

Biblioteka “Bora Stanković” u Vranju i pandemija KOVID-19

The Public Library “Bora Stanković” in Vranje and the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Informacije o članku / Article Info

Primljen / Received 26. 5. 2022.

Prihvaćen / Accepted 29. 7. 2022.

Dostupan online / Available online: 10. 12. 2022.

Ključne riječi / Keywords

Biblioteka “Bora Stanković”, pandemija, Biblionet 2020, digitalne platforme, onlajn časovi, biblioteke, bibliotekari

“Bora Stanković” Library, pandemic, Biblionet 2020, digital platforms, online classes, libraries, librarians

Sažetak / Abstract

Prethodne godine obeležene su izazovima nametnutim pandemijom kovid-19 i epidemiološkim merama koje su znatno otežavale regularno funkcionisanje svih segmenata našeg života i rada. Kako bi se ograničio prenos virusa i sačuvalo zdravlje ljudi, biblioteke širom sveta zatvorile su svoja vrata. Ono što se nije zaustavilo i ugasilo jeste pronalaženje načina da se sačuvaju korisnici i pružanje ključnih usluga nastavi. Bibliotekari su pojačali svoje aktivnosti i usredsredili se na svoju suštinsku ulogu da služe javnosti, ponašajući se odgovorno i pojačavajući svoju nepokolebljivu posvećenost da, više nego ikada, korisnicima omoguće infrastrukturu za otvoreni pristup informacijama, kolekcijama i ispune nove zahteve svoje zajednice. Cilj rada je da se sagleda položaj i funkcionisanje javnih biblioteka tokom pandemije koronavirusa, sa posebnim naglaskom na aktivnosti Biblioteke “Bora Stanković” u Vranju. Vranjski bibliotekari su se izborili sa novonastalim izazovima i, uprkos nezavidnoj situaciji, prilagodili svoje programe “novo normalnosti”, nastavili da pružaju svoje usluge i uspešno realizovali niz sadržaja, među kojima je svakako najznačajnije održavanje konferencije Biblionet 2020. u našem gradu.

The previous year was marked by the challenges imposed by the covid-19 pandemic and epidemiological measures that significantly hindered the regular functioning of all segments of our life and work. Libraries around the world have closed their doors to limit virus transmission and preserve human health. What hasn't stopped and shut down is finding ways to preserve users and provide key services. Librarians have strengthened and focused on their essential role of serving the public, acting responsibly and reinforcing their unwavering commitment to, more than ever, providing users with the infrastructure to openly access information, collections, and meet the new demands of their community. The aim of this paper is to look at the position and functioning of public libraries during the coronavirus pandemic, with special emphasis on the activities of the “Bora Stanković” Library in Vranje. Vranje librarians overcame the new challenges and, despite the unenviable situation, adjusted their programs to the “new normality”, continued to provide their services, and successfully implemented content, among which the most important is certainly the implementation of the Biblionet 2020 in our city.

1 Uvod

Analizirajući ulogu savremene biblioteke na pragu 21. veka, Piter Brofi (2005, 241) opaža da će “najmoćnija biti uloga informacionog posrednika unutar zajednice, tela koje razume i ume da se poistoveti sa zajednicom svojih korisnika, dobro poznaje univerzum informacija i njegovu organizaciju i istovremeno aktivno razvija i poboljšava mehanizme koji povezuju ta dva sveta”. Čini se da apostrofirana uloga biblioteke kao informacionog centra nikada nije imala veće uporište nego u poslednjih godinu dana, kada je pandemija koronavirusa nametnula ograničenja u našim

1 Introduction

By analyzing the role of modern libraries at the turn of the XXI century, Peter Brophy notices that the most crucial function of the library will be the one of an information mediator within the community. The library will be the institution that understands and identifies itself with the community of its members. It also comprehends the universe of information and its organization, thus developing and improving the mechanisms which connect those two worlds (Brophy 2005, 241). It seems that the highlighted role of the library as an information center became a particularly firm stronghold the last

životima. Transformacije, novi trendovi u načinu rada i radnim odnosima, adaptacija na novonastale životne i radne okolnosti nisu zaobišle ni bibliotečko-informacionu delatnost. Neophodno je bilo da se brzom reorganizacijom, ozbiljnim angažovanjem rukovodilaca i odgovornim ponašanjem zaposlenih iznađu alternativna i inovativna rešenja za očuvanje veza sa svojim korisnicima i načini da se uspešno plasiraju sadržaji i kolekcije u virtuelnom svetu. To je značilo kreirati virtuelne programe, fokusirati se na promociju digitalnih resursa i implementirati ih pružajući javni pristup tehnologijama, svakako bez komercijalizacije. Biblioteke i bibliotekari su dali solidan odgovor na krizu i trenutne društvene okolnosti, u kojima je prioritet sačuvati zdravlje ljudi i potvrdili su svoju nezaobilaznu kulturnu i obrazovnu ulogu u diseminaciji i eksploataciji informacija i znanja te odlučno nastavili sa svojom primarnom misijom: pružanje usluga građanima koji traže znanje, mogućnosti učenja i veze sa informacijama.

2 Rad Biblioteke „Bora Stanković“ u izmenjenim okolnostima

Nakon proglašenja globalne pandemije koronavirusa i uvođenja vanrednog stanja u našoj zemlji, u cilju kontrole širenja virusa 15. marta 2020. godine usvojene su dve Uredbe o merama za vreme vanrednog stanja, kojima se uvode određena ograničenja na slobodu kretanja građana. Prva Uredba bila je opšteg karaktera i odnosila se na, primera radi, zabranu svih okupljanja u zatvorenom prostoru i odlaganje izbornih radnji. Druga Uredba se specifično odnosila na organizovanje rada poslodavaca za vreme vanrednog stanja, a obe su objavljene u Službenom Glasniku RS broj 31/2020. (Otvorena vrata pravosuđa 2020). Ključni instrument u sprečavanju širenja zaraze je fizička distanca i sve mere su se, u svojoj osnovi, zasnivale na smanjenju kretanja i međusobnog kontakta građana. To je proizvelo direktne promene u životima svih ljudi, a naročito zaposlenih i poslodavaca koji su se našli u potpuno novoj situaciji. Uredba o organizaciji rada poslodavaca za vreme vanrednog stanja propisala je da su poslodavci dužni da omogućće zaposlenima obavljanje poslova van prostorija poslodavca, odnosno rad od kuće u svim situacijama u kojima je to moguće. U skladu sa novim propisima, većina biblioteka u Srbiji, obustavila je rad sa korisnicima i svoje funkcionisanje prilagodila novonastaloj situaciji, vodeći računa o zdravstvenoj bezbednosti zaposlenih, ali i korisničke populacije. Iako Biblioteka za vreme

year when the pandemic caused many restrictions in our lives. Many changes have influenced the library and information areas, such as transformations, new tendencies in doing business and business relations, and the adaptation to new life and work circumstances. Finding alternative and innovative solutions was essential to maintain the relationship with library users. The same refers to launching content and collections in the virtual world. For this purpose, a few conditions were fulfilled, such as the reorganization, a serious approach of the management, and a responsible attitude of the employees. This meant creating virtual programs and concentrating on promoting digital resources and their implementation by enabling public access to the information technologies, without commercialization. Libraries and librarians acted reasonably and professionally in the state of the crisis and current social situation. Their priority was to save people's health. They confirmed their crucial cultural and educational role in the dissemination and exploitation of information and knowledge by accomplishing their mission – providing adequate services for the residents in search of knowledge, educational opportunities, and information connections.

2 Activities of the “Bora Stanković” Library in Changed Circumstances

Following the proclamations of the global pandemic and the emergency state in our country, issued on March 15, 2020, Serbian authorities officially enforced two Regulations of the Measures in the State of Emergency. These Regulations introduced certain restrictions on the freedom of movement, aiming at controlling the spread of the virus. The first Regulation was general and referred to banning social gatherings indoors and postponing the elections. Another Regulation was more specific as it referred to the organization of work of employers in a state of emergency, published in Službeni Glasnik RS, issue 21/2020 (Otvorena vrata pravosuđa 2020). The key instrument in preventing the virus infection is a physical distance. Therefore, all the official measures focused on decreasing the level of movement and social and physical contact among citizens. Consequently, this led to immediate changes in people's lives, especially in the lives of employees and employers. Namely, this was a completely new situation for them. According to the Regulation of Organizing the Work in the State of Emergency, employers are responsible for enabling

trajanja vanrednog stanja nije bila mesto susreta sa korisnicima, proces rada u prostoru vranjske biblioteke nije se ni u jednom trenutku potpuno prekidao. Transferom značajnog dela aktivnosti na digitalne platforme, putem kojih su realizovani raznovrsni biblioteko-informacioni sadržaji, očuvani su kontakti sa korisnicima, saradnicima, kolegama i uspostavljeni novi načini rada i komunikacije. Bibliotekari su se potrudili da na najbolji mogući način, koordinisano, jedinstveno i efikasno odgovore na novonastale okolnosti (Knežević 2020).

Biblioteka "Bora Stanković" je od početka vanrednog stanja neprekidno radila sa skraćenim radnim vremenom, uz upućivanje ugroženih kategorija zaposlenih na rad od kuće i uz redukciju rada sa korisnicima, poštujući sve preporuke nadležnih organa. Rad sa korisnicima je bio obustavljen, ali on čini samo jedan segment bibliotekog poslovanja, dok su mnoge druge aktivnosti nastavljene, poput rada na inventarisanju, katalogizaciji, rashodu ili reviziji biblioteko-informacione građe, uređivanju i reorganizaciji fondova, obavljanja matičnih poslova u segmentima komunikacije i pružanja neophodnih informacija javnim i školskim bibliotekama, rada na novoj elektronskoj MBS Bazi, onlajn prosljeđivanja anketa bibliotekama u nadležnosti i davanja uputstva za njihovo popunjavanje. Korisnici biblioteke su sve vreme mogli da putem telefona, elektronske pošte ili preko društvenih mreža kontaktiraju ustanove i dobijaju informacije, produže rok za pozajmicu ili koriste građu dostupnu u elektronskom obliku.

Pozajmljivanje monografskih i serijskih publikacija u našem informativno-pozajmnom sistemu je automatizovano. Preko 65.000 naslova naše Biblioteke je uneto u katalog u okviru sistema COBISS. Korisnici mogu sami, od kuće, da urade jednostavnije pretrage (po autoru ili naslovu), dok im je za komplikovanije pretraživanje (po kompleksnijim parametrima) ipak neophodna pomoć bibliotekara. Tokom pandemije nastavili smo praksu onlajn rezervacije knjiga, tako da su članovi biblioteke, pored direktnog naručivanja, knjige mogli da naruče i putem mejla ili telefonskog poziva, dobiju obavještenje iz biblioteke da je građa slobodna i dođu po nju u zakazano vreme, bez zadržavanja u prostorijama Biblioteke. Ovom praksom proces preuzimanja knjiga bio je ubrzan i bezbedniji. Bibliotekari su se trudili da svojim stalnim članovima izađu u susret i olakšaju put do željene literature za vreme trajanja protivpandemijskih mera. Primećena je povećana zainteresovanost za knjige poput Pekićevog "Besnila", "Ljubav u doba kolere" Gabrijela Garsije Markesa i "Kuge" Albera Kamija. Navedeni naslovi

their employees to do their tasks out of employers' premises – homes or wherever possible. In line with the new regulations, most of the libraries in Serbia discontinued the work with their members. At the same time, they adjusted their work to the emerging situation, thus taking care of the health condition of their employees and users.

Although it was not the meeting point for its users during the state of emergency, the working process within the premises of the Vranje Library never entirely ceased. The transfer of the majority of activities on digital platforms, where a variety of the library and IT content was realized, resulted in maintaining contact with the users, collaborators, and colleagues. In other words, new ways of working and communicating were established. The librarians did their best to respond to the circumstances, by relying on their coordination, unity, and effectiveness (Knežević 2020).

During the state of emergency, the Public Library "Bora Stanković" organized part-time work. The library workers in COVID-19 risk groups did their tasks from their homes. The activities with library members were reduced, following the recommendations of the institutions in charge. There was practically no physical contact with the members, but that is only one segment of the Library business. Other activities were also carried out, such as taking an inventory, cataloging, dismantling, or revising the Library and IT materials, ordering and reorganizing Library collections, and doing other main tasks in communication. The Library was providing necessary information to the public and school libraries. It was also working on the new MBS, forwarding surveys to other libraries, and giving instructions on completing those surveys. All the time library members communicated with the Library via phone, email, or social media. They could receive information about extending the deadline for returning books or using the accessible e-material.

Borrowing monographs and other serial publications in our system for sharable information is automated. We have catalogued around 65000 books in the COBISS system. The library members can conduct less complex searches at home (using the name of the author or title of a book), and more complicated searches (more complex parameters) require the specialized assistance of the librarians. During the pandemic, we proceeded with online book reservations, so that the library members could order books by email or phone, apart from the in-person ordering. They were informed about the books at

doživljavaju novi nalet popularnosti usred pandemije, iako se jedina sličnost sa “novom normalnošću” može naći samo u naslovu knjige. Knjige i kultura još jednom su nesumnjivo dokazale da imaju blagotvoran uticaj na duh ljudi u kriznim vremenima i “predstavljaju najsigurnija uporišta, najpouzdanije tačke oslonca, najbolja i najprimenjivija rešenja i za pojedinca i za čitavo društvo” (Politika, 2020). Kvantitativni podaci govore da su građani Vranja i okoline kada je najsigurnije bilo ostati kod kuće i što manje se kretati i družiti, sve više pronalazili zabavu u čitanju. Broj članova se znatno menjao tokom trajanja pandemije. U 2019. je bilo 6.111 novih članova (Јавна библиотека Врање, 2020), u 2020. godini 6.112 (Јавна библиотека Врање, 2021), dok se u 2021. godini beleži znatno povećanje broja članova – 6.561 (Јавна библиотека Врање, 2022).

Vanredno stanje je ukinuto 6. maja 2020, ali vanredna situacija je ostala na snazi. Ostale su i sve mere, ili bar većina njih, i preporuke donete u prethodnom periodu. Zaposleni i korisnici su se vratili u svoje biblioteke. Nastavili smo da držimo distancu, nosimo maske i rukavice. Pleksiglasom smo pregradili prilaz knjižnom fondu, te on više nije bio slobodno dostupan. Korisnici nisu mogli slobodno razgledati fond i šetati između polica. Knjige su se preuzimale i ostavljale na pultovima koji su postavljeni prvog dana nakon što je vanredno stanje ukinuto. Razvijena je nova rutina prilikom pozajmljivanja i vraćanja knjiga. Vraćene knjige su se odlagale na 72 sata, zatim dezinfikovale i tek tada ulagale na police, pridržavajući se svih epidemioloških mera tokom postupka. Takođe, u čitaonicama je bio ograničen broj korisnika. U Biblioteci “Bora Stanković” postoje dve čitaonice (stručna čitaonica i čitaonica periodike) u kojima je istovremeno moglo da boravi po pet korisnika. “Formalno vanredno stanje je ukinuto, ali ono je suštinski nastavilo da bude vanredno.” (Милуновић, 2020, 42) Rad u skladu sa preporukama je i do današnjeg dana aktuelan. Protivepidemijske mere nisu sasvim ukinute, već su svedene na snažnu preporuku.

3 Prelazak na onlajn sferu

Delatnost Biblioteke u Vranju se u najvećoj meri oslanja na neposredan kontakt sa članovima, što je praktično bilo onemogućeno na samom startu pandemije, u martu 2020. godine. Ova činjenica je prozurokovala tektonske poremećaje u načinu pružanja usluga Biblioteke “Bora Stanković” u Vranju. Skoro sve aktivnosti Biblioteke morale su iz fizičkog prostora da pređu u virtuelni, internetski prostor i to ko-

their disposal so that they could come and take them at an assigned time, without staying longer within the Library premises. As a result, this process of borrowing books has become more efficient and safer. Librarians made efforts to facilitate this process of accessing desired literature for the regular library members during anti-pandemic measures. It was noticed that the following books were frequently borrowed: *Besnilo* by Borislav Pekić, *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel Garcia Marques, and *The Plague* by Albert Camus. These books reached a new level of popularity during the pandemic, even though the only similarity with “the new normalcy” refers to the titles themselves. Books and culture have again demonstrated their beneficial influence on the human spirit in times of crisis, “presenting the safest shelters, the most reliable points, the best and the most applicable solutions for an individual and the whole society.” (Politika, 2020)

The quantitative data indicated that the citizens of Vranje and its surroundings were diverting themselves by reading books on the days and months they had to stay home. The number of members was drastically changeable during this period of the pandemic. In 2019 there were 6 111 new library members (Јавна библиотека Vranje, 2020) while in 2020 there were 6 112 new members (Јавна библиотека Vranje, 2021). In 2021 there was a significant increase of 6 561 new library members (Јавна библиотека Vranje, 2022).

The state of emergency terminated on May 6, 2020. However, the situation of emergency was still in effect. Most of the regulations, measures, and recommendations were still in force. The employees and library users returned to their libraries. We continued to keep a proper physical distance and wear masks and appropriate gloves. The library counters were equipped with plexiglass so that the users do not have direct physical access to the library books and various publications as before COVID-19. The users could not walk around the bookshelves and look at the content. The books would be taken and returned on the previously mentioned counters, installed on the first day after the termination of the state of emergency. A new routine of borrowing books has established new rules. After returning, the books are put aside for the next 72 hours. Following their disinfection, they would be put back on the bookshelves, according to the assigned epidemiological measures for the procedure. The number of users in reading rooms was also limited. There are two reading rooms in the “Bora Stanković” Library (rooms for professional content and periodicals).

rišćenjem zvanične veb-stranice i društvenih mreža, koje su globalno najrašireniji komunikacijski alat. Putem socijalnih mreža biblioteka ima priliku da ostvari kontakte i sa onim osobama koji nisu njeni članovi, a pokazalo se i da su vrlo praktične za kreiranje interaktivnih usluga u virtuelnom svetu, kao što su recimo preporuke knjiga za čitanje i diskusije o nekom konkretnom delu. Prelazak na onlajn sferu predstavlja novu dimenziju rada i unos dinamike u pružanju tradicionalnih bibliotečkih usluga, ali i svojevrstan izazov s obzirom na to da nisu postojali dovoljni onlajn kapaciteti za ovakav poduhvat. To se pre svega odnosi na nepostojanje razvijene onlajn platforme za direktnu komunikaciju sa članovima i činjenicu da su se bibliotekari morali oslanjati na korišćenje društvenih mreža i korespondenciju putem elektronske pošte. I pored toga što Biblioteka ima svoj veb-sajt, nije bilo moguće da se putem njega dopre do svih članova biblioteke, jer oni nisu stekli naviku da ga redovno posećuju. Zbog toga je odlučeno da se akcenat stavi na Fejsbuk (Facebook), jednu od najpopularnijih društvenih mreža u Srbiji. Zvanična Fejsbuk stranica Biblioteke “Bora Stanković”¹ ima 2.350 pratilaca, što praktično znači da gotovo polovina ukupnih članova prati svoju biblioteku na Fejsbuku. Svaka objava na stranici u proseku dopre do 500 osoba, što je bio glavni motiv za korišćenje ove društvene mreže za komunikaciju sa članovima. Na Fejsbuk stranici su pre svega plasirana obaveštenja vezana za rad Biblioteke u uslovima pandemije kovida, informacije o različitim bibliotečkim onlajn resursima i pretraživim korpusima digitalnih sadržaja, davane preporuke za čitanje članovima i drugim onlajn posetiocima, istaknuti svi značajni datumi vezani za bibliotekarstvo i književnost (Svetski dan poezije, Međunarodni dan dečje knjige, Dan stradanja NBS, Svetski dan knjige i autorskih prava itd.), podeljene su veze prema različitim zanimljivim emisijama iz kulture (pre svega u oblasti književnosti), korisnici su obaveštavani da ne brinu zbog neblagovremenog vraćanja pozajmljene građe jer se naknada neće naplaćivati za vreme trajanja vanrednog stanja, promovisani su popularni blogovi koje uređuju bibliotekari iz Srbije.

Za razliku od tradicionalnih pristupa, po kojima je član primarno čitalac, u alternativnom, relativno novom pristupu on postaje komentator i kritičar, onaj koji vrednuje, deli iskustva, preporučuje. Biblioteka i bibliotekari nisu dopustili da ih pandemijska kriza spreči u obavljanju svog posla i u promovisanju bibliotečkog poslovanja.

The total number of people in both of them was 5. “The state of emergency was officially over, but actually it continued to exist in its essence.” (Milutinović 2020, 42). The library activities have been synchronized with the official recommendation ever since. Anti-epidemiological measures are still in function as they have the status of strong advice.

3 The Online Sphere Transition

The activity of the Vranje Library mainly relies on direct contact with its members. However, this was impossible at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. This fact has caused tectonic changes in its principles of offering its services. Almost all the activities had to be transferred from the physical space into a virtual reality (the Internet space) by using the official web page and social media, known as the globally most expanded communication tool. Thanks to social media, the Library has had an opportunity to make contact with people who are not its members. It turned out that social media can be practical in creating interactive services in the virtual world, for instance, book recommendations and discussions over the works of writers. The online sphere transition presents a new dimension in library activities and the inclusion of dynamics in providing traditional library services. Yet, it is a peculiar challenge, considering the previous lack of online capacities for this endeavor. This issue particularly referred to the non-existence of a developed online platform for direct communication with library users. There is a fact that librarians had to rely on social networking sites and email correspondence. Even though the Library has its website, it was impossible to reach all the library members as they did not get used to visiting the site. Therefore, the focus was on the Library’s Facebook page, as Facebook is one of the most popular social networks in Serbia. The official Facebook page of the Public Library “Bora Stanković”¹ has 2350 followers, which is half of the total number of Library members. Every post on the Facebook page reaches 500 people on average, which was the main reason for using this social networking site for communication with Library users. The Library Facebook page was primarily used for announcements about the working hours of the Library during the pandemic. Then, there were various pieces of information on different online library resources and other digital corpora. Additionally, the posts included book recommendations for members and other on-

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/bibvr>

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/bibvr>

4 Primer dobre prakse: Odeljenje američkog kutka

Odeljenje Biblioteke koje je od svog formiranja 2005. godine uvek prednjačilo u pružanju inovativnih formata, kreativnih sadržaja i aktivnosti svojim korisnicima jeste Odeljenje američkog kutka. Pre početka pandemije, u 2019. godini Američki kutak je organizovao i do 150 različitih programa godišnje: konverzijske programe na engleskom jeziku, predavanja američkih profesora, umetnika i službenika Ambasade SAD, kreativne radionice, projekcije filmova sa diskusijom, radionice o preduzetništvu, kurseve engleskog jezika (Јавна библиотека Врање, 2020). Sve ove aktivnosti su od početka marta 2020. godine morale preći u onlajn sferu. S obzirom na to da navedene aktivnosti podrazumevaju direktan kontakt sa korisnicima, bilo je neophodno koristiti odgovarajuću onlajn platformu. Bibliotekari su bili pred dilemom za koju se odlučiti. Platforma je pre svega morala biti besplatna i pouzdana. Prvi izbor je bio Gugl hangouts (*Google Hangouts*), koji se pokazao kao vrlo dobar, pre svega kod konverzijskih programa kao što je Book Club – čitanje i diskusija na engleskom jeziku o kratkim pričama, pesmama ili esejima. Međutim, problem je nastao kod programa kod kojih je bilo potrebe koristiti tablu za pisanje kao što su Bell+ – časovi engleskog jezika ili obuka iz oblasti medijske pismenosti. Za ovu vrstu aktivnosti korišćena je platforma Zum (*Zoom*), koja nudi tablu, ali je, sa druge strane, ograničena vremenski na 40 minuta, tako da jedan čas nije mogao da traje duže od toga. Aktivnosti su promovisane na Fejsbuk stranici Američkog kutka,² Biblioteke, kao i elektronskom poštom. Sve ovo je rezultiralo znatnim ublažavanjem posledica pandemije kovid-19, kada je reč o broju aktivnosti i učesnika u programima 2020/21. godine. Naime u 2020. godini Američki kutak je organizovao 108 programa (54 manje u odnosu na prethodnu godinu), dok se u 2021. godini taj broj povećava i iznosi 143. Svi ovi programi su održani putem onlajn platformi, a to su uglavnom bili konverzijski programi na engleskom jeziku, zatim radionice za medijsku pismenost, kao i kreativne radionice za osnovce. Takođe su 4 grupe polaznika besplatno pohađale kurseve engleskog jezika, ukupno oko 50 ljudi (50 manje u odnosu na 2019. godinu). Ukupan broj učesnika u programima Američkog kutka u 2020. bio je 523 (617 manje u odnosu na 2019. godinu), a u 2021. godini 632. Posledice pandemije koronavirusa vidljivo su se odrazile na broj konzumenata plasiranih sadržaja, ali je Biblioteka dobila novu, redizajniranu uslugu.

line visitors. Today people also receive information about important dates in areas of librarianship and literature (for example, World Poetry Day, International Children's Book Day, Day of Destruction of the National Library of Serbia, World Book and Copyright Day, and others). Administrators of the Library's Facebook page also share links to interesting culture-oriented shows (the field of literature especially). The users did not have to pay a fine in case of not bringing books back at a specified time during a state of emergency. There were promotions of popular blogs of Serbian librarians, as well.

Compared with the traditional approach, where a member is primarily a reader, the alternative, relatively new approach turns a library member into a commentator and critic. It is a person who estimates, shares experiences, and recommends. The Library and its librarians didn't allow the pandemic crisis to prevent them from doing their job and promoting the purpose of libraries.

4 The Example of Good Practice: The American Corner Department

Since its opening in 2005, American Corner Vranje has been representing a Library department that has always taken the lead in providing innovative formats, creative content, and activities to its members. Before the coronavirus pandemic, the American Corner used to organize up to 150 programs annually, such as conversation programs in the English language, lectures of American educators, artists, and officials of the American Embassy in Belgrade, creative workshops, movie projections followed by discussions, workshops on entrepreneurship, English language courses (Јавна библиотека Vranje, 2020).

Since March 2020, all the previously-mentioned activities had to be organized online. Considering that the activities include face-to-face contact with users, it was necessary to use a suitable online platform. Its choice was a dilemma for librarians. First and foremost, the platform needed to be free and reliable. The first choice was Google Hangouts, which proved convenient, especially with conversation programs, like Book Club (reading and discussing short stories, poems, and essays in English). However, an issue emerged with programs that required the use of a whiteboard (for example, BELL+ classes of the English language or media literacy training). We used Zoom for these programs, as it has the whiteboard option. On the other hand, there is a 40-minute-long time limit, and classes could

² <https://www.facebook.com/AmericanCornerVranje>

Onlajn časovi su prilika da se kroz aktivan kontakt sa korisnicima prikupe eventualne primedbe i sugestije u vezi sa realizacijom časa kako bi se proces učenja unapredio. Uloga biblioteke u onlajn obrazovanju je novi horizont, jer je vrlo malo biblioteka nudilo onlajn obrazovanje pre pandemije, a način predavanja bio je licem u lice. Pandemija je, na kraju, iznudila izazove, kao i mogućnosti bibliotekama da redefinišu svoju ulogu, usluge i dosegnu još dalje u ispunjavanju informativnih potreba lokalnih zajednica.

5 "Biblionet 2020." u godini pandemije

Ustanove kulture su usled širenja zarazne bolesti covid-19, kao odgovor na rastuću zabrinutost i u skladu sa odlukama Vlade Republike Srbije, bile prinuđene da privremeno onemogućće pristup svojim zgradama, otkazu sve planirane tradicionalne, umetničke i obrazovne programe koji su bili planirani. Uzdrmani razvojem nepovoljnih događaja u svim domenima, uplašeni za lično i kolektivno zdravlje odlagali smo dva puta (u junu i avgustu) održavanje, planiranog, stručno-naučnog skupa Zajednice matičnih biblioteka Srbije. Suorganizatori i domaćini skupa bili su Biblioteka "Bora Stanković" i Grad Vranje. Pripreme Biblioneta 2020. tekle su na uobičajan način, kroz saradnju i korespondenciju biblioteke domaćina, Programskog i Organizacionog odbora. Okupljeni oko zajedničkog cilja – da se skup održi, ali u zdravstveno bezbednom okruženju, preduzeli smo i obezbedili sve preporučene mere zaštite od širenja virusa (maske, sredstva za dezinfekciju, fizička distanca u prostorima gde će se održavati planirane aktivnosti i poštovanje maksimalno dozvoljenog broja posetilaca). Uz pojačane mere predostrožnosti, apelovanje na poštovanje svih propisanih mera i pozivanje na odgovornost prema sebi i drugima, u Vranju je održan Četrnaesti stručno-naučni skup Zajednice matičnih biblioteka Srbije sa temom "Saradnja i partnerstva: kreiranje nove zajedničke vizije za biblioteke", od 1. do 3. oktobra 2020. godine. Fokus „Biblioneta 2020.“ bio je na umrežavanju biblioteka na svim nivoima i stupanju u različite partnerske odnose koji doprinose povećavanju kapaciteta, ostvarivanju inovativnih projekata, kvalitetnijim programskim sadržajima i dosezanju široke publike.

Na svečanom otvaranju konferencije Laslo Blašković, upravnik Narodne biblioteke Srbije i, samim tim, predsednik Zajednice matičnih biblioteka Srbije, poželeo je „smislen i plodan rad skupu“, upućujući optimističnu poruku čitavoj bibliotečkoj zajednici: „Dalji nastavak naših aktivnosti i susretanja biće, svakako, u senci zlokobnog virusa, koji je, na

not last long. The activities were promoted on the Facebook pages of the American Corner² and the Library, and via email.

These steps resulted in a significant reduction of the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. This refers to the number of activities and program participants in 2020/21. Namely, in 2020, the American Corner organized 108 programs (54 fewer than the previous year). In 2021 this number was increased to 143. All the programs were conducted online, most of which were conversational programs in the English language, workshops for media literacy, and creative workshops for students. There were four groups of participants (approximately 50 people) who attended free English language courses (50 people fewer than the number of participants in 2019). In 2020 the total number of participants in the American Corner programs was 523 (617 fewer people than the number in 2019). In 2021 there were 632 participants.

The number of users of the Library content has obviously demonstrated the consequences of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the Library added a new, redesigned service to the existing ones. Online classes present an opportunity for active contact with its users as they can provide possible critiques and suggestions about the programs. This way the Library could improve the learning process. The role of the Library in online education is providing a new horizon because only a few libraries used to provide online education before the pandemic (it was face-to-face teaching). All in all, the COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges and opportunities for libraries to redefine their role and services, thus reaching new levels in meeting the need of their communities to stay informed.

5 Biblionet 2020 in the Year of COVID-19 Pandemic

Responding to the rising concern over the expansion of the COVID-19 disease, cultural institutions followed the regulations of the Serbian government and temporarily denied access to their buildings. They canceled all planned traditional, artistic, and educational programs. Disturbed by the development of inconvenient events in all domains of human activities and concerned about personal and public health, we postponed the planned scientific meeting of the Association of Public Libraries of Serbia twice (in June and August). Co-organ-

² <https://www.facebook.com/AmericanCornerVranje>

jeziv način, globalizovao našu stvarnost. Ne treba, međutim, očajavati. Život, kao i voda, uvek pronalazi prolaz, svoj autentični put.“ Zaista, organizatori, domaćini, aktivni učesnici i zainteresovani pregooci u bibliotečko-informacionoj delatnosti su podelili jedno novo iskustvo i kroz sadržajna multimedijalna izlaganja, dinamične radne sesije i zanimljive propratne programe, uz neposredno druženje i razmenu iskustava, otvorili nove prostore za razmišljanje o saradnji, novim partnerstvima, umrežavanju i postizanju zajedničkih ciljeva na kulturnom nebu.

U sklopu radnih sesija, učesnicima su o svojim iskustvima u bibliotečkoj regionalnoj i lokalnoj saradnji i partnerstvima govorili predstavnici biblioteka u Novom Sadu, Kruševcu, Lazarevcu, Kraljevu, Kladovu, Bačkoj Palanci, nekoliko predavača iz Narodne biblioteke Srbije i Biblioteke grada Beograda, kao i biblioteke domaćina. Ovo je bila prilika da se čuju podsticajni primeri međusobne i saradnje javnih biblioteka sa drugim pravnim licima, uspešne ili poželjne prakse, kratkoročni ili dugoročni modeli projekata zasnovanih na zajedničkim interesima i pokušaj da se kroz konstruktivnu komunikaciju i cirkulaciju ideja dođe do smernica koje će pomoći bibliotekama da svoje delovanje i kapacitete prošire i iskoriste na najbolji način. Skup je dao dobar uvid u aktuelne trendove umrežavanja biblioteka, bilo kao inicijatora, glavnog aktera ili poželjnog partnera i inicirao promišljanje kako da brojne struke u oblasti kulture i ustanove kulture budu složnije, povezane, da bolje sarađuju i još intenzivnije i transparentnije učestvuju u kulturnom dijalogu.

Vranje je tokom tri dana održavanja skupa bio centar bibliotekarstva u Srbiji. Pozitivna radna atmosfera, vedar duh, inovativne ideje, lepota izgovorenih reči, primeri dobre prakse potisnuli su strahove i ulili optimizam i veru u očuvanje i unapređenje bibliotečke struke. Visoke ocene održanog “Biblionet 2020.” nije umanjila ni činjenica da je skup održan uz poštovanje svih epidemioloških mera zaštite od širenja korona virusa. Bibliotekari su uspešno odgovorili izazovnom i nimalo lakom zadatku: u vremenu virtuelnih i hibridnih konferencija sasvim bezbedno, produktivno i odgovorno su održali konvencionalni, stručni skup u fizičkom prostoru.

6 Zaključak

Pandemija kovida nije promenila strategije i prioritete bibliotečke paradigme,³ ali je pojačala

³ *Teorija naučnih revolucija*: Po veoma uticajnom mišljenju Tomasa Kuna, nauka se razvija kroz revolucionarnu izmenu naučnih paradigmi. Pri tome je paradigma definisana kao skup uverenja, vrednosti i

izers and hosts of the Biblionet Conference were the Public Library “Bora Stanković” and the local government of Vranje. Preparations for Biblionet 2020 were running in a standard way, through cooperation and correspondence among the host, the program committee, and the organization committee. We wanted the Conference to occur in healthy, safe surroundings, so we implemented all of the recommended measures against the spread of the virus (masks, disinfectants, physical distance, and the allowed number of visitors). The XIV Scientific Conference of the Association of Public Libraries of Serbia was held in Vranje from October 1st to October 3rd, 2020. There were stricter precaution measures, appeals on respecting all the regulations and rules, and constant reminders of the responsibility for personal and social well-being. The topic of the Conference was “Cooperation and Partnership: Creating a New Mutual Vision for Libraries”. The focus of Biblionet 2020 was the process of networking libraries on all levels and entering different partnership relations that can contribute to the increase of capacities, the realization of innovative projects, and the higher quality of programs, thus reaching more people.

At the Conference opening Laslo Blašković, the manager of the National Library of Serbia and president of the Association of Public Libraries of Serbia wished for “reasonable and productive work at the Conference”. He delivered an optimistic message for the entire library community: “The continuation of our activities and meetings will be in a shade of the threatening virus, which globalized our reality. However, there is no place for desperation. Life, just like water, always finds its authentic way.” Accordingly, the organizers, hosts, active participants, and interested individuals in the library and information occupation shared a new experience. There were various multimedia presentations, dynamic working sessions, and fascinating follow-up programs, accompanied by friendly interactions and exchanges of experiences. This led to discovering new areas of possible cooperation, partnerships, networking, and achieving mutual aims in the cultural sphere.

Within the working sessions, the representatives of the libraries in Novi Sad, Kruševac, Lazarevac, Kraljevo, Kladovo, Bačka Palanka, and a few lecturers of the National Library of Serbia, and the libraries of Belgrade and Vranje were talking to the participants about their experiences with regional and local cooperation and partnership. It was an opportunity to hear about inspiring examples of the cooperation among libraries and between public libraries

i ubrzala trendove ulaganja biblioteka u digitalne resurse i usluge. "Biblioteka orijentisana prema zajednici mora ne samo prepoznati i izraziti, već razvijati informacione i kulturne potrebe svih grupa korisnika, prateći društvene i tehnološke promene i izazove." (Вучковић 2003, 171). Biblioteke su odavno prestale biti "hramovi knjige", izašle su iz svojih okvira i postale biblioteke bez zidova, otvorene za svoje korisnike 24/7. Bibliotečki prostori su izmešteni u digitalni svet, ali i "čuvari knjiga" su se transformisali u bibliotekare – informatore. "Moderna biblioteka prepoznaje se kao živ, aktivan, bitan društveni činilac. Ovaj kopernikanski preokret istovremeno uključuje promenu tradicionalne teorijske paradigme i praktični obrat u delovanju javnih biblioteka" (Вучковић 2003, 171).

Građani su biblioteke u ovom razdoblju, teškom za čitavu planetu, prepoznali kao dobro pozicioniran, dovoljno fleksibilan i sadržajno-tehnički pripremljen resurs u pružanju digitalnih usluga i plasiranju sadržaja koji su podrška informisanju i komunikaciji na digitalnim platformama te daljinskom podučavanju, istraživanju i učenju. Sadržaji koji će biti sve neophodniji u budućnosti, i kada epidemiološka kriza prođe, utemeljeni su na stvaranju hibridnih modela za standardne korisničke servise u kojima će virtualna ponuda dominirati nad fizičkom. Novi uslovi diktiraju da digitalne usluge i e-sadržaji postaju nosioci bibliotečkih usluga kojima se omogućava razmena znanja i inteziviranje komunikacije u naučne, obrazovne ili informativne svrhe, povećava kvalitet života i zadovoljavaju realne potrebe građana. Biblioteke neće izgubiti svoj tradicionalni kontekst, ali će dobiti i svoju virtualnu dimenziju. Da bi izašle u susret korisnicima novih generacija i novog senzibiliteta i bile prilagođene izazovima dolazećeg vremena, neophodno je da biblioteke izgrade infrastrukturu i sisteme koji će maksimalizovati inkorporaciju digitalnih sadržaja, naročito u domenu obrazovanja i daljinskog pružanja bibliotečkih izvora i usluga. Time bi transformacija iz fizičke u digitalnu biblioteku bila efikasnija, a prelazak sa neposrednog na alternativne, modifikovane oblike rada dao podsticaj za napredak bibliotečko-informativne delatnosti.

tehničkih procedura koje su zajedničke članovima jedne naučne zajednice. Paradigme su okvir i model za rešavanje naučnih zagonetki u periodima takozvane "normalne nauke". Pod normalnom naukom podrazumeva se preovlađujuće redovno stanje nauke, istraživanje zasnovano na postojećoj paradigmi. Najveći deo ovakvih istraživanja sastoji se u prikupljanju činjenica, demonstriranju slaganja činjenica i teorije i artikulacije vladajuće teorije (Kun, 1985).

and other legal entities. The participants became acquainted with successful and desired practices and short-term and long-term models of projects based on mutual interests. This was an attempt to reach the guidelines for helping libraries to expand their activities and potential in the best possible way. The attempt included constructive communication and the circulation of ideas. The Conference provided a valuable insight into current trends of networking of libraries, whether their role was that of an initiator, the main subject, or a desirable partner. It initiated thinking about the ways of more compact, tighter connections among numerous professions within the area of culture and cultural institutions. This would mean better cooperation and more intensive and transparent participation in a cultural dialogue.

During the three days, Vranje was the center of librarianship in Serbia. A positive working atmosphere, bright spirit, creative ideas, the beauty of pronounced words, and examples of good practice annulled the fears and broadened optimism and hope for saving and upgrading the profession of a librarian. High grades of Biblionet 2020 were not diminished by the fact that the Conference took place under all of the epidemiological measures against the COVID-19 spreading. The librarians successfully faced the challenging and complicated task – they organized and realized a conventional professional meeting in physical space in the time of virtual, hybrid conferences.

6 Conclusion

The coronavirus pandemic has not changed the strategies and priorities of the library paradigm,³ but it has strengthened and accelerated trends of investing in digital resources and services. "The library oriented towards its community needs should not only recognize and express but also develop IT and cultural needs of its users, following social and technological changes and challenges." (Vučković 2003, 171) Libraries stopped being "book temples" a long time ago. They became libraries without walls, at the disposal of their users 24/7. The library space has been relocated to the

³ *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*: According to a highly influential opinion of Thomas Kuhn, science develops through a revolutionary change of scientific paradigms. A paradigm presents a collection of beliefs, values, and technical procedures common to members of a scientific community. Paradigms are the frame and model for solving scientific riddles in the periods of the so-called "normal/regular science". The regular/normal science presents a prevalent regular state of science and research based on the existing paradigm. The biggest part of these researches consists of collecting facts, demonstrating the compatibility between facts and theories, and articulation of the leading theory (Kuhn, 1985).

digital world while “book guardians” have been transformed into librarians-information agents. “A modern library is recognizable as a live, active, important social factor. This ‘Copernican-like’ turn of events simultaneously includes the change of the traditional paradigm and practical change of the actions of public libraries.” (Vučković 2003, 171) In these challenging times for the whole world, citizens see a library as a well-positioned, flexible resource that can provide suitable content. Technologically, it can provide digital services and promote content. This seems simulative in the process of informing and communicating on digital platforms, including distance lecturing, learning, and researching. In the future and after the end of the epidemiological crisis, the indispensable content will be based on creating hybrid models for standard user services. This way, the virtual offer will dominate over the physical one. New circumstances make digital services

and e-content the strongholds of library services, thus enabling the exchange of knowledge and intensive communication for scientific, educational, or informative purposes. These new strongholds improve the quality of life and meet the real needs of citizens. Libraries will not lose their traditional context; they will get their virtual dimension. To satisfy users of new generations and sensibility and to be adaptable to the challenges of the future, libraries need to build an infrastructure and systems which will maximize the incorporation of digital content, especially in the domain of education, providing library sources and services remotely. This way, the transition from a physical into a digital library would be more effective. In other words, the transition from direct into alternative, modified forms of work would stimulate the progress of the library-information area of human activity.

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