Building Repository of School-librarian Works on Croatian Network of School Librarians

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Summary

This article discusses incentives and preparation actions connected with starting repository of school-librarian works, criteria for selecting the contents management system, solutions for indexing contents, which are the file and the article on the repository. This article discusses problems that emerged while using program MediaWiki, portalization of network center and plans for future.

Key words: repository, school library, portal, wiki, network

Informational technologies and school librarians

Recently development of informational technologies motivated many changes in libraries and librarian profession. School libraries in Croatia are at the back of those changes – there is still great number of school libraries without the computer with an internet access. Because of chronic lack of money for equipment, book collections and library staff, many school librarians have no conditions to build more quality library collections or to implement quality educational activities. Still, despite of those limitations, school librarians have embraced informational and computer technologies and are using them more and more in their jobs of school librarians. During last years they have started documenting more and more of their examples of good practice using computers and periphery computer units. Those their works, in the first place examples of good practice, they have started exchanging frequently during last few years without compensations, using CDs and memory sticks. Works in question are of different sizes, kinds and qualities, but in their contextual, pedagogic, methodic and technical form lot of intellectual engagement, creativity, knowledge and time is frequently invested in all the phases, from planning to realization. Since school librarians are in most cases the only employees in their school libraries, it would be uneconomic when such examples of good practice couldn't be used by colleagues as well, it is best to use them on more occasions. Exchanging and using works, school librarians are helping each other mutually to achieve more quality work with their customers.

Need for creation of professional repository
After smaller or greater collections of such works, that were dispersed on computers and amongst CDs, were collected on computers of school librarians, it was noted that such "private" collections are not practical or economic, it was noted that it was getting harder to find the desired work and the solution is not in the increase of exchange but in unifying and clarity. It was necessary to use advantages of librarian profession and of modern age we are living in: to unify works and information about works in one network place from which all school librarians will be able to take them and to process them using certain (librarian) classification systems (schemes) in order for one to be able to find the desired work quickly and simply in multitude of works, so that overview of works by queries – according to different criteria, would be available.

What was on computers of individual school librarians should have been transferred to common, remote network server, so that all works would become united and available to everyone at any time from any place that has access to the internet.

Preconditions for repository
While planning building of network repository of school-librarian works, several opposed wishes had to be considered.

On the one side, colleagues who know how to store the file on a memory stick do not have to know how to use HTML nor to please FTP. For them, transferring files on remote network server has to be as simple as to choose partition and folder in which files are stored, in order to determine, in fewest steps possible (screen changes), place on the internet for file storage. During transfer of file one must not waist too much time nor fill in tiresome, exhaustive forms, especially such where data is lost if network connection is broken.

On the other side, from the position of visitor, files have to be described quality and in – detail, so one could reach desired choice asking complex queries like limiting selection by years, authors, types of files, contents, keywords… It is necessary to have multiple summaries like newest, best graded, most visited, most downloaded files, overview by content (subject), keywords…

For associates and visitors it is important for repository to be simple and clear, without even one undesired link that would distract attention. But also, both associates and visitors need to get in fewest steps possible to any page on the networks site following simple and logical organization of pages.

These requirements are very hard to fulfill – to have simultaneously ascetic simple interface and enable reaching any desired page in simple, short and precise way and offer detailed overview of all existing files and articles.

Transferring files is not very demanding job, it is simplest to determine one folder on the network server in which files would be sorted and in one step transfer files from your computer, but accumulating files (which often have nontransparent names) on common server is not functional, it turns visitors and

associates away if files are not adequately processed. Generating alphabetic lists of united files is like an alphabetic catalogues that would only contain titles of books, without even one other information, and that is too less for quality information about the book or file. Visitors who would have an opportunity download works based solely on the name of the file would quickly conclude that, because of time spent on their download and study, it is not worthwhile to waste time, that it is very hard to find the desired work in multitude of works. No one likes or have time to download on his computer every single file to see what it is about only after opening it. It is, anyway, in opposition with librarian work. Gathering and finding information is just one part of the job, and value of a library is in good organization and not in simple amassing of information carriers.

Less time we spend indexing and describing files, less information we will have about them, and more detailed "archiving form" is files will be indexed with more elements, so visitor will be able to find them easier. However, in that case network page will be filled with that information. We are in the gap: on the one side, if too high demands are posed upon associates, they will refuse to cooperate and will prefer to exchange files in usual way. On the other side, big and disorganized series of files turns visitors away because it brings them in the situation to be forced to manage on their own finding desired information, creating bad image of librarians.

We have chosen the name *Croatian Network Of School Librarians* for the whole project, name *UDK 02* for repository, and http://www.knjizinicari.hr for URL – which mean *librarians* on English. Thought we started using word *repository*, we kept in mind that our repository will be different from repositories like institutional repositories which grown up since Budapest Open Access Initiative.[1] Lots of institutional repositories have been built, and according to The Directory of Open Access Repositories[2] and Registry of Open Access Repositories[3] there are more then 850 such repositories around the world. Looking into Croatian institutional repositories, like repository of Medical faculty[4], Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences[5] and Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture[6] of University in Zagreb and vocational repositories like E-lis[7], we noticed that they have selected the solutions in which authors cannot

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[1] http://www.soros.org/openaccess

[2] http://www.opendoar.org

[3] http://roar.eprints.org

[4] http://medlib.mef.hr/

[5] http://darhiv.ffzg.hr

[6] http://www.fsb.hr/library/search.php

[7] http://eprints.relis.org/

self-archive their works or they can, but in that case they are not available as long as an authorized person does not give the allowance. Based on the experience of leaders of named Croatian faculty repositories it is noticeable that authors, generally, are not particularly interested to self-archive their works, e.g. they love to leave that work to leaders, even when "archiving form" is quite short and simple one.

Since we imagined the repository of school-librarian works foremost as simple continuation of exchange of works that we exchange anyway on CDs or memory sticks, just in this case we would not sore them on outside media but on one network place, this concept is not acceptable for us. Besides, since in our case we have professional repository at hand and we are mutually in equal and not hierarchic relation, it would be inappropriate to give individuals among us editorial authorizations or to make that part of work professional, because there are no more competent persons than ourselves who could realize our desires and ideas better, and we do not have money either to pay that kind of professionals.

We have decided for approach without hierarchy, in which all parts of repository are accessible to all associates, and every associate can change every part, but, also, every associate or group of associates can from whole base make their "editorial bibliographies", "feature articles", clear pages and similar.

Regarding procedure of transferring, indexing and describing files, we have decided for variant in which every associate can completely self-archive his own (or someone else's) work in all its parts successively or partially, and that work can be done by several associates, through mutual cooperation. Work is done in the way that everything that is missing or is not done correctly can be fixed by any other associate, which ensures speed and efficiency, and if someone does not want to give the part of the job to other associates, he can always reserve that part of work for himself, putting appropriate note or locking page. At this point we have not yet provided to offer procedure of archiving using complex form because of two reasons. First, there is great animosity in community towards filling in the pools and forms. And second, we are still working on all elements of describing and indexing files and articles, so that kind of form would require modifications from time to time.

With this kind of approach – building repository based on equality and cooperation instead of declaring editorial boards and setting hierarchy of privileges and protecting copyrights using licenses GNU, GPL[8] and CC[9] , not only that we achieve principles of democracy and ensure access to the information for all members of the community, but we are also on the track of most successful trends in network cooperation.

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[8] http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html

[9] http://creativecommons.org

Indexing files

Though all school librarians are obliged to use UDC in their school libraries, though UDC (generally) is used in all other libraries in Croatia, though it is widespread in the world and though its attribute is universality and applicability to all sources of the information, and explicitly for indexing files, not only books[10] - with wondering and disbelief we can note that we can almost find no application of UDC in some network site, besides network catalogues of classical (paper) libraries.

With introduction of computers into business, by global acceptance of only few operation systems (DOS and Windows) and unifying graphic interfaces of different programs (for example with usual appearance and positioning of menus), school librarians have accepted as well positioning of files in the folders or subfolders named by arbitrary names according to momentary needs, and number of which as well as the number of levels also increases gradually. Multiple indexing is generally not used, because of nature of programs (Windows Explorer and similar), and in case two librarians would get in their personal collections few hundred files with task to arrange them in groups and subgroups in order for these files to be as easy as possible to find – it is evident that each of them would have his own solution in naming folders, in number of folders and subfolders and in organization of their hierarchy (programs like Windows Explorer do not offer creation of mutual relations).

With appearance of many general and specialized network portals that offer clear lists and descriptions of network sites it is also notable that librarian classification schemes were not used, but network sites' administrators were finding their own solutions, creating groups and subgroups of information that are not in accordance with librarian schemes.

We have predicted possibility of files' (and articles') classification using UDC, but we have not yet realized this, not only because of stated reasons but because of need of resolving copyrights for usage of UDC on http://www.knjiznicari.hr. Besides, because of often changes of UDC during last years, national libraries in Croatia, with which librarians closely cooperate, apply UDC unequally in their funds. That is why it seemed that classifying and often changing of marks would take too much time and energy, and based on experience of other repositories and portals, it is questionable how many visitors and associates even use UDC. Because of everything that's been said feasibility of using UDC is questionable. All files and articles are marked with subject words, that is keywords, and because of characteristics of MediaWiki[11] program that enables simple way for establishing mutual relations using references and creating hierarchy, it seems better to use those keywords in building thesaurus of school libraries.

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[10] http://www.udcc.org/

[11] http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/MediaWiki

Problems with usage of MediaWiki

Thinking about technical side, from the beginning we were planning to run network site on such a platform that would enable gradual growth and expansion without program limitations, system for contents' management based on database. We generally agreed to choose system for contents' management from some of offered "free" software, e.g. open source software. Thought there are wide area of free software specialized for institutional repositories[12], and some of repositories has its own wiki, we have choose different approach. We determined criteria that potential contents' management system must have and according to that criteria we have narrowed down the selection of programs that could represent program platform for librarian works' repository, and later on for portal of school library science. The primary criteria:

- User interface should be as easy as possible to enable beginner to upload different kind of files and to write texts
- Interface must be in Croatian language
- Admin's side of software should be as simple as possible so average school librarian could use it

The secondary criteria:

- Users should be able to change files and text after they have been uploaded and written
- Visitors should be able to post comments
- Besides text, users should be able to add picture, videos and audios
- There should be automatically generated pages with statistics
- There should be automatically generated authors index pages
- There should be automatically generated pages with recently changes
- There should be integrated searching pages

Comparing characteristics of some twenty programs, in closest selection were Joomla[13], Moodle[14], PHP Nuke[15] and MediaWiki[16]. We have selected MediaWiki because it met most of criteria (besides grading / points), and mostly because there is smallest difference in the level of computer pre – knowledge between "regular" associate and "admins". We supposed that repository will contain multitude of different documents, and librarians' job is to organize information. This system enables for every librarian to manage simply and on his own with the contents, every school librarian can via network interface publish

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[12] http://www.soros.org/openaccess/pdf/OSI_Guide_to_IR_Software_v3.pdf

[13] http://www.joomla.org

[14] http://moodle.org/

[15] http://phpnuke.org/

[16] http://www.mediawiki.org

and classify his own and works of other people, and he does not have to learn HTML, PHP or satisfy FTP. Everything can be done via interface of his network browser. Still, it is necessary to learn some twenty new techniques, but multitude of associates on Wikipedias[17] is proof that those skills can be quickly and easily mastered. MediaWiki derived form the idea of GNU encyclopedia (which is immanent to librarians), it is in constant growth and development because it is program platform of Wikipedia – the most famous world network encyclopedia – which guarantees popularization of software, and it is constant trend that, besides classic network pages, many firms and institutions start their own wikies, as places for exchange of ideas and information and of together, cooperative work on projects. With this we open opportunity for school librarians to gather, exchange ideas and works on the best quality program platform with aim of achieving common goal – affirmation of vocation, improvement of work conditions, offering more quality service to users, which finally lead to fulfillment of librarian mission – building better world.

Though Wiki is world trend and world phenomenon, we have expected most problems in managing repository architecture, that is, of whole network site, first experiences indicate that problems are not of that nature, but they are in using Wiki as such. Namely, greatest problems for many associates are managing through the menus (which were typified), using "edit" card, fear to spoil or ruin something and similar. Regardless of that if those problems are because of different levels of computer pre-knowledge, that is, because of not being used to Wiki, or because Wiki is still not what is should be – fast and easy to master and use, we conclude that to use even this simple and quickly learnable program best to use workshops in informatics classrooms and directly teach participants in way of cooperation, especially because it showed that associates do not like to use help pages, that they prefer to skip them and they prefer to learn on computer using method of tries and fails, and during workshops they can always directly ask leader for clarification of any vagueness so learning is much faster and more efficient.

Repository and Portal

We have started thinking about repository of digital and digitalized school – librarian works (and called that project "UDC 02"), but from the beginning we have predicted possibility of portalization of network site, e.g. for http://www.knjiznicari.hr to become starting point for all school librarians for different contents, and not access point only to the repository. Since we have chosen MediaWiki program and with its usage of same techniques and procedures possible to add file to the repository and to write an article, there was no need to limit from the beginning contribution of associates to "filling up" the

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[17] http://www.wikipedia.org/

repository with files, and since one of agreed principles was to enable modification of network site according to stated desires and needs of users, from the very beginning parallel are being built portal of school library science and librarians' works repository.

In the repository of files and on the portal contents from area of class preparations and presentations of educational work are being gathered and presented; literary critics and annotations, displays of exhibitions and other examples of good practice; presentations of work of county expert councils and mother offices in all phases, from announcement of invitation for meetings, display of work of certain councils, to final reports about work; we arrange lists, overviews and comments of laws and other prescriptions that refer to school librarians; we follow and give overviews of works of associations, societies and institutions that are engaged in school library science; we model lists and clear pages of school libraries and librarians; we announce, follow and note events and gatherings, happenings and ongoings – creating thus a kind of almanac, and recently we have introduced rubrics which change on weekly or daily bases on starting page.

Future plans

Since there are many school librarians who have yet not heard of existence of network site on http://www.knjiznicari.hr, they should be introduced and included in the cooperation.

Many school librarians readily visit network site, but they do not dare to cooperate, they should be motivated for cooperation.

In network environment boundaries between states become irrelevant, and language barriers manageable, and it is our desire to achieve cooperation with colleagues from other states, from other language areas, respecting language, cultural and other specificities, but with desire to, with getting to know with examples of good practice, mutually influence on quality of work, affirmation of vocation of school librarian and, finally, for benefit of our users and community in which we live and work.

Conclusion

Though we have not encountered during building school – librarian works' repository in wiki – environment examples of repositories that would be built by school librarians, amount of published works and written articles in less than a year from starting the network site indicates good perspective of building repository as well as of portal of school library science, solving the appearing problems because of use of new technology and new way of network cooperation as we go.

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