during the same period) and to the management of library work in different countries (4 projects)*.

* According to the reports of the Director General of the UNESCO.

The experimental projects in the field of librarianship UNESCO aims at the Asian, African and Latin American countries. Their general goal is to find the most effective ways to use the library resources, to advertise them in the countries of a region. UNESCO began its activities with establishing separate libraries according to the examples of Western Europe. Later it turned to creating the projects of library networks, to deeper studies of local needs and conditions, to natural development of libraries and so including the planning of library work into the plans of social and economic development. During the last period (1987–1989) UNESCO makes complex pilot projects for the interaction and intergration of libraries and information services.

The effect of UNESCO projects, the positive changes that they can start depend not only on the correspondence to the conditions of the country, but on the attitude of the local authorities and specialists (including librarians) towards them, on the wish of society to participate in them.

REFERENCES

- 1. Gardner F. M. *The Delhi Public Library: An evaluation report*. – Paris, 1975. – P. 21.
- 2. *Item*. – P. 85.
- 3. Carter E. J. *UNESCO public library projects // Books*. – 1953. – N 280. – P. 51.
- 4. Coblans H. *Librarianship and documentation: An international perspective*. – London, 1977. – P. 52.
- 5. Parker J. S. *International directions // Prospects for British librarianship*. – London, 1977. – P. 173.
- 6. Soosai J. S. *A decade of international library cooperation through IFLA: A third world perspective // IFLA J.* – 1981. – V 7, N 1. – P. 21.
- 7. Spiller D. *International organizations and their effect upon the libraries of developing countries // Intern. libr. rev.* – 1979. – V 11, N 3. – P. 341–351.
- 8. Генеральная конф. Сессия (23; 1985; София). Проект программы и бюджета на 1986–1987 гг. Т. 1. – Париж, 1985. – С. 153.
- 9. Генеральная конф. Сессия (22; 1983; Париж). Проект программы и бюджета на 1984–1985 гг.: Предоставление крупных программ с разбивкой по административным единицам. – Париж, 1983. – С. 303.
- 10. Clavel J. P., Tocatlian J. *Feasibility study for the revival of the ancient library of Alexandria*. – Paris, 1987. – P. 27.

UNESCO PAGALBA BIBLIOTEKOMS

Re z i u m ė

UNESCO pagalba bibliotekoms vyksta per įvairius projektus. Vienu metu UNESCO gali teikti pagalbą 3-4 projektams, kurių tikslas - pagerinti bibliotekų darbą, likviduoti neraštingumą, kelti išsilavinimo lygį besivystančiose Afrikos, Azijos ir Lotynų Amerikos šalyse. Straipsnyje analizuojami konkretūs projektai viešosioms bei mokyklų bibliotekoms arba jų tinklams kurti, informacijos tarnybų ir bibliotekų veiklai integruoti atskirose šalyse arba tarptautiniu mastu. Autorė aptaria ir vertina šių projektų rezultatus, jų tobulinimo ir plėtros kelius, taikymo kitose valstybėse galimybes.