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PEDAGOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN LIBRARY-INFORMATION SPECIALISTS AND USERS IN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

In today's rapidly evolving society, the dynamics of human relationships are growing increasingly intricate and multifaceted. Despite technological advancements revolutionizing numerous fields, including libraries and information services, the human factor remains a cornerstone in addressing challenges, overcoming obstacles, and achieving progress. In this regard, pedagogical and psychological skills are essential for effectively engaging and supporting library users. These skills enable librarians to understand diverse user needs, foster an inclusive and welcoming environment, and communicate information in a clear and impactful way. By combining teaching strategies with empathy and active listening, librarians can empower users to navigate resources confidently and enhance their overall learning experience. The paper explores the critical role of libraries and information specialists in navigating these complexities by focusing on the intersection of technological innovation and essential human-centric skills. The study also highlights recent innovations in library and information sciences, emphasizing their transformative impact on academic environments. In parallel, it examines the skills, habits, and ethical standards expected of professionals in the field to meet emerging demands effectively. Particular attention is paid to the pedagogical and socio-psychological dimensions of interactions between library professionals and users, underscoring the significance of fostering positive relationships and effective communication within an academic context. Drawing on examples from legislative and normative frameworks, the paper discusses the regulatory and professional standards guiding the field. Additionally, it advocates for the continuous study of human relationships and the adoption of progressive practices to enhance service quality and inclusivity in libraries. The findings underscore the necessity of blending technological advancements with interpersonal skills to ensure that library and information services remain adaptable, responsive, and user-centered in a diverse and dynamic global landscape. The paper emphasizes the importance of studying human relationships and applying progressive practices in the field of library and information.

Key words: *academic library, information specialist, modern skills, user, training and education, pedagogical-psychological aspects.*

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ПЕДАГОГІЧНО-ПСИХОЛОГІЧНІ АСПЕКТИ СПІЛКУВАННЯ БІБЛІОТЕЧНО-ІНФОРМАЦІЙНИХ ФАХІВЦІВ ТА КОРИСТУВАЧІВ В АКАДЕМІЧНОМУ СЕРЕДОВИЩІ

У сучасному суспільстві, що швидко розвивається, динаміка людських стосунків стає дедалі заплутанішою та багатограннішою. Незважаючи на технологічний прогрес, який революціонізував багато сфер, включаючи бібліотеки та інформаційні послуги, людський фактор залишається наріжним каменем у вирішенні проблем, подоланні перешкод і досягненні прогресу. У цьому відношенні педагогічні та психологічні навички є важливими для ефективного залучення та підтримки користувачів бібліотеки. Ці навички дають змогу бібліотекарям розуміти різноманітні потреби користувачів, сприяти інклюзивному та доброзичливому середовищу та передавати інформацію чітко та ефектно. Поєднуючи навчальні стратегії з емпатією та активним слуханням, бібліотекарі можуть надати користувачам можливість впевнено орієнтуватися в ресурсах і покращити їхній загальний досвід навчання. Стаття досліджує важливу роль бібліотек та інформаційних спеціалістів у навігації з цими складнощами, зосереджуючись на перетині технологічних інновацій та основних навичок, орієнтованих на людину. Дослідження також висвітлює останні інновації в бібліотечних та інформаційних науках, наголошуючи на їх трансформаційному впливі на академічне середовище. Паралельно він вивчає навички, звички та етичні стандарти, які очікуються від професіоналів у цій галузі для ефективного задоволення нових вимог. Особливу

увагу приділено педагогічним і соціально-психологічним аспектам взаємодії між бібліотечними професіоналами та користувачами, підкреслюючи важливість сприяння позитивним стосункам і ефективній комунікації в академічному контексті. Спираючись на приклади законодавчої та нормативної бази, у статті обговорюються нормативні та професійні стандарти, що регулюють цю сферу. Крім того, він виступає за безперервне вивчення людських стосунків і впровадження прогресивних практик для покращення якості послуг та інклюзивності в бібліотеках. Результати підкреслюють необхідність поєднання технологічних досягнень із навичками міжособистісного спілкування, щоб бібліотечні та інформаційні послуги залишалися адаптованими, оперативними та орієнтованими на користувача в різноманітному та динамічному глобальному ландшафті. У роботі наголошується на важливості вивчення людських стосунків і застосування прогресивних практик у бібліотечно-інформаційній сфері.

Ключові слова: академічна бібліотека, інформаційний спеціаліст, сучасні навички, користувач, навчання та виховання, педагогічно-психологічні аспекти.

Introduction. In a rapidly changing current environment, information consumers' expectations from information institutions and information specialists are constantly increasing while new technological opportunities emerge. In such cases, libraries should regularly review their tasks (missions) and constantly develop their human resources. On the other hand, the librarians, or in other words, information specialists who are indispensable participants of the service provision process, face a number of challenges. The question "Who is a modern era librarian and what should he/she be?" can be answered as follows:

– A professional librarian with a degree in library and information science;

– An academic specialist (pedagogue with a degree granting the right to teach) who teaches information knowledge and skills, including a professional who conducts research and helps transfer knowledge through presentations and publications;

– An experienced specialist who understands, uses and has the ability to apply a wide variety of ICT programs and tools;

– A skilled manager who is responsible for managing a complex budget and a large number of staff;

– A politician who establishes relationships, communicates, and negotiates between service departments and the academic community (Envisioning future academic library services, 2010: 65).

Today's librarians must be information specialists who are constantly working on themselves, working diligently to improve their professional knowledge and skills, and be able to keep up with the demands of the times. In the literature devoted to the theory and practice of international library science, the set of modern professional skills of librarians reflects the following areas: training and teaching, strategic knowledge, results-oriented solutions, research and analysis, knowledge management, knowledge services, competitive intelligence, non-standard thinking, overview of events, communication and listening skills, empathy, interviewing skills, positive attitude, initiative, digitization, electronic indexing, digital archiving, metadata creation and management, system building and management, document management, corporate content management, bibliographic records management, digital asset management, search engine/index development, website design, social media communication skills, 21st century cataloging, marketing and sales, people management, volunteer recruitment and management, strategic planning and corporate policy formulation, financial and budget management, communication, public speaking and presentations, project management, effective writing skills, preparing project proposals for fundraising and grants, planning meetings and events, contract negotiations, decision-making, team spirit, implementing successful innovations, the ability to attract people to libraries instead of searching on Google or Wikipedia, building trust between management and users, as well as calculating, demonstrating and projecting the benefits that the librarian brings to the institution, etc. (Hunt, D., 2013: 78-80; Lawson, J., 2010: 56-59).

In addition to the above, there are new types of knowledge and skills for librarians, which include training, webinars, seminars, writing blogs, networking, coaching and mentoring, volunteering, participation in internship programs, etc. (Hunt, D., 2013: 81).

An information specialist should always be sensitive in his/her relationship with users. Thus, the main qualities that a service worker should know and possess include:

Image – since he/she represents the enterprise, it is essential that the service personnel have an appropriate image;

Mood – when communicating with customers, mood should take a back seat, and in no case should the user be negatively reacted to or allowed to violate the rules of conduct. It is necessary to avoid stress by focusing on the correct execution of the work, not on personal problems;

Always be ready – it is necessary to always be ready to communicate with users;

Knowledge – it is important to have sufficient knowledge and skills about the work and service, and to ensure that users are satisfied and do not feel neglected (Gannon-Leary, P., 2010: 101).

These listed qualities apply not only to the library environment, but also to areas of activity and service sectors with various profiles, since the socio-psychological aspects of human relationships play an important role in these areas.

Library professionals as educators. In the modern conditions, where education and upbringing work in society is built on new scientific foundations, the mutual relations between library science and pedagogy have expanded further, and as a result of the deep integration process, a relatively new discipline, "Library Pedagogy", has been formed. This discipline, while studying the experience of library work in its research, widely uses the scientific methods of pedagogy and enriches the study of the upbringing and education process with important provisions in its scientific results, which is of great importance for pedagogical research.

Pedagogical activity refers to professional activity aimed at educating the younger generation, in other words, at implementing the process of training, education and development, including the formation of personality (Gasimova, L., 2022: 171).

Historically, libraries have been an integral part of educational institutions and at the same time have acted as independent executors of this process, and library specialists, as subjects of pedagogical activity, have played an indispensable role in the education of not only the younger generation, but also all age groups, in their educative and educational process.

Studying the problems of "working with readers" and "reading" is of great importance in achievement of the educational and enlightening functions of libraries. Libraries also act as one of the leading institutions in managing and directing the reading process, in cultivating a reading culture, especially in guiding children's reading, and take initiatives to coordinate educational and instructional work (Khalafov, A., 1999: 6).

It is more appropriate to express the role of librarians in this process as mentors.

"Mentor" is a Greek word and means to guide and to direct. According to Greek mythology, a mentor gives advice, admonition, and encourages with his personal example and word. The purpose of applying the mentoring system in pedagogy is to develop human potential, ensure organizational (project group) culture, provide academic or career support to the

target audience, and as a result, shape the developing human potential (Gasimova, L., 2022: 174).

In modern times, there is a great need for mentors, or rather, educated, competent librarians in their person, to successfully implement the educational practices.

In academic libraries, this task is performed by teacher-librarians, who instill the methods and techniques of information search in order to master the course materials at the appropriate level, organize individual and group classes with students to ensure more effective use of library resources, as well as consultation hours, constantly establish feedback with the Faculty members, are invited to classes, and teach Information Literacy training courses in accordance with the needs of the faculties. At the same time, as in teachers, the high level of personal and pedagogical skills and habits, as well as professional abilities in librarians determines the success of the results to be achieved. Such skills and habits include:

– informative;
– mobilizing;
– developing;
– guiding.

Pedagogical abilities are divided into three groups: basic, auxiliary and complementary. These include personal pedagogical, didactic – explanatory, oratory, theoretical (academic) abilities, organizational-communicative, perceptive (empathy, personality assessment), and suggestive (voluntary influence) abilities (Gasimova, L., 2022: 180-189).

Regardless of its type, any library environment, by providing favorable conditions for personal education and lifelong learning, highlights the influence of librarians as pedagogical subjects in this process.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Education also notes the important role of libraries in education and upbringing, and they are considered the main means of providing information to participants of the educational process. The inclusion of employees of general education and higher education libraries in the category of pedagogical workers in the law has further increased the responsibility of librarians in the education and upbringing process and has created a basis for their joint creative activity with the pedagogical team (The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Education, 2009: Chapter 3, Article 31).

Psychological aspects of user services. Regardless of the development of technology and the level of integration of technological tools into library services, the human factor has always been and will be at the forefront. This includes not only professional relationships between library staff, but

also the relationship between librarians and users, the psychological characteristics of the communication of information specialists with teachers, students and staff in the academic environment, which, in turn, is of particular importance in multicultural, diverse and inclusive societies.

As stated in the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Library Work, "Library activities are carried out in order to ensure the right of readers to freely receive information, to meet their needs for books, periodicals and other documents that make up the library collection. One of the main tasks of libraries, serving the development of the intellectual and moral potential of society as a social institution, is to actively contribute to the upbringing of independent and creatively thinking citizens." (The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Library Work, 1998: Article 1).

Historically, librarians have acted as "gatekeepers" by deciding what types of books, audiovisuals, and other materials are available and by establishing guidelines for their use. In modern times, they fulfill this function by deciding what information and resources are shared on the library's new technological means of dissemination (websites, social media platforms, e-mails, etc.), where, and how they are presented. The success or failure of library users' educational and research outcomes depends on how well librarians fulfill this "gatekeeper" role (The whole library handbook 5, 2014: 345).

Many students think that librarians only play a navigating role in the physical library, and they simply cannot imagine that they have a function such as research support.

As a result of the research conducted, it has been found that students in the campus environment try to solve their research-related queries with the support of their classmates or teachers more often than by contacting library professionals. Several factors are cited as the reasons for this:

– They think that they will bother the librarians with their queries;

– They think that the librarians are not obliged to help them;

– Some students are unaware of the services available to them in the library;

– They are unaware of the role of librarians in education;

– In some cases, they refuse to approach librarians with new requests because they are dissatisfied with their past library experiences (College libraries and student culture, 2012: 52).

Such situations lead to the emergence of "hidden no" answers, in which the user does not approach the library, thinking that a specific request cannot be met unless he has the necessary information about the library's holdings and service capabilities (Rzayev, S., 2008: 65).

The "Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers 2023", jointly developed by the professional organizations ALA (American Library Association), RUSA (Reference and User Services Association), and SLA (Special Libraries Association), states the following about exemplary professional conduct for library staff:

– Builds relationships with users based on communication, trust, mutual understanding, and intellectual empathy.

– Participates in bibliographic activities that require excellent interpersonal skills and offer collaborative learning experiences.

– Determines the user's information needs, including context, before addressing them.

– Assists users in finding and using information, including instilling information literacy skills (Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers, 2023: 2). This guideline, which covers five main areas – visibility/accessibility, user engagement, listening/inquiry, search and result tracking – focuses primarily on the behaviors displayed by librarians in reference and user services (Emotion in the library workplace, 2017: 134).

These behavioral norms help to ensure quality library service. Library users have their own ideas about quality. These can be divided into two categories: (1) service quality and (2) customer satisfaction. Service quality is more content- and context-based. Both service quality and customer satisfaction encompass users' experiences with library staff, their performance expectations, the ease or difficulty of accessing services in the institution, the comfort of the physical environment, etc. Most importantly, customer satisfaction, like service quality, is based on the interactions between real customers and the library (or any service provider). Satisfaction is a feeling of satisfaction or a state of mind in which a customer perceives that their expectations have been met or exceeded by a particular library. Customer satisfaction is measured by the ratio of actual experience to expected experience (Hernon, P., 2014: 12-13).

In general library practice, librarians are advised to follow this formula when dealing with dissatisfied and sometimes angry users:

– Greet;

– Listen;

– Acknowledge (admit);

– Listen;

– Apologize;

– Ask questions if necessary;

– Listen;

– Build a bridge;

– Offer a solution;

– Obtain verbal confirmation (Rubin, R.J., 2011: 55).

Here, the recommendation to "listen" is proposed in several stages, which ensures effective communication in any interaction. The habit of active listening is a leading factor in clarifying and resolving the problem in any conflict situations, and often leads to a gradual decrease in the aggressiveness (with or without reason) of the other party. In this regard, in the process of interaction with library users, librarians, in addition to professional knowledge and experience, must also have strong emotional intelligence so that they can identify, understand and manage both their own and the other party's emotions (Montgomery, J.G., 2005: 38).

It is no coincidence that the ALA Code of Ethics adopted by the ALA Council in 1939 and subsequently amended and revised several times, states that the basic principles that librarians should be guided by are to provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources, to ensure an equitable service policy, equitable use, and to provide accurate, impartial, and courteous responses to all inquiries (American Library Association Code of Ethics, 1939: Article 1). "Library Bill of Rights", another document adopted by the ALA Council in the same year states that the right of a person to use a library should not be denied or restricted on the basis of origin, age, background or views, that requests from individuals or groups regarding the use of library space should be provided on a fair basis for everyone, regardless of their beliefs or affiliation, and that libraries should ensure the right to privacy of all users, regardless of their identity, by protecting their library usage data and personally identifiable information (Library Bill of Rights, 1939: Articles 5-7).

One of the important tasks facing librarians is to create individual or, in other words, personalized library services for users, focusing on what is important to them, finding the intersection between general library services and personalized relationships, and thereby achieving a mutually beneficial library experience. In such a case, librarians begin to act as "door-openers" rather than "gatekeepers". At this point, they should think less about the resources, services, content, etc. provided by the library and focus more on what value and efficiency user groups obtain from these services and resources. "Opening the door" to members of the public by observing whether and how they use the services provided by the library, and by asking them which services are most effective for them, should become a key task for libraries (The whole library handbook 5, 2014: 347-348).

As mentioned, in the academic environment, librarians act not only as information providers, but also as educators and mentors. The main recommendations when working with students include:

– Minimize any verbal or non-verbal rejection responses related to the task or the teacher;

– Provide the best possible support to the student who needs help;

– Inform the student about personal judgments and conclusions regarding the assignment and leave the student with the opportunity to make a choice (right or wrong);

– Do not take the student's failure in the assignment personally;

– Contact the teachers regarding the problem with the assignment, but do not bother them, and if you do not achieve results, make a conscious decision and continue working;

– In case of an emergency, contact the relevant department management (dean, curriculum committee or vice-rector). This step can often lead to additional anxiety and even personalization of problems rather than solving the issue (McAdoo, M.L., 2010: 29).

There are several ways to communicate with faculty. These include:

Indirect (via email, phone, etc.)

Advantages:

– Facilitates immediate communication;

– Allows for a quick response.

Disadvantages:

– It is a form of absentee communication;

– It may not be immediately responded to;

– The idea written or said in the message may be misunderstood;

– Additional clarification may require follow-up correspondence/communication;

– The faculty may not have the time or interest to respond indirectly.

Direct (face-to-face)

Advantages:

– It is a form of visual communication;

– Allows for dialogue.

Disadvantages:

– It can take time to arrange a meeting;

– It can be seen as confrontation;

– It can make the faculty defensive;

– The librarian may have poor or no communication with the faculty (McAdoo, M.L., 2010: 26).

In many cases, teachers themselves are skeptical of the educational support function of librarians,

and generally have low expectations of them in this area. If they convey this conclusion to students, it is understandable that students will turn to their teachers for help, not librarians (College libraries and student culture, 2012: 59).

Conclusion. In general, it is very important for users to communicate their needs with the library. In turn, library staff must periodically share any changes to the library structure, relocation, transfer of collections, etc. with the students, faculty and staff, as well as with other library users, thereby preventing possible dissatisfaction and lack of knowledge, and also learning users' opinions and suggestions regarding these innovations (Sengupta, E., 2020: 31). These sharings can be done through the library website, social media platforms, email newsletters, or by conducting surveys to solicit suggestions and comments.

The interaction between librarians and students is not limited to the use of library services and resources, but also the professional relationship with students who temporarily work in the library as interns or volunteers creates an opportunity to gain valuable experience for those at the beginning of their career. At this time, librarians should try to be an example to students who will become future specialists with their personal and professional behavior as a role model, and instill in them characteristics such as attendance, responsibility, teamwork skills, punctuality, attention to detail, etc. (Reale, M., 2013: 31).

Summarizing all that has been said, it can be noted that communication between information professionals and users is constantly evolving and being shaped as a result of the steadily changing demands of the society and time.

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