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The Library Environment as a Form of Knowledge Organization



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Defines the concept "library environment", substantiates its potentials as a form of knowledge organization, and describes methods of supporting users' access to knowledge in the library environment. (Author)

The library environment represents an aggregate of conditions and a unity of the material and spiritual world, in which the activities of librarians and users are realized. It represents a part of the information and cultural environment of society and is characterized by certain spatial and temporal parameters and an intellectual, aesthetic and emotional potential.

The library environment is one of the institutionalized forms of knowledge organization since in it is concentrated a certain part of the documented world of public knowledge and the world of individual knowledge (terms suggested by A.V.Sokolov) of librarians and users.

The knowledge potentials of the library environment are determined by the library collections, the library's reference-search systems, elements of design and make-up of the reading halls, methods of arrangement of equipment and technical means, and the librarians' and user's knowledge.

The world of public knowledge of the library is created with the aim of making knowledge available to all members of society. Each element of the library environment, if it is well organized, can promote access to knowledge. As regards the librarians, this aim is expressed in their professional training and the desire to help the user gain knowledge. The reader can make the access to knowledge easier for himself if he acquaints himself with the library's resources and masters the fundamentals of an information culture beforehand.

The organization of documentalized knowledge (library collections and the reference and information system) is connected with the consideration of such a psychological factor as the limitedness of the volume of information that an individual can absorb at one time. This is why the library, though possessing vast fields of documentalized knowledge, cannot present it as a whole to the user, but is obliged to reveal its resources successively through different methods, such as the singling out of certain parts of

this knowledge (displays, organization of auxiliary libraries of reference and information literature, the "easy issue" of topical documents); through the system of secondary information, which makes it possible for the user, by using catalogs, bibliographical lists, etc., to learn about all the resources accumulated by the library (or group of libraries); through the gathering of facts and conceptions and the issue of them to the user out of context of the document in which they were found; through the introduction of minimized and more capacious information-carriers.

The prospects of organization of wide access to knowledge in the library environment are connected with the use of computer technology, television systems and new technology. In these conditions, the user is able, due to new technical means, to present knowledge on the displays of computers in a convenient order and form. The user is freed from the rigid scheme of his library's classification system and system of arrangement of documented knowledge.

In the library environment, in the capacity of information means of knowledge organization, appear the following four types of information: guiding, bibliographical, factographical and conceptographical information. The first covers advertisements, indices and schemes, which show the locality within the library environment of different parts of documented knowledge. Bibliographical information provides identifying data on elements of documented knowledge and helps the user to enter the base of knowledge and make the necessary choice. Factographical and conceptographical information allows the user to pass from documented knowledge to factual and conceptual knowledge.

In the library environment, seen as a form of knowledge organization, all elements are interconnected and they exist as a single whole, which favors a wide access to them.