ROLES OF LITHUANIAN LIBRARY NETWORK IN REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

Library and library network is a part of the infrastructure of culture and information, which, by fulfilling its roles, provides society and communities with a possibility to exploit information resources, participate in cultural activities, acquire knowledge, it encourages life-long learning, etc. The activity of the library network encompasses all the regions of the country, including the most remote locations and persons that face difficulties in obtaining information and enjoying cultural services by other means; therefore, discourse on the roles and functions of the library network as well as its activities in the regional infrastructure of culture and information is needed.

KEY WORDS: *libraries, library roles, regions, infrastructure of culture, infrastructure of information*.

Introduction

A library is an institution of information and culture, which serves as a part of a country's infrastructure of culture and information. Library network connects regions across the whole country, reaching out to the most remote locations; for instance, rural libraries cover one third of the country's residents (Cicėnienė, 2009). Such scope allows for talking about the influence of the roles of the library network, their importance and the situation in the regional infrastructure of culture and information. Scientific problem of article topics formulate an aim to investigate a change of library roles and the importance of it in Lithuanian regions using a systematic approach to analyze and perceive the influence of the environment on the roles of libraries. Library roles, their changes and effecting at the infrastructure of culture and information are analyzed through the prism of stakeholders and persons which effect: policy makers who develop and provide the laws, which must be implemented, and members of the society, who say and indicate their needs and expectations (based on the accomplished surveys about the needs and the opinions). The analysis presented in this article is a part of the investigation about the changes of the roles of libraries in Lithuania and it is aimed to determine directions and opportunities of the changes of roles of libraries.

The a i m of the article is to analyse the roles of the Lithuanian libraries in the regional infrastructure of culture and information;

The o b j e c t is the roles of libraries in the regional infrastructure of culture and information.

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The following goals were set out in order to reach the aim:
1. To analyse the scope of the Lithuanian library network;
2. To identify the context of the infrastructure of culture and information of the Lithuanian library network;
3. To carry out the analysis of public needs and opinion surveys.
In order to reach the aim and implement the goals, the methods of the analysis, summary and synthesis of scientific literature, statistical data, analysis of strategic and other document as well as previously carried out public needs and opinion surveys were applied.

1. The scope of Lithuanian library network

A library network is defined in an encyclopaedia as a group of libraries sharing certain features (territory, departmental subordination, type, scientific field) (Knygotyra, 1997: 65). From the point of view of territorial distribution, the Lithuanian library network could comprise all libraries operating in Lithuania. According to the Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 1995; 2004), the Lithuanian library network consists of the following: Lithuanian national library, public county libraries, public municipal libraries, libraries of scientific and study institutions as well as schools (except higher education), specialized and other libraries (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 1995; 2004). There are also five libraries in Lithuania that enjoy the *status of state importance* due to the exceptional nature of their functions and funds accumulated (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 1995; 2004): Lithuanian Library for the Blind, The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Lithuanian Medical Library, Lithuanian Technical Library, and Vilnius University Library. Therefore, the Lithuanian library network in this article is perceived as a whole of libraries of different types, subordination, and status as well as libraries that are inhomogeneous due to other reasons such as different communities served or different funds managed, and widely geographically distributed ones (Fig. 1) (based on Manžuch, Macevičiūtė, Adomavičius, 2012: 10).
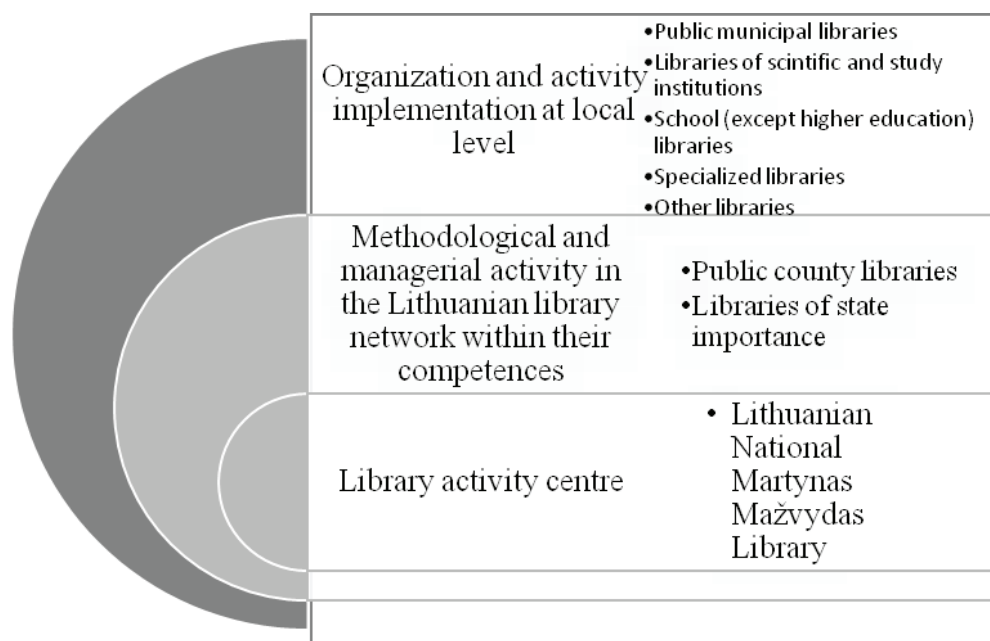

Fig. 1. Lithuanian library network
Source: based on Manžuch, Macevičiūtė, Adomavičius, 2012: 10

The Lithuanian library statistics of 2013 (Lietuvos bibliotekų statistika 2013 m., 2014) gives a record of 2 980 libraries of all types (including the main libraries, their branches, service points and mobile libraries),

covering all the regions of Lithuania. In 2013, the network in Lithuania reached and had over one million registered users, and almost 25 million visitors, which were served by 6004 professional librarians (Table 1).

Table 1. Lithuanian library network indicators, 2013

Fund size (31 December, 2013)	Number of registered users	Number of visits (visitors)	Professional librarians
107 198 647 physical items	1 311 558	24 555 634	6004

Source: Lietuvos bibliotekų statistika 2013 m., 2014

Taking a more detailed look at the Lithuanian library network and its regional scope, libraries are further analysed according to their types:

- Lithuanian National Martynas Mažvydas Library (further referred to as LNL) is the main scientific library of the Republic of Lithuania accessible to all users (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 1995; 2004), which, implementing its functions provided for in the law and formulating the mission of a national library in a wider context, shifted the definition of its mission in 2012–2013 from library fund-orientated to social needs-oriented, based on the search of the place, role and perspectives of a library resulting from social and technological transformations in society (based on Renaldas Gudauskas, Lithuanian Public Libraries, 2012):

LNL mission, 2012: "…a national cultural institution, which collects, manages and preserves written Lithuanian cultural heritage, shapes the fund of Lithuanian and foreign documents to meet scientific, educational, cultural and economic needs, and also provides services to the public" (Lithuanian Public Libraries, 2012).

LNL mission, 2013: "...to ensure that the needs of the Lithuanian knowledge society for documented and digital information are met" (Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka, 2013; Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka, 2014).

According to Valerija Vilnonytė (1985), the appearance of the Lithuanian national library was historically determined by several factors, one of which was examples in foreign countries: "...the idea born to the Lithuanians abroad to have their own library was not an exceptional phenomenon. However, differently from others, the Lithuanian emigrants decided to use such a library as the beginnings for a national library. This is a specific phenomenon, urged by the ban on the press in the national language in Lithuania" (Vilnonytė, 1985: 100). It took decades to move from the first steps to the foundation of the actual Lithuanian national library, and it was only after the end of the period of the press ban, as cultural work became appreciated, and after the First World War, in 1919, when the State Central Library was reorganized, that the Lithuanian National Library (Lithuanian Central Bookstore) was founded (Sinkevičius, 1983; Vilnonytė, 1985).

- The status of a library of state importance (it is not a separate type of libraries but a name granted in the law) is granted to the libraries where the written and cultural heritage accumulated is of exceptional significance to science, education, culture and state economy (Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania, 1995; 2004). According to the Lithuanian Library Optimization Network (LiBiTOP) feasibility study (Manžuch, Macevičiūtė, Adomavičius, 2012), libraries of state importance can be grouped into two types: libraries of science and study institutions (Vilnius University Library and The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences) and specialized libraries (Lithuanian Library for the Blind, Lithuanian Technical Library, Lithuanian Medical Library) (Manžuch, Macevičiūtė, Adomavičius, 2012: 15).

The current version of the Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 2004) stipulates that the document fund accumulated and preserved in the libraries of scientific and study institutions is needed for the activities of the institutions; in a scientific research institution it *meets the*

need to use documents and information and in an institution of higher education it *guarantees a possibility for the institution to implement the scientific and study goals as well as upgrade the teachers' qualification* (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 2004). The libraries of scientific and study institutions serve users (most often, their own community), participate in shaping the Lithuanian library fund and designing library information system (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 1995; 2004).

A specialized library if defined in the Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 1995, 2004) as a library, which accumulates specialized fund of documents published in Lithuania and abroad, serves users, participates in shaping the Lithuanian library fund and designing library information system (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 1995; 2004).

- Public county libraries have undergone a number of changes[2], and in the Law Amending Articles 4, 9 and 10 of the Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymo 4, 9 ir 10 straipsnių pakeitimo įstatymas, 2010) are defined as "a centre of the analysis and co-ordination of the activity of libraries operating in a defined territory, methodological assistance, upgrading librarian qualification, inter-library loan services, bibliography, ethnography and information", which also serves users, manages a universal document fund and carries out other library activities (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymo 4, 9 ir 10 straipsnių pakeitimo įstatymas, 2010).

The current public county libraries were established when Lithuania was part of the Soviet Union (further referred to as SSR) as methodological centres for other libraries (and librarians): in 1950, the so-called area libraries were established in Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai and Klaipėda (Sinkevičius, 1983). The staff of these libraries used to visit and consult public municipal library specialists, the majority of which lacked adequate education for library activities and the necessary knowledge in the field of fund management, reader services, etc.: specialists from public county libraries used to organize specialized trainings, conferences, etc. to the staff of other libraries (Sinkevičius, 1983). During the beginning of the independence period of Lithuania, although in the Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania of 1995 the public county libraries and their scope of activity are defined, the activity of public county libraries was questioned because "their methodological activity became an object of discussions, <…> the librarians expressed dissatisfaction with their controlling function" (Jaskonienė, 2002: 20). Currently county public libraries are active participants in the network of libraries and are engaged in regional activities.

- The founders of public municipal libraries are municipalities. These libraries are distinguished by the concentrated community they serve (the main group of users served are the residents of the territory of the particular municipality) and a universal document fund they manage (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 1995).

In the library network of the Lithuanian SSR, the current public municipal libraries not only served readers in their own territory of activity but they also carried out "extensive propaganda and cultural education work" (Sinkevičius, 1983: 40). The restoration of the independence of Lithuania was the point when the public view of libraries and their roles changed, the libraries re-oriented and adapted to the environment as an open, democratic and accommodating institution. During the years 1990–2000, ideologized literature of outdated content was removed from library funds, the universal 10-point classification system was fully introduced, Lithuanian integral information system was introduced, and new services were designed and launched (Jaskonienė, 2002: 5). The political changes that took place, the disappearance of the old structures

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[2]   Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania of the 6th of June, 1995, indicates that the founder of public county libraries is the Ministry of Culture; Article 9 of the Law Amending the Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania No. IX-2378 of the 15th of July, 2004, stipulates that the founder of public county libraries is the head of the county; after the abolishment of the administrations of county heads, according to articles 4, 9 and 10 in the Law Amending the Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania No. XI-775, the owner rights and duties to public county libraries went to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Education.

and the occurrence of the new ones (such as municipal committees and departments responsible for libraries), as well as unfavourable economic situation resulted in the decreasing number of public municipal libraries in Lithuania at the time, explaining it as corrections to network distribution (blind-alley settlements, short distances between libraries), inappropriate premises (the premises previously belonged to kolkhozes and were privatized and returned to the legal owners) (Jaskonienė, 2002: 6). Although the processes of closure were intense, chaotic and unpredictable when comparing the statistical data from the year 1990 and 2000, it turned out that in 1990, 49 public municipal libraries were operating (with 1706 branches in towns and villages), and in 2000, there were 61 public municipal libraries (with 1448 branches) (Jaskonienė, 2002). The Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania of the year 1995 established the library names: the previously-called "central libraries", the public municipal libraries were given their current form and named "public municipal" (Jaskonienė, 2002). One may think that since the restoration of independence of the state, the situation stabilized in its essence, so the current public municipal library network is the continuation of the developed network.

Currently, 60 municipal and 5 county public libraries are operating in Lithuania, located throughout Lithuania and covering all regions of Lithuania (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Lithuanian library map
Source: Lithuanian Public Libraries, 2012: 6

Thus, library network encompasses all the Lithuanian regions and, acting in a coordinated manner, designs and provides services to the public, which are driven by public needs.

2. Context of the infrastructure of culture and information of Lithuanian libraries

The activity of the Lithuanian library network in the regions is affected by the overall situation of the infrastructure of culture and information in the country, its political environment and other factors. Libraries are also an inseparable part of the infrastructure of culture and information; although libraries are not always directly referred to in state strategic and other documents, one can guess and imply that the library network can also be used for the implementation of the strategies.

In 2010, The Guidelines for the Change in Lithuanian Cultural Policy (further referred to as Guidelines for the Change) (Lietuvos kultūros politikos kaitos gairės, 2010) were adopted in the Seimas of the Republic

of Lithuania, defining the aim of the desired change as the renovation of the Lithuanian cultural policy model, which would help reveal, preserve and develop the cultural identity and creative potential of society (Lietuvos kultūros politikos kaitos gairės, 2010). In order to achieve the goals, the cultural situation in the country is going to be changed, considering the needs of a creative, changing, and technologically equipped society: to establish culture as a strategic direction of state development assigning priority to cultural policy; to reform and democratize culture management by developing self-regulation, to ensure high level protection of copyright and related rights, to increase the intellectual capital of the Lithuanian creators as well as the competing abilities of creative industries based on it, to ensure life-long development of personal cultural competences and creativity, to build common policy of integral heritage protection, to increase culture accessibility across Lithuania, to broaden the Lithuanian cultural space by bringing together Lithuanian representatives from abroad, etc. (Lietuvos kultūros politikos kaitos gairės, 2010). In the Guidelines for the Change, public libraries are referred to as institutions providing life-long development of people's cultural competences and creativity. This can be achieved through the implementation of functions that ensure the perspectives of a more meaningful and happier life of a person: updating one's knowledge, realizing interest in history and innovation, aiming at a better career, integrating into community, taking independent decisions and participating in public life (Lietuvos kultūros politikos kaitos gairės, 2010). The Guidelines for the Change also stipulate the importance of libraries' institutional response to public needs: free-of-charge access to a variety of science and art as well as modern information technologies is provided; they establish that libraries expand and supplement the activity of schools and education system; they provide a possibility to reveal oneself and participate in cultural life, to deepen one's cultural knowledge, develop one's creativity and apply it in daily life (Lietuvos kultūros politikos kaitos gairės, 2010). Therefore, "libraries are a fundamental institution of an educated and creative society, providing members of society with a free-of-charge access to a variety of science and art as well as modern information technologies" (Lietuvos kultūros politikos kaitos gairės, 2010), which create conditions to update one's knowledge, access literature, practice interest in history and innovation (Paliukaitė-Medeckienė, 2013). Moreover, in 2012, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, implementing the State Progress Strategy "Lithuanian Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030" (2014–2020 metų Nacionalinės pažangos programa, 2012), adopted the National progress programme for the Year 2014–2020, where libraries, as well as other cultural institutions, are given a role in increasing access to education and variety of services (2014–2020 metų Nacionalinės pažangos programa, 2012), thus encouraging life-long learning, attempting to involve socially vulnerable groups, and rural residents; in order to implement the goal of the programme, it is planned to strengthen the possibilities of cultural, sports and education institutions to provide formal and informal education services (2014–2020 metų Nacionalinės pažangos programa, 2012). Another role defined in the programme, given to libraries as memory institutions, is to preserve and bring relevance to cultural heritage and to develop conscientiousness (2014–2020 metų Nacionalinės pažangos programa, 2012). In carrying out the role, the libraries should expand and revive historical and cultural memory of the Lithuanian residents: give relevance to the cultural heritage with the help of modern tools and make it accessible, which means to preserve, digitalize, display the heritage in an interactive and attractive manner and to bring it closer to modern day (2014–2020 metų Nacionalinės pažangos programa, 2012). The programme also assigns yet another role to libraries, namely, to promote creativity, leadership, participation in cultural activity, cultural activeness and integration of communities (N2014-2020 metų Nacionalinės pažangos programa, 2012), libraries acquire the functions of strengthening creative abilities and developing talents of social groups, particularly young people, encouraging partnership between creative social groups as well as leadership within community by applying modern technologies (2014–2020 metų Nacionalinės pažangos programa, 2012).

The problem faced while working towards the integration of libraries in the infrastructure of culture and information of the country is the incompatibility of the Guidelines for the Change, other documents and documents aimed at individual areas of culture, as well as diverging visions; for instance, the Law on Libraries of the Republic of Lithuania and its versions (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymas, 1995; 2004; Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymo 4, 9 ir 10 straipsnių pakeitimo įstatymas, 2010; Lietuvos

Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymo 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 straipsnių pakeitimo (…), 2013) (further referred to as Law on Libraries) has lost its relevance in its essence and concept due to fundamental changes that society has undergone, the Law on Libraries does not reflect the directions established in the Guidelines for the Change, and cultural and information institutions are seen in the traditional way, considering only a small part of their actual roles and functions. In general, since 1995, when the Law on Libraries was adopted, only editorial amendments were introduced, although researchers see that the current Law on Libraries does not help the libraries fulfil their roles in society (Audronė Glosienė claimed so back in 2000 m. [Glosienė, 2000]). Renaldas Gudauskas (2013 a, 2013 b, 2013 c, 2014) comes back to the topic: he claims that a new law on libraries would allow libraries to be and fully participate in the Lithuanian information infrastructure, since the changed environment suggests that fundamental changes are needed in the laws, allowing for efficient activity of cultural institutions in carrying out functions that meet public needs and accepting timely roles (Gudauskas, 2013 a; 2013 b; 2013 c; 2014). In 2013, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania rallied an expert working group in order to establish the priority directions in library development; the aim of the group was to define library activity priorities, encompassing their functions and roles (Dėl bibliotekų plėtros prioritetinių krypčių nustatymo darbo grupės sudarymo, 2013), and, before the work of the working group was over, a version of the Law on Libraries was adopted in 2013 (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymo 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 straipsnių pakeitimo (…), 2013), where the definition of public libraries was expanded: a library accessible to all users, accumulating and preserving a universal document fund that meets the needs of the community of the territory (county, municipality) it is located in, providing the residents with information and public internet access services, implementing programs and projects of ethnography, socio-cultural education, reading promotion, information literacy and other programs and projects of informal education related to library activities (Lietuvos Respublikos bibliotekų įstatymo 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 straipsnių pakeitimo (…), 2013). The next planned step in the preparation of a new, fundamentally different, law on libraries.

The Lithuanian Programme of the Development of Information Society for the Year 2011–2019 (Lietuvos informacinės visuomenės plėtros 2011–2019 metų programa, 2011) the role of libraries in information society is perceived as that of a prophet of information and communication technologies, aiming at ensuring the reach and access to information for the users: it is stipulated that by implementing the programme, the libraries will play a role of a memory institution, when their functions will include the following: to ensure the remaining of the Lithuanian language in the global society, via information and communication technologies, to spread information about the Lithuanian culture and to contribute to the preservation and strengthening of cultural variety in Europe as well as development of national self-expression (Lietuvos informacinės visuomenės plėtros 2011–2019 metų programa, 2011).

The Regional Cultural Development Programme for the Year 2011–2020 (Regionų kultūros plėtros 2012–2020 metų programa, 2011) also reflects the roles of libraries. In this case, the main focus is put on the accessibility of culture and its spread in the region through the use of existing and developed network of cultural institutions (Regionų kultūros plėtros 2012–2020 metų programa, 2011), libraries are given a role in creating conditions for the residents to use possibilities provided by information and communication technologies, in reducing social and electronic exclusion, integrating national communities, and developing information society competences (Paliukaitė-Medeckienė, 2013: 20).

Therefore, the roles of library network in regional infrastructure of culture and information are not fully defined, the library network is given broad and generic roles: memory preservation and transfer to future generations, information society development, community promotion and involvement in various activities, spreading information and communication technologies, etc.

3. Lithuanian library roles: analysis of public needs and opinion surveys

The assessment of library network activities, roles and functions is reflected in the results of public and library users' opinion surveys. They also reveal the scope of library activity in the regions. In Lithuania, library

users' needs and opinion surveys are carried out both at library level (libraries carry out needs and opinion surveys in the communities they serve) and at state level. The largest public needs and opinion surveys that looked at library activities and revealed the public attitude towards the role of libraries were carried out in 2008–2012 during the impact assessment of the project "Libraries for Progress" (Lith. *Bibliotekos pažangai*) covering public libraries across the country.

From the chronological point of view, it is important to mention the surveys carried out prior to the year 2008: in 2004, an opinion survey of Lithuanian residents was carried out, where cultural needs as well as the evaluations of cultural institutions including libraries were looked at (Lietuvos gyventojų kultūriniai poreikiai, 2004). The report states that "in the context of the development of information society, the perception of libraries is changing; their focus shifts towards the function of information and communication, i. e. providing readers with a possibility to get acquainted with the latest global information online," and the role of libraries is also changing: "they do not only create conditions for the residents to familiarize with the Lithuanian periodicals and receive information on job vacancies but they often become centres of cultural life and interpersonal communication between people" (Lietuvos gyventojų kultūriniai poreikiai, 2004: 40). According to the researchers, the respondents perceive the library network as *an ordinary lifestyle attribute*, they look for information there (23 per cent of survey respondents), satisfy their aesthetic needs (search for works of fiction) (13 per cent of survey respondents), look at most recent topics (information in newspapers and magazines) (8 per cent), read scientific literature (4 per cent), etc. (Lietuvos gyventojų kultūriniai poreikiai, 2004).

In 2007, the Lithuanian National Martynas Mažvydas Library carried out a survey "Village (Town) Library as Community Centre" (Cicėnienė, 2009), the aim of which was to determine the place of a village library in socio-cultural environment of a contemporary village and its actual functions and role in the social life of a village community (Cicėnienė, 2009). The main purposes of the respondents' visits in village libraries were identified, which in their sequence and content resemble the opinion survey of the Lithuanian residents in 2004 (Fig. 3 Survey respondents' purposes of visits in village libraries (percentage).
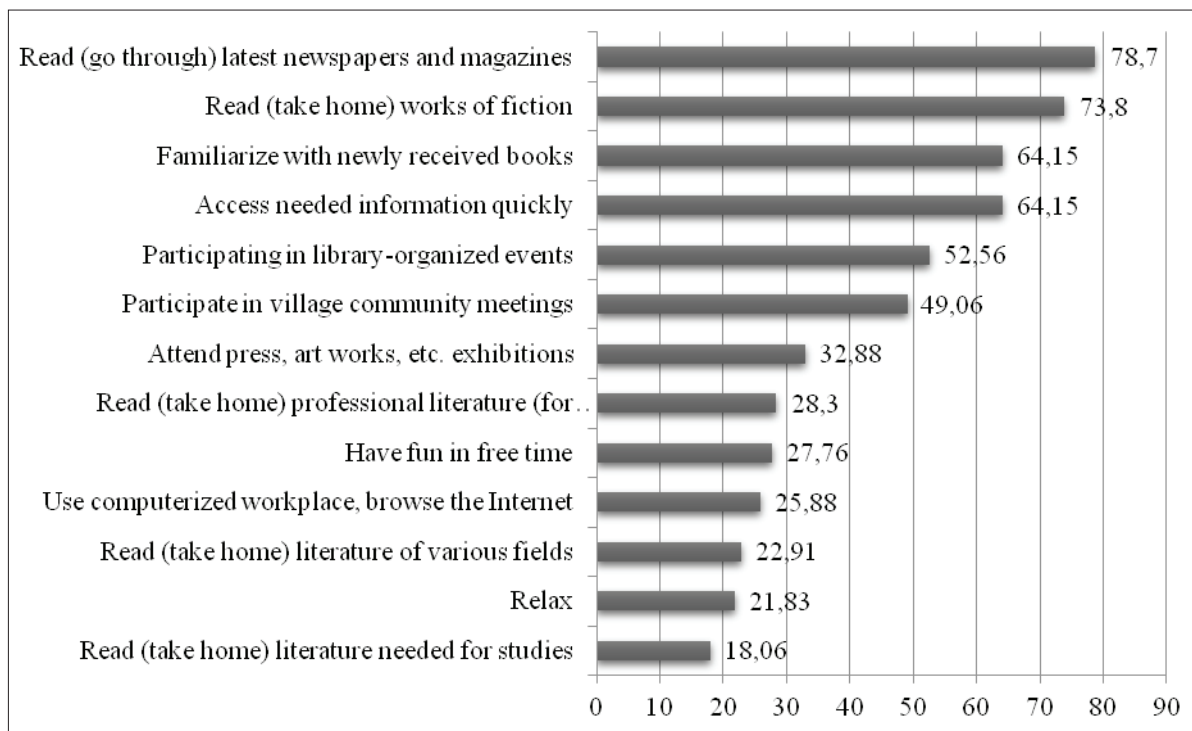

Fig. 3. Purposes of survey respondents' visits in village libraries (percentage)
Source: based on Cicėnienė, 2009: 125

The survey respondents also indicated that in the library they upgraded their qualification, looked for information regarding finding employment, used electronic services and CDs, studied foreign languages and tried out language learning software, they used music CDs, played computer games, listened to music recordings, used registered (subscribed) databases and computer catalogues of the library (Cicėnienė, 2009). The conclusions of the survey in question indicate that the role of a village library for local community manifests in the educational, informational, cultural and social life of the village people (Cicėnienė, 2009). In 2008–2012, during the implementation of the project "Libraries for Progress", wide scale opinion surveys of the public, library visitors, heads and staff, socially vulnerable groups, and experts were carried out. The social research of the project "Libraries for Progress", which was launched before the implementation of the project (an initial situation analysis was carried out), continued up to 2012, when the final impact assessment of the project was carried out (Bibliotekos pažangai: projektas „Bibliotekos pažangai" 2008–2012 m.). The impact assessment analysis revealed how public attitude towards the roles, functions and activities of libraries changed throughout Lithuania (Bibliotekos pažangai: projektas „Bibliotekos pažangai" 2008–2012 m.; Bibliotekos pažangai (…), 2008; Bibliotekos pažangai (…), 2009; Bibliotekos pažangai (…), 2010; Bibliotekos pažangai (…), 2012):

- When the survey was launched in 2008, it was established that the public opinion on the roles of libraries was limited to a belief that these were institutions where one can get books. The initial situation analysis showed that adults usually borrowed books from libraries to take home (96 per cent of respondents), read periodicals (62 per cent), found other publications (30 per cent), etc. The first survey also revealed a large gap in the skills of information technology use and the possibilities of internet use between urban and rural residents: although one third of users (28 per cent) had libraries as the only place to use internet (Bibliotekos pažangai (…), 2008: 33), the Lithuanian library network infrastructure did not allow to reach all potential users. In her article in 2009, Ugnė Rutkauskienė claims that in Lithuania, technologies are unevenly spread between different society layers: "[technologies] are more frequently used by younger, socially active and better educated respondents as well as those with better income. Another part of society, which makes up around 40 per cent, can be attributed to the digitally excluded" (Rutkauskienė, 2009a; 2009b). Children saw libraries as conservative and unattractive institutions due to outdated infrastructure (Projekto „Bibliotekos pažangai" vaikų apklausa, 2008).

- The impact assessment in 2009 showed that the situation was changing: although many people still believed that libraries were "book reading centres", the broadened library functions allowed users to use other library services: free-of-charge internet access (Bibliotekos pažangai (…), 2009: 31). According to the survey of 2009, the public attitude towards the role of libraries was changing: "the number of those who find it a good place for communication, a place with pleasant atmosphere and a place to have fun is growing" (Bbliotekos pažangai (…), 2009).

- The mid-term survey in 2010 showed an even clearer impact of the new functions: "the "traditional" library activity is evaluated more poorly. Public internet access users gave the lowest evaluation to the following areas: book assortment and updating the periodicals" (Bibliotekos pažangai (…), 2010: 5). The perception of a library role in society was changing: "In the village, the role of a library as a social point of attraction is highlighted, while in the city emphasis is put on modernity and facilities" (Bibliotekos pažangai (…), 2010: 31). Having systemized the data of the surveys from all years, a chart is presented (Fig. 4), based on public opinion survey results from the year 2008–2011 on the associations that the public had on libraries. Since the questionnaire of 2008 differed from those of other years and the questionnaires of the years 2009–2012 also had slight differences among them, the chart presents only the main associations that characterize libraries, which were noticed in all or most surveys.
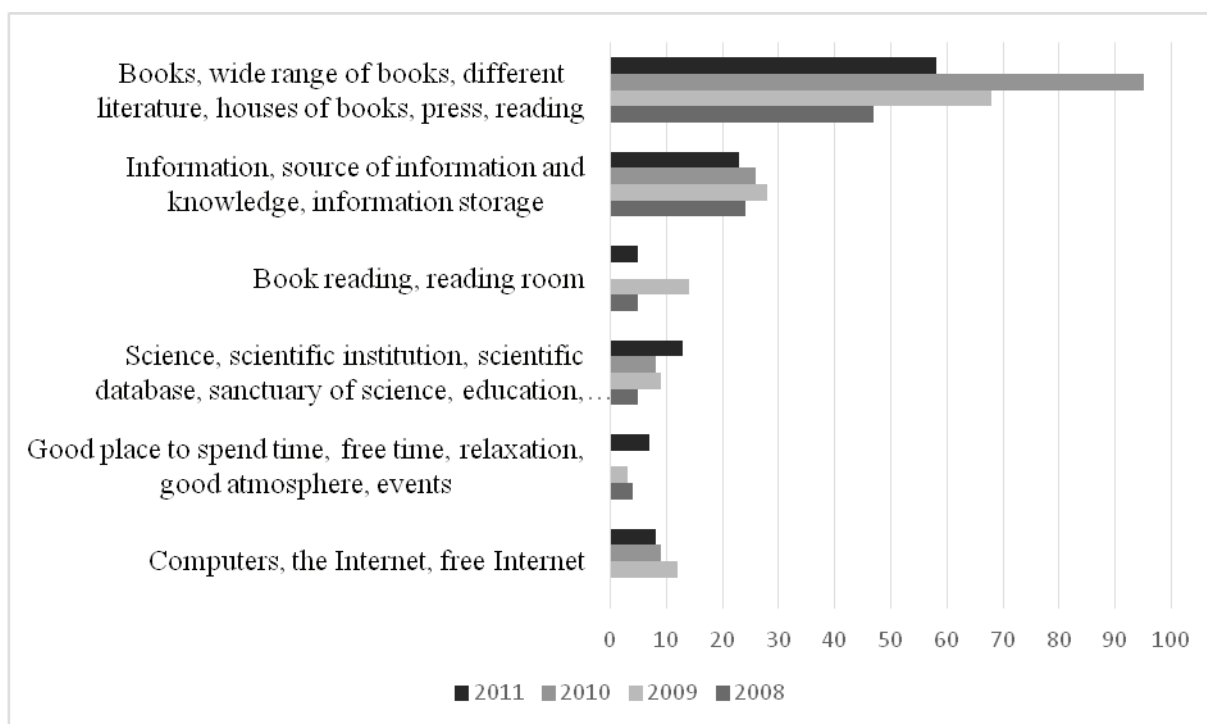
Fig. 4. Library associations with activities, services, etc. in society in 2008–2011
Source: Projekto „Bibliotekos pažangai" gyventojų apklausa, 2008: 18; Projekto „Bibliotekos pažangai" Lietuvos gyventojų apklausa, 2009: 65; Projekto „Bibliotekos pažangai" Lietuvos gyventojų apklausa, 2010: 15; Projekto „Bibliotekos pažangai" Lietuvos gyventojų apklausa 2011; 2012: 83

In 2012, the impact assessment of the whole project "Libraries for Progress" 2008–2012 was carried out, which revealed an altered attitude towards libraries: "The mission and role of a library expanded, the image of the institution in society improved. Library is currently considered as a provider of complex services, centre of information, culture, education and community attraction that constantly introduces innovations and encourages the residents to actively use them" (Bibliotekos pažangai (…), 2012: 5). The assessment report states that since 2008, the attitude towards library roles was constantly changing: "A library was perceived as a passive information mediator, an administrator of information sources (…) [as of 2009, the library] is perceived as multidimensional, encompassing a number of fields; to provide all-sided information, build favourable social space for residents, (…) to educate and teach community members (…) as of 2011, the library mission became linked to innovations, their introduction, promotion and teaching to use them" (Bibliotekos pažangai (…), 2012: 17).

Public needs and opinion surveys regarding information and cultural institutions and their activities continue and are further carried out, thus evaluating public attitude towards libraries, their roles, functions, activities and impact on society members in the regions. In 2012, under the commission of "Bill & Melinda Gates foundation", a research was carried out in 17 European Union (further referred to as EU) member states with the aim of establishing the perception of public libraries as well as types of their use, highlighting the role of public libraries in supporting the strategy *Europe 2020*. According to the report, the user opinions on the use of information and communication technologies in Lithuanian public libraries are identified and the results are compared to those of the entire EU (Vartotojų nuomonė apie informacinių ir komunikacinių technologijų naudą Lietuvos viešosiose bibliotekose, 2013):

1. Library and public access use. 96 per cent of the Lithuanian public libraries provide public internet access (further referred to as PIA) service, which the users use motivating that it is free of charge and in many cases they do not have other choices of access to computer or the Internet (Vartotojų nuomonė apie informacinių ir komunikacinių technologijų naudą Lietuvos viešosiose bibliotekose, 2013). 99 per cent of Lithuanian library service users, compared to the EU, believed

that the library's computer and internet connection services are valuable. During the survey it was established that it was people who can be attributed to the group of "digital exclusion" who used the computer services.

2. Opinion on public libraries and the impact of libraries on users. Compared to the EU, in Lithuania the users acknowledged the importance of libraries in providing services related to computer access, bringing community together, which was also linked to positive answers regarding the need to increase funding for libraries. The users state that libraries have impact on them (98 per cent). During the survey, it was determined that the most active users of information and communication services are the elderly, those with smaller income, unemployed and those in search of a job.

3. Self-education and informal education. According to survey data, during the 12 months of the period analysed, 75 per cent of library users participated in educational activities in libraries in Lithuania.

4. Occupation and public internet use for work. Half of the Lithuanian users admitted using library computers in order to keep a certain form of occupation. Library computers were also used for job search, for example, to submit application for a job.

5. E-government and active citizenship. During the 12 months of the period analysed, one in four Lithuanian library users (24 per cent) used interaction with governmental institutions (Vartotojų nuomonė apie informacinių ir komunikacinių technologijų naudą Lietuvos viešosiose bibliotekose, 2013) via library network: downloaded or filled tax returns, obtained information from the websites of governmental institutions, read and wrote to internet websites for civic or political purposes, carried out information search regarding consumer law or legislation, activities or policies of local, national or EU institutions.

To sum up, one can state that the Lithuanian library network, encompassing all regions of the country, carries out roles and functions that respond to public needs: provides access to information, brings community together, creates conditions to use information and communication technologies, and implements other activities relevant to communities.

Conclusions

The set out goals were implemented and the aim of the article, to analyse the roles of Lithuanian libraries in regional infrastructure of culture and information, was reached. It was established that the Lithuanian library network, a library network perceived as the entirety of libraries, covers the whole territory of Lithuania and builds a unified system available for use of all community members with no exceptions according to their needs. The library network is a part of the regional infrastructure of culture and information, which provides the community members with a possibility to participate in cultural activities, and be part of information society. Summing up the analysis of strategic documents that was carried out, one can claim that the situation of the Lithuanian library network in the infrastructure of culture and information is paradoxical: on the one hand, libraries serve as an important part of the infrastructure, capable of successful implementation of priority activities of the country; on the other hand, the library network is restricted and its potential is often not fully exploited due to fragmented shaping of the Lithuanian infrastructure of culture and information, which often fails to cover wider context. This also reflects in the public needs and opinion surveys of the year 2004–2013. Analysing the data received, it turned out that the main roles of library network in the regional infrastructure of culture and information are multiple: library as information mediator; the role of the library as an information and communication services provider and communal activity promoter also emerged. To sum up, it can be stated that the roles of the library network in the regional infrastructure of culture and information are those of an institution, which: develops cultural competences, creativity and conscientiousness in people, promotes leadership, provides free-of-charge access to the variety of science

and art as well as new information technologies, provides a possibility to reveal oneself and participate in cultural life, encourages cultural activeness and integration in communities, increases access to education and variety of services, preserves and gives relevance to cultural heritage, disseminates the advantages provided by information and communication technologies, provides space with public internet access.

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LIETUVOS BIBLIOTEKŲ TINKLO VAIDMUO KULTŪRINĖJE IR INFORMACINĖJE REGIONŲ INFRASTRUKTŪROJE

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Santrauka

Bibliotekų tinklas yra kultūros ir informacijos infrastruktūros dalis, atlikdama savo vaidmenį, ji suteikia visuomenei ir bendruomenėms galimybę naudotis informacijos ištekliais, dalyvauti kultūrinėje veikloje, siekti žinių, skatina mokytis visą gyvenimą ir kt. Bibliotekų tinklo veikla apima visus šalies regionus, neaplenkiant net labiausiai nutolusių vietų ir asmenų, kuriems sudėtinga kitais būdais gauti informaciją ir naudotis kultūros paslaugomis, todėl tikslinga kalbėti apie bibliotekų tinklo vaidmenis, funkcijas ir veiklą regionų kultūros ir informacijos infrastruktūroje. Straipsnio temos mokslinė problema pasireiškia siekiu bibliotekų vaidmenų kaitą ir svarbą Lietuvos regionuose tirti sistemiškai, analizuoti visumą ir įžvelgti aplinkos įtaką bibliotekų vaidmenims. Bibliotekų vaidmenys, jų kaita, veikimas kultūros ir informacijos infrastruktūroje tiriami per suinteresuotų ir bibliotekų vaidmenis veikiančių asmenų prizmę: politikos kūrėjus, kurie rengia ir teikia įstatymus, visuomenės narius, kurie išsako savo lūkesčius, įvardija poreikius (remiamasi atliktais poreikių ir nuomonių tyrimais).

Šiame straipsnyje pateikiama analizė – dalis atliekamo tyrimo apie bibliotekų vaidmenų kaitą Lietuvoje, kuriuo siekiama nustatyti bibliotekų vaidmenų kaitos kryptis ir galimybes.

Šio straipsnio tikslas – išanalizuoti Lietuvos bibliotekų vaidmenis regionų kultūros ir informacijos infrastruktūroje. Objektas – bibliotekų vaidmenys regionų kultūros ir informacijos infrastruktūroje. Siekiant tikslo ir įgyvendinant užsibrėžtus uždavinius taikyti mokslinės literatūros, statistinių duomenų, strateginių ir kitų dokumentų, atliktų visuomenės poreikių ir nuomonių tyrimų analizės, apibendrinimo ir sintezės metodai.

Nustatyta, kad Lietuvos bibliotekų tinklas, jį suvokiant kaip bibliotekų visumą, apima visą Lietuvos teritoriją ir sukuria vieningą sistemą, kuria gali naudotis visi be išimties bendruomenės nariai, atsižvelgdami į savo poreikius. Apibendrinant atliktą strateginių dokumentų analizę, galima teigti, kad Lietuvos bibliotekų tinklo situacija kultūros ir informacijos infrastruktūroje yra paradoksali: viena vertus, bibliotekos yra svarbi infrastruktūros dalis, siekiant įgyvendinti šalies prioritetines veiklas; kita vertus, bibliotekų tinklas yra suvaržytas, dažnai neišnaudojamos tinklo galimybės dėl epizodiško, platesnio konteksto neapimančio Lietuvos kultūros ir informacijos infrastruktūros formavimo. Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad bibliotekų tinklo vaidmenys regiono kultūros ir informacijos infrastruktūroje yra šie: institucija, kuri ugdo kultūrines žmogaus kompetencijas, kūrybingumą ir sąmoningumą, skatina lyderystę, suteikia nemokamą prieigą prie mokslo ir meno šaltinių, naujų informacijos technologijų, galimybę atsiskleisti ir dalyvauti kultūriniame gyvenime, skatina bendruomenių kultūrinį aktyvumą ir integraciją, didina švietimo prieinamumą ir paslaugų įvairovę, išsaugo ir puoselėja kultūros paveldą, tai yra erdvės, kuriose sukurta viešoji interneto prieiga.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *bibliotekos, bibliotekų vaidmenys, regionai, kultūros infrastruktūra, informacijos infrastruktūra.*

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