



Parliamentary libraries - Necessity of keeping the pace with time
CASE STUDY: The Parliamentary Library of Montenegro: Necessary coming - out from the past

Svjetlana Aligrudic

The main librarian

The Library of the Parliament of Montenegro

Podgorica, Montenegro

E-mail: svjetlanaa@t-com.me

Meeting:

90. Library and Research Services for Parliaments and Library History

WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 75TH IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL

23-27 August 2009, Milan, Italy

<http://www.ifla.org/annual-conference/ifla75/index.htm>

Abstract

A short historical overview of the Montenegrin parliamentarism and activities in touch with The Library of the Parliament of Montenegro, since it's constitution up to nowadays, is given in the paper. The accent is placed on the necessity of transformation of this Library into up-to-date parliamentary library. The status of this Library within the parent organization – The Parliament of Montenegro is analyzed, as well as library holdings (volume and structure, organization and acquisition policy), user's profile and (non)using of its sources and services, manpower structure and necessity of employing high-qualified library staff and younger researchers for the Research Centre. Finally, inevitability of structural changes in The Library of the Parliament of Montenegro's dealings is emphasized, in order that it could keep pace with the time.

Key words: Parliamentary libraries, special libraries, Montenegro, analysis, work improvement, the parliamentarism,

Introduction:

Nowadays parliamentary libraries

The purpose of existence of any special library, particularly of a parliamentary library, is putting all it's strengths into disposition to the institution to which it belongs to – The Parliament, respectively to deputies and parliamentary committees, because of the fact that they have direct influence in decision-making procedure of the biggest national importance. This kind of library is needed to provide the latest information, which entirely „covers“ user demand, in order to save the time that the client would have to put himself through looking for information.

Parliamentary libraries are the special libraries belonging to the institution of the highest state importance, as they have very strict circle of clients. Their primary task is providing services to deputies and employees in their parent organization, as well as to the secretaries of the parliamentary committees and to administrative service of the parliament.

Library materials have to be adapted to the single-core category of clients, and to consist of publications such as laws, decisions and case law of the state and the parliament, whose organizational part a library is, as well as from the other parliaments and institutions in this state and abroad, whose legal practice could help to deputies, parliament committees and administrative work in the parliament. Publications which contents are connected with: legislature, law, political sciences, economy, EU documents, international legal practice, and with supplementary social sciences, are also preferable. The purpose of existence of parliamentary libraries is to provide their clients with the latest relevant information that is essential for the work process of the parliamentary committees, as well as for the decision-making process itself in parliaments. Depending on the capabilities, parliamentary libraries are in obligation to make the specified analyses based on deputies and parliamentary committees' requests. The advantage of parliamentary libraries with a not numerous holdings, but well selected and organized, is in providing a faster dissemination of information and more efficient using of holdings. Also, the ordinary writing-off of unused and obsolete materials is necessary.

Special librarianship, particularly it is mattered for the parliamentary libraries, is specified by supremacy of the informatics against traditional librarianship. The use of new informational technologies is of crucial importance for functioning of modern parliamentary library, because nowadays it is unthinkable that any European parliamentary libraries' work is based on the traditional organization on information departments and services.¹ Parliamentary library has to be useful and used resource for deputies and administrative staff, and such to provide more efficient and professional parliamentary work.

On grounds that the basic task of library like this is to allow deputies to learn, for the reason of daunting explosion of information – as a main characteristic of our epoch, which is challenge for everybody, even for the most educated individuals. Those who don't pain to cope with new information technologies, which make contact with every aspect of our life, will swamp deeper to the ignorance.

Good material capabilities of parliaments as institutions, educated information experts, modern equipment, quality selected holdings, proper inter –library cooperation, information organized according to international standards - are just some of the postulates for the efficient work. Without the use of new information technologies and, on that basis, organized information service, parliamentary libraries would be small museums of printed books. However, this is fully opposite to definition of the idea of special-parliamentary library itself. It is not necessary talking about the importance of the timeliness and accuracy of information in the legislative procedure, also. Parliamentary libraries, nowadays, should not be static in the process of the retrieval and dissemination of information, and they should offer information and research services in addition to the traditional services.²

Special libraries, especially parliamentary libraries, should be real informational institutions, and should lead the way to the application of the recent communication achievements in the library occupation.

¹ See: Rothstein, Samuel, "Reference service: the new dimension in librarianship," in *College and Research Libraries*, vol. 22 (1961), no. 1, pp. 11-18. Cited according: Sečić, Dora, *Informacijska služba u knjižnici*. 2. dopunjeno i prerađeno izd. (Lokve: Benja), 2006, p. 35.

² See: Ilić, Biljana, "Budućnost parlamentarnih biblioteka," *Glasnik Narodne biblioteke Srbije*, (2002), no. 1, URL: http://www.nb.rs/view_file.php?file_id=605, Access (25-05-09).

A short historical overview

The Republic of Montenegro is situated on the Adriatic Coast in South East Europe. Its neighboring countries are Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania and Italy (sea border). Size of Montenegro is 13,812 km², length of borders is 614 km and populations is 658.000 (Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosnians, Albanians, Muslims, Croats and others). The Capital is Podgorica with population of 179.000 inhabitants.

The parliamentarism in Montenegro

The Parliament of Montenegro is a unicameral legislative body of 81 members, who are elected by direct general elections. Over the history, the general conventions of Montenegrins, or councils of clan-chiefs, were bodies of a representative character, i.e., a kind of national assembly, which had been held since the 17th century. Montenegro was declared (first time) a independent principality in 1878, at The Congress of Berlin. The first parliamentary elections were held in 1906 and the first session was held on October 31, 1906. This date is celebrated as the official beginning of the parliamentary life in Montenegro. Montenegro's 100 year history of parliamentary life includes: as an independent country (1906 – 1918), then through The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918-1929), The Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929 – 1941), The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1963), The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – as one of the six republics with its own parliaments (1963–1991), The Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (1991 – 2003) and The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (2003 – 2006).

Montenegro was, again, recognized as an independent state after May 2006. Existing Parliament was elected in March 2009. MPs have a mandate that is 4 years long. One year Parliamentary budget is approximately 3 million €. Web address is www.skupstina.mn.yu

The Overview of The Library of the Parliament of Montenegro

The Parliamentary Library was established in 1953, within the Administrative Service of the Parliament. The official record which could confirm its constitution doesn't exist, but it could be a conclusion based on a fact that the first record in the accessions register of The Parliamentary Library was from that year. It was closed, however, in the period 2002 - 2007. The Montenegrin parliamentary authorities initiated a process within all the books and materials have been moved from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building (close to the Parliament) to the newly renovated space in the basement of the Parliament where the Library is now officially situated.³ That space is equipped with the appropriate furniture, bookcases and computers, which have access to Internet. Although, in spite of the fact that the Library had been functioning beyond the parent organization (in the neighboring building), the employees were within parliamentary administration staff, and the holdings could be used by all employed in the State Administration. As a parliamentary library, which doesn't dispose of appreciably financial resources, The Library of the Parliament of Montenegro can not perform original researches and analyses. It is conceived as a integrated service, where in the same place, both research and reference service are managing. In the process of transition and changes of systems of the proprietary relationships, in the post-socialistic Montenegrin society, the numerous special libraries had been closed. The similar destiny, also, the special

³ Data taken from the internal documentation of the Parliament of Montenegro

libraries in the surroundings, had been passed through.⁴ On the other hand, The Parliamentary Library of Montenegro, although it had been closed for a five years, was continued with its work, because of the existing awareness of the importance of parliamentary library services and its better use. Unfortunately that awareness is not still rather powerful at many deputies' opinions, but we should hope for the best, that such attitude toward librarianship, as a profession, will be changing, slowly.

The Library holdings (about 2500 bibliographic items) are composed, mostly, of the printed books and a few titles of the official serial publications ("Official Gazette" and the Phonographic Records off all plenary sessions of The Parliament), as well as a concerned number of the older monographic publications.

- The old stock (books acquired after the World War II, by the end to single-party system – 1992 (historical books, dictionaries and encyclopedias, mostly from the 1950-1980) – about 1500 titles
- Collection of the Phonographic Records, since 1946, to a present day 348 volumes
- Collection of the federal "Official Gazettes" - 93 volumes, 1-3 for a year (FNRJ, SFRJ, SRJ - including the former Yugoslav republics), since 1945 - 2000
- Collection of the republic (Montenegrin) "Official Gazettes", since 1945-2007 – 82 volumes (2008 isn't still bounded)
- 500 new name entries of the books, acquired in the last year
- Access to Montenegrin legislation online data base
- Collection of old photos.

The Library is rarely used by deputies or other staff. Only when they need information about some explicit law or a paragraph of that law, or the time when it is officially announced, librarians use to copy articles, usually from the "Official Gazette", for their supporting staff. The Phonographic Records are the matter of their interests, in the process of the preparing for the sessions, also.

The conclusion is that the Library needs an urgent reconstitution of departments and services, as a coming – out from the past.

Regarding book processing cycle - cataloguing, systematic and subject cataloguing hadn't been practiced, until 2008, so as card catalogue hadn't been done, ever. Now, for the employees, one of the most important tasks is to constantly work on the forming of the computerized catalogue, which is made possible by joining the COBISS system (Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services), in November 2008.

The records are entering into accessions register, depending on topics: law, economy, encyclopedia/dictionaries and the other books. There are the special accession register for the Phonographic Records. The method of arrangement on the shelves is two handed: a part of the materials is in order to UDK classification, and the second part of the materials ("Official Gazettes" and Phonographic Records are arranged according to a accession number). The space limits may require more electronic books and publications.

The main lack of holdings is the fact that there are no specialized periodical titles, and the particularly foreign books in the English language (except the gifts of foreign delegations), although it should be the most representative part of the collection.

"... Intensively usage mean 'a good holdings', and every book is notable for the library, that much as it is used."⁵ The fact that deputies doesn't use the holdings of the

⁴ See: Milunović, Dragana, "Special Libraries in the Republic of Serbia in 2003: Development Priorities and Measures for Work Improvement," *INFOTEKA*, vol. 6 (2005), no. 3, pp. 209-215.

⁵ Clayton, Peter and Gorman, Gary E. *Upravljanje izvorima informacija u bibliotekama* (Beograd: Clío), 2003, p. 216.

Library, except the „Official Gazettes“ and the Phonographic Records, because of their interesting in new laws and the previous parliamentary sessions, is indicating about the fact that the existing holdings and organization of the Library's services is more than superannuated and obsolete, a long time ago.

The Library is being supplied with all three titles of the Montenegrin newspapers, daily, keeping them about a half of the year, and after that period eliminating them, because of the eventuality of backfilling of the space if they will keep them continuously.

The cooperation with other European parliaments, in the process of the transformation the Library into up-to date one, will be crucial. The ultimate goal is to transform the Library into a useful and used resource for MPs and staff, so to add efficiency and professionalism to their work.

Staff:

According to the Rulebook of the Organization of Workplaces and Departments in the Parliamentary Service of The Parliament of Montenegro⁶, from 2008, The Bureau for the Research and Library is consisted of two units: The Parliamentary Library and The Research Centre. Both Library and Centre should have ten employees, including the position of the head of Bureau, but it is only state on the paper. Two of ten workplaces are anticipated for librarians' positions, senior (the main librarian) and junior employee, but there are only two people who have been employed in the whole Bureau, until now, a chief and the main librarian.

The OSCE Mission Project “Strengthening the Capacity of the Parliament of Montenegro” April 2007-March 2011

Under the four-year project (2007/11) aiming at strengthening the capacity of the Montenegrin Parliament, funded by the Government of Austria and supported by the German Foreign Ministry, the OSCE Mission to Montenegro⁷ at the beginning of 2007 hired a professional librarian to provide technical assistance to the Library. The project also provided training on research methods and techniques and supplied more than 500 new books and publications.

The main task was to help the employees in the Library in the process of its transformation. Through the engagement, consultant has been working on the organization of the professional daily training of the employed librarians and their professional education, practicing with them. The long-term and short-term plans of the development were done, according to which was determined that the very important, forthcoming work will be the evaluation and selection of the existing holdings. After that, the next step was planning of the acquisition and making a list of the most important and needful - relevant publications, professional journals and data bases, for creating a new holdings, which would be in compatibility with a deputies' working bodies and the other parliamentary staff requests. The

⁶ The Rulebook of the Organization of Workplaces and Departments in the Parliamentary Service of The Parliament of Montenegro, December 2008:URL: http://www.skupstina.mn.yu/23_saziv/files/downloads/Pravilnik%20o%20organizaciji%20i%20sistemizaciji%20sluzbe%20skupstine.doc, Access (26-05-09)

⁷ The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe – OSCE Mission to Montenegro: URL: <http://www.osce.org/montenegro/>, Access (26-05-09)

planned and aimed acquisition of the professional literature, hadn't been doing for a decades. So far the holdings was filled with the gifts of foreign delegations, scheduled pouring in of the Phonographic Records of all plenary sessions of the Parliament, and with all numbers of the "Official Gazettes" – periodical publication, in which are announced all laws and the judgments, voted by deputies and brought by the Parliament. Though, the holdings were backfilled with indisposed surplus stock of the Montenegrin publishers, cumbering with unwanted titles, mainly obsolete and worthless literature. In a word, the weeding of holdings is something that is urgently needed to be done in the Library, as a revision of the holdings, which had never been done.

A subscription to EBSCO online database in co-operation with The University Library of Montenegro is being planned. Precisely, a specialized package "LEGAL COLLECTION" is a subject of interesting, as well as opportunity of using all the others packages, to which The University Library is subscribed, including The Law Faculty Library, The Faculty of Political Science Library and The Faculty of Economy Library. Through the consortium, a capacity of the Library in access to online publications will be enlarged significantly, for the relatively modest amount.

A good thing about current activities in the Library is, that as a part of the project of cooperation of the Parliament of Montenegro and the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, The Parliamentary Library became a member of the Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services (COBISS)⁸, in November 2008 and has begun work on developing an online catalogue that will be available to all COBISS members. The outbreak of forming an online catalogue is something that should be emphasized, because of the fact that any type of card catalogue hadn't been ever managed in the Library. So, that online catalogue will become a part of the co-operative online catalogue, which is constituted of all members of the system COBISS. It is very important for the access to the recent information and for the inter-library loan as well as it opens new possibilities of cooperation with the similar professional institutions.

Besides that, contacts with parliamentary libraries of Austria, Slovakia and Serbia were established through study visits. Those institutions, also, might provide a significant assistance in the process of realization of planned activities through the expert's recommendations. Mentioned study visits were prior directed to introduce library staff with the positive experiences from that institutions, regarding role, organization and business activity of parliamentary libraries and research centers, as important organizational units of any parliament. The method of functioning of these organizational units in mentioned parliaments, as well as importance which was giving to them, indicated to the necessity of reorganization and apostrophed more attention on the work of the Library and Research Centre of The Parliament of Montenegro. The cooperation is established with following professional services of mentioned parliaments: parliamentary libraries, research centers, public relations departments, ITC departments etc.

The Parliament of Montenegro is, also, a part of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation - a tool for inter-parliamentary cooperation and exchange of information. The assignment of a correspondent for the cooperation with that institution, a few months ago, by The Parliament of Montenegro (for the first time), is something that should be emphasized, but very negative phenomenon was that nobody had any request, and the correspondent hasn't begun the cooperation, yet.

The Library of the Parliament of Montenegro, improved with support from the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, was presented to the Speaker of Parliament, the Deputy Speakers,

⁸ The Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services - COBISS: [URL:http://www.cobiss.net/](http://www.cobiss.net/), Access (26-05-09).

Members of Parliament and of the Parliamentary Service as well as representatives of international organizations and the professional public in Podgorica. All attendants were expressed their expectation that the full use of the Library would be made in the future and that it will be developing further to become an important element of the Professional Service of the Parliament of Montenegro.

Conclusion:

A current situation in the Parliamentary Library of Montenegro is not quite admirable, but it is very important that it was perceived what kind of significance that organizational part for the parent organization could have and that it was started with an improvement of a work process.

A drawback is mostly connected with a neglecting of the Library and the librarianship as a service and a profession of a minor importance for the Parliament, as well as unrecognizing of the information values in the contemporary world, by the some deputies, employees and a part of the managing staff of the Parliament.

A positive side, in touch with the recent events in The Parliamentary Library, is that the survey amongst the deputies and employees, as potential users of the Library, was made. They have expressed their opinions, desires, needs and requirements according to acquisition of new entries for the Library. After recapitulation of the results of survey, the plan of acquisition has been done. Within that plan hasn't been insisted on satisfying of deputies' desires, but on selection of library material, according to some basic criteria for the selection, such as: author's reputation, data capture, text processing, analyze of the language, style, subject matter, technical and esthetical form, special attributes etc.⁹ Towards future planning of the acquisition and selection of the titles, opinions and needs of the users of the Library - deputies and employees in the Service of the Parliament, will be crucial. On the other hand, it is only the beginning of the process of the transformation, which shouldn't have been stopped, and it would be necessary to continue with initiated changes.

A positive steps are that the first list of new entries of books has been made recently, within the reference service, and set up on the web site, as so as few seminars that were held, to introduce new deputies with a Parliamentary Service (including the Library). Requiring from nongovernmental organizations to send all their publications to the Parliamentary Library should be affirmative effort. But the most important step forward is start of forming the online catalogue.

Contacts which are made with colleagues from the other parliaments are very important for the exchange of the best practice between the services. Particularly, with the colleagues from the Serbian parliament, because of the similar history and the same challenges we have to deal with.

Something that is necessary is the weeding and evaluation of the holdings.

The very important step in the Library work improvement would be to start with a budget planning for every year, apropos the question how much money would be spent for the acquisition of new entries, what hadn't been ever done, so far.

Upgrading traditional library service, improvement of the distribution of publications to the deputies and recruitment of the parliamentary staff for the Research Service, are also issues that are urgent for the serious changes.

⁹ Clayton, Peter and Gorman, Gary E. *Upravljanje izvora informacija u bibliotekama: Upravljanje fondovima u teoriji i praksi* (Beograd : Clio), 2003, p. 118.

The most important is to continue with an initiated process of the transformation in The Parliamentary Library of Montenegro, step by step, and it should give a good result in the future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Clayton, Peter and Gorman, Gary E. *Upravljanje izvorima informacija u bibliotekama* (Beograd: Clio), 2003.
- Ilic, Biljana. Buducnost parlamentarnih biblioteka. In: *Glasnik Narodne biblioteke Srbije*, (2002), no.1: URL: http://www.nb.rs/view_file.php?file_id=605, Access (25-05-09).
- Milunovic, Dragana. Special Libraries in the Republic of Serbia in 2003: Development Priorities and Measures for Work Improvement. In: *INFOTEKA*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2005.
- Secic, Dora. *Informacijska sluzba u knjiznici*. 2. Added and adapted edition Lokve: Benja, 2006.
- The internal documentation of the Parliament of Montenegro.
- The Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services - COBISS: [URL:http://www.cobiss.net/](http://www.cobiss.net/).
- The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe – OSCE Mission to Montenegro: URL: <http://www.osce.org/montenegro/>.
- The Rulebook of the Organization of Workplaces and Departments in the Parliamentary Service of the Parliament of Montenegro, December 2008:URL:http://www.skupstina.mn.yu/23_saziv/files/downloads/Pravilnik%20o%20orga_nizaciji%20i%20sistematizaciji%20sluzbe%20skupstine.doc

Appendix : Organizational Chart of the Parliamentary Service

