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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE TRAINING FOR LIBRARY EMPLOYEES AS AN ACTIVITY INCREASING COMPETENCIES IN THE PROMOTION OF CULTURE ON THE INTERNET



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KEYWORDS: Training for library staff. GDPR. Management control. COVID-19 pandemic. Extraordinary situations.

ABSTRACT: Thesis / purpose of the article – The aim of the article is to analyse the process of on-line training for library employees as an activity increasing competencies in the field of promoting culture on the Internet. **Research methods** – The training process concerning areas that have a direct or indirect impact on the subsequent activities of library employees on the Internet is discussed. Various forms of online training are indicated, among which priority is given to the division into synchronous and asynchronous training. **Results and conclusions** – Libraries, as cultural institutions, play a special role in providing access to information and cultural events. This scope of activity is of exceptional importance in the case of local communities, in particular those located outside large urban centres. Therefore, business continuity is very important, even in unusual situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic

INTRODUCTION

Libraries, like all other public administration entities, operate on the basis and within the limits of the law. The legislature has defined the general principles of the functioning of libraries in several normative acts, among which the Libraries Act of June 27, 1997 (Journal of Laws 2019 item 1479) is of particular importance¹. This legal act indicates that libraries organize and provide access to the resources of Polish and world science and culture. Indicating such a scope of libraries' tasks is not innovative and is characteristic of this type of institution around the world (Young-Hee, 2020). On the one hand, organizing and providing access to the indicated resources should be done in a creative, modern and attractive way for recipients, resulting from the specific conditions of information management in the 21st century (Wyrzykowski, 2000). On the other hand, it should be conducted with care to ensure the rights and freedoms of all natural persons. This applies to both people using the services of libraries and employees of these institutions. The priority in this case is security, broadly understood, in the traditional dimension of personal physical security and in the sectoral dimension, e.g. in the field of personal data protection, which closely correlates with the protection of privacy. Therefore, libraries are covered by a wide range of legal regulations aimed at building a professional management system for individual sectors of the institution's functioning. An example of such a legal requirement is the obligatory nature of introducing a management control system in libraries that are independent entities. This is to enable effective and cost-effective management of the library while achieving its statutory objectives. It is a legal obligation resulting from the provisions of the Public Finances

¹ Relations between libraries and other cultural institutions and the organizer are defined in the Act of 25 October 1991 on organizing and conducting cultural activities (Journal of Laws 2020, item 194).

Act of 27 August 2009 (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 869). The indicated activities require systematic improvement of the qualifications of library managers and employees, which is largely done through training (Szałkowski, 2002).

It is worth emphasizing that libraries must be prepared to function in various circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 became a factor that verified the functioning of libraries in extraordinary situations. The role of cultural institutions in such times is unique, as people forced into solitary confinement especially need access to culture. Universal access to the Internet and applications enabling live transmission of sound and image, as well as various forms of interaction with users, is an opportunity to organize cultural events and access them for people living in isolation. It is also a challenge for the management and employees of libraries, because such projects must be carried out in accordance with the law, with particular emphasis on the protection of personal data and respect for intellectual property. At the same time, access to such functionalities makes it possible to raise the qualifications of people working in libraries through the implementation of effective training.

The aim of the article is to analyse the process of on-line training for library employees as an activity increasing competencies in the field of promoting culture on the Internet. In addition to the direct implementation of tools for organizing cultural events online, it is also important to ensure the proper functioning of libraries in the administrative and legal dimension and to improve employees' qualifications through online training. The author used three research methods to investigate these issues. The first of these is a decision-making method that enabled the analysis of potential activities in the field of organizing training and implementing cultural events remotely. The second is a comparative method by which the forms of traditional actions and actions in extra-emergency situations (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic) were compared. The third is an institutional and legal method that enabled the analysis of normative acts and documents prepared on their basis which had an impact on the adopted solutions. Moreover, the author bases his considerations on his own empirical experience in cooperation with libraries as an on-line trainer for library managers and employees.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF IMPLEMENTING ONLINE TRAINING FOR MANAGEMENT STAFF AND LIBRARY EMPLOYEES

An analysis of the general principles of conducting on-line training for librarians requires a distinction between the obligatory and optional nature of this type of education. Remote training was popularized on a large scale in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was also carried out

earlier (Wojciechowski, 2020). The advantages of organizing such events were, among others:

- reduction of training costs understood as remuneration for the entity providing the training;
- the possibility of participation by participants without the need to incur travel costs (in addition to financial resources, the time allocated for travel is also important);
- no need to prepare a training room, which in the case of some libraries had meant that they had to be temporarily closed, despite the fact that only some of the employees participated in the training;
- in the case of some training sessions, the ability to provide a recording of the training, making it possible to return to the presented content at a later date;

If the library management wanted to organize training during the period of forced isolation (the so-called *lock down*), the remote form was *de facto* obligatory. Therefore, in addition to continuing to offer training, which so far had been conducted in a remote form, an attempt was also made to adapt training offered in a traditional form to electronic training platforms. For some thematic scopes, this form of knowledge transfer has proved to be effective and may still be used in the future, when decisions regarding in-person versus remote forms of training rest solely with the management. The period of the pandemic also made it possible to check which training topics do not work within remote education. This is one of the positive experiences resulting from isolation, because if it had not happened, it would most likely not be possible to test this in practice.

The methodology of building the training process in the case of online training does not differ significantly from the methodology of creating such a process in the case of training carried out in a traditional form. In the case of both forms, we can speak of six stages, which were indicated by Ricky W. Griffin (Griffin, 2004):

1. Assessment of training needs.
2. Setting the goals of the training.
3. Development of the training program and methods of its evaluation.
4. Implementation of the training.
5. Assessment of the training.
6. Modification of the training program based on its evaluation.

Of these six steps, only the first is the exclusive prerogative of library management and staff. It should be emphasized, however, that entities that provide training services may also participate in this stage as advisory bodies². Offering relevant and up-to-date training topics may inspire

² Among the indicated entities there are not only companies that offer commercial training, but also libraries with instruction and methodology departments. The organization of training courses

organizers to order training on a topic not originally planned in the training calendar (Mayo, 2002). The remaining stages are most often activities carried out by entities providing training, but in this case setting goals and developing the program is done in cooperation with representatives of libraries, as is the implementation of the training. Traditional training courses are most often held at the library premises, while in the case of online training, a library employee very often takes part in organizational activities, e.g. sending information directly to participants, which at the same time reduces the scope of personal data processing by the entity providing the training. The remote form of conducting training has allowed for a significant improvement in the process of their evaluation (Bramley, 2001; Younghee; Rosa, 2020). Traditional paper-based surveys have been replaced by electronic surveys, which include automatic counting of points, segregating answers and presenting results in a clear form, e.g. diagrams and charts. Such a solution also enables the preparation of anonymised reports that can be presented to a larger number of people for whom evaluation data may constitute an important source of information in the context of planning subsequent projects.

An important factor that has an impact on the implementation of online training is the mode of content provided. Such training can take place in a synchronous mode, which enables live contact with the teacher, asking questions and performing exercises (Kopciał, 2013). Despite the fact that such training takes place remotely, it no longer concerns an independent analysis of materials, but allows the use of a wide range of didactic methods, often similar to those carried out in a traditional form. Synchronous training takes place at a designated time with direct participation of the teacher and participants, hence it is possible, among other things, to work in groups, jointly solving exercises in various forms, e.g. *case study* and immediate feedback from the teacher. Some training platforms offer the functionality of moving groups of participants to separate virtual rooms where they can solve the exercises by seeing and hearing other participants. A popular form of performing tasks during synchronous training is also the use of forms that participants can fill in at the same time and see each other's statements, which are then read and discussed by the teacher. This form of on-line training is most similar to traditional classes. More and more entities also offer training in asynchronous mode. Their essence is posting didactic materials on a dedicated remote learning platform with the possibility for the participant to read them at any time (there is no set time for training). The participants can most often see the presentation, podcasts, recordings in the form of video files, legal acts and other mate-

for library employees in Poland often takes the form of a cascade, e.g. voivodeship or poviats libraries organize training sessions attended by smaller entities from the region.

rials, e.g. in the form of links to websites related to the subject of the training. In the case of an extensive thematic scope of training, it is possible to divide the material into smaller batches, which allows one to perform revision exercises. Secondary recapitulation is in this case an important factor that allows the participant to prepare for solving the test or the final task. Electronic training platforms allow you to check knowledge in the form of a quiz, or to solve a task in a descriptive form, which the trainer checks at a convenient time and sends feedback to the training participant. In some cases, participants have the option of asking questions to the trainer via e-mail or via the electronic training platform.

A comparison of the synchronous and asynchronous training modes based on the divisions presented in the Polish Qualifications Framework leads to the conclusion that in the case of asynchronous training, it is possible to achieve learning outcomes primarily in the field of knowledge. On the other hand, synchronous training enables the extension of this scope to include skills, and even social competences. However, they must be conducted in a creative and thoughtful manner, and a variety of teaching methods must be used as part of such training.

Regardless of the form and mode of training, it is also important to comply with copyright and the principles of personal data protection. In the case of asynchronous training, participants can easily copy the materials and share them with others. It is worth emphasizing, however, that library employees are a professional group that deals with the practical implementation of copyright law on a daily basis, due to their work with the book collection. Therefore, during the implementation of synchronous training for this professional group, it is important not so much to introduce the participants to the rules of copyright, but to explain the specific aspects of this area of legislation as part of the implementation of a specific project. Some materials can be copied and some will be protected. On the other hand, in the case of synchronous training, it is the duty of the entity providing the training to protect the privacy of participants. If they take an active interactive part in training that is recorded, their image and voice may be registered. In such a case, particular attention should be paid to the extent to which and to whom such a recording will be made available. It is also possible to anonymise or to remove some fragments that might not be considered a significant substantive contribution to the recording and at the same time might contain a wide range of personal data.

RAISING QUALIFICATIONS IN SELECTED ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL AREAS

Increasing the competencies of management staff and library employees in the field of promoting culture on the Internet does not only involve

providing useful tools for carrying out online cultural events. There are areas that are not largely visible to people using library services, but are of key importance for shaping the appropriate organizational culture and procedures that ultimately increase the safety of such people. Among such areas, priority is given to personal data protection and management control, with particular emphasis on planning and risk management (Jan-czak, 2013).

Libraries have been operating in the reformed personal data protection system since May 25, 2018, which entails the entry into force of the GDPR provisions³. The implementation of new legal obligations is a challenge for the management and library staff, and at the same time generates deficit areas. This is mainly due to the fact that the provisions of the GDPR, which should be applied in practice in libraries, are dispersed and, unlike legal acts that are no longer in force, they do not constitute concise and transparent guidelines regarding the required documentation and security of IT systems. The new regulations require skillful and professional interpretation, which allows understanding the re-defined priorities of personal data protection, including an approach based on the risk of violating the rights and freedoms of natural persons (Mizerski, 2018). This leads to a situation in which most libraries use, to a greater or lesser extent, the support of external entities in coordinating the implementation of the provisions of the GDPR or at least conducting training aimed at increasing the competencies of employees in the area of personal data protection.

In the case of this area, training conducted in a synchronous mode is of great importance. The problem is not access to valuable materials, among which it is worth mentioning first of all the "Code of Conduct for Libraries", created by specialists in the implementation of GDPR provisions in libraries in cooperation with the Polish Librarians' Association. What is of key importance, however, is the need to present practical aspects of the implementation of the provisions governing the protection of personal data and to answer the doubts of training participants, including solving practical problems occurring in their institutions. An example of a difficult area is the set of dilemmas related to publishing photos of children participating in library lessons on the library website and on profiles in social media. Discussing such an issue during the training often requires a diagnosis of dependent and independent variables related to the functioning of libraries and interaction with the person asking the question. At the same time, other trainees have access to the questions and answers and can use the information provided.

³ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46 / EC (Journal of Laws No. of 4.5.2016).

It is worth emphasizing that the implementation of personal data protection procedures should not result solely from legal obligation. The value of the actual introduction of adequate solutions at the level of the daily functioning of each library was verified after the COVID-19 pandemic began. Employees of institutions in which the protection of personal data functioned well could effectively adapt the previously adopted solutions to the new reality. Both the remote work of library employees and the organization of on-line events were automatically regulated by internal regulations that already existed in the institution. At the same time, in the case of libraries where this area was neglected or insufficiently developed, there was a need to quickly develop new internal regulations and their implementation, which was particularly difficult due to the limitations caused by the pandemic.

The second key area for improving the qualifications of library management and employees in selected administrative and legal areas is management control. As indicated previously, the introduction and implementation of a management control system is a legal requirement resulting from the provisions of the Public Finances Act of 27 August 2009 (Journal of Laws 2019, item 869). The legal act provides a legal definition of management control. According to it, "management control in units of the public finance sector is all activities undertaken to ensure the implementation of goals and tasks in a lawful, effective, economical and timely manner" (Bogacki; Dmowski; Wołowiec, 2019). It is worth noting that, despite the fact that regulations relating to the management control system are included in the Public Finances Act, this process applies to all spheres of the institution's functioning (Ćwiklicki, 2015). In libraries that are independent units (not included in the structure of another institution, e.g. schools, universities), which is most often signalled in the assigning of a separate Tax Identification Number, it is the library director who is responsible for the introduction and implementation of the management control system. Among the broad spectrum of activities performed as part of management control, planning and risk management as well as self-assessment of the management control system have the greatest impact on increasing the competencies of employees in the field of promoting culture on the Internet. In the first case, it is important to analyse potential threats that may have a negative impact, on the one hand on the implementation of training and other projects increasing the competencies of employees, and on the other on activities promoting culture on the Internet. At the same time, the process of self-assessment of the management control system has a significant impact on planning the next training calendar and analysing the needs of employees by diagnosing deficit areas that require increasing competencies. Risk estimation should also take into account other factors, including the possibility of an exodus of employees to other entities. There

is a correlation between increasing employee competencies and making decisions about changing the place of employment (Gonera, 2016).

Contrary to training in the field of personal data protection, increasing the knowledge of the management control system may also take place asynchronously and in some cases this does not have to negatively affect the participants' gaining of knowledge. The choice of the training mode should be related to its detailed scope. The legal regulations of management control are not evolving as fast as those relating to the protection of privacy. At the same time, there are less valuable materials available on the subject, so the mere sharing of them as part of the training and discussion, e.g. in the form of a podcast or film material, can be a significant added value for library employees.

IMPROVING QUALIFICATIONS IN THE FIELD OF INCREASING ACCESS TO CULTURE

In addition to the areas that have an indirect impact on increasing the competencies of library management and employees in the field of creating access to culture on the Internet, it is also important to provide tools that serve this directly. It is a good practice to adopt a solution according to which library employees acquire appropriate knowledge and competencies in the field of copyright, personal data protection and other areas of the institution's functioning, and only then is the next step to start developing creative forms of promoting culture on the Internet.

It is worth emphasizing the special role of libraries in increasing access to culture for local communities (Jeziarska, 2018). In unusual situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the related temporary closure of institutions or limitation of the scope of activities, library management and employees faced the difficult task of providing alternative solutions. The initial balance in this respect was strongly determined by the actions that had been taken before. It was much easier to reach people using the library's services for those institutions that had previously ran library profiles on social networks. This applied both to ongoing communication with readers and recipients of other services, where the profile on the social network served as a conveyor belt, with the possibility of presenting messages regarding the current access to individual functionalities as well as preparing new projects and promoting them. The effectiveness of activities was also influenced by other factors, including positioning the website in search engines, which also directly correlated with how providing valuable content was carried out in the past and how diligently. The number of visits to the library website also directly correlates with the advancement of the digitization of the collection (Caro, 2016).

One of the most effective forms of learning to implement new solutions promoting culture on the Internet is organizing training courses for library employees in this field. Also in this case, training conducted in a synchronous mode should be indicated as the most effective means. The situation in which participants learn during on-line training how to conduct activities remotely should be considered as a specific one, therefore it is important to ensure the maximum level of interactivity and the possibility of ongoing verification of information by asking questions to the teacher.

There are areas of knowledge in the field of promoting culture on the Internet that can be effectively adapted to on-line training. These are primarily topics related to the use of specific applications and tools that can be used for such purposes. The tutor can discuss their functionalities and at the same time suggest to participants to install the application on their computers in order to practice selected activities (Oleksyn, 2006). It is also possible to use existing resources on the Internet, among other things to convey knowledge in the field of modern methods of working with the reader, e.g. gamification and inspiration nests. However, it is worth emphasizing that practicing some skills remotely may be impossible or significantly difficult. An example in this respect can be workshops on the use of a camera to shoot short film materials, appropriate processing and editing of the materials and posting them on social media and on the library website. If the training is attended by a group of participants who have prepared (recorded) material and want to learn how to process it, it is possible in the form of synchronous on-line training. However, practicing recording different shots, properly framing and holding the camera, or recording a mobile device is notably difficult with such training. It requires individual or traditional training.

It is worth emphasizing that the implementation of training courses increasing the competencies of library employees in the field of promoting culture on the Internet does not follow a simple scheme, according to which a library employee participates in the training and then organizes an event. Trainings very often have to take the form of a cascade. First, a library employee is trained, and then they have to act themselves as a trainer conducting the training and properly preparing other people participating in the project. An example in this respect can be the organization of an online meeting with authors. The role of the management and employees of the library is not only to provide the appropriate IT infrastructure to carry out the project and to promote the event. It is also important to properly prepare the author to master the technical aspects of participating in the project. In this respect, it is of key importance to check the equipment in advance and eliminate possible problems, e.g. paying attention to the author's Internet connection bandwidth, which may not be enough for smooth video and image transmission online.

SUMMARY

The considerations presented here lead to several conclusions. As the first of these, it is worth mentioning the significant importance of access to training courses on a diverse range of topics for the management and library staff in the context of developing the promotion of culture on the Internet. Some thematic scopes have an indirect and some a direct impact on the conducted on-line cultural activities, but each of them is a component of a later project and has an impact on selected technical and organizational aspects.

The second conclusion is the observation of the fact that when planning training activities for library employees, it is important to clearly agree with the entity providing the training as to its mode – synchronous or asynchronous. As indicated in the article, some thematic areas, e.g. personal data protection, clearly qualify for synchronous training, during which the instructor is present at the same time as the participants and the experience is closest to traditional training. The remaining topics can be implemented in both modes, and decisions in this regard should be preceded by an analysis of the needs and opportunities to participate in training.

The third conclusion should be the necessity of cooperation between individual libraries, both in order to organize trainings in a cascading form (e.g. a county library organizes training in which smaller communal libraries from within this county take part) and the exchange of information and experiences. On the one hand, such activities make it possible to reach a larger number of entities with training projects, and on the other, they eliminate training companies from the market that provide low-level services or do not know the specifics of library functioning.

The last conclusion, and at the same time this author's postulate, is to draw attention to the need for further research on the impact of various forms of online education on the development of the promotion of culture on the Internet. This article was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is the further development of this situation of epidemiological threat that will be of prime importance in shaping the promotion of culture on the Internet. Undoubtedly, regardless of the development of events, such promotion will develop, but the scale of the phenomenon may vary. It is also not without significance that new tools are regularly being created that enable the promotion of culture on the Internet. It is worthwhile to systematically analyse their implementation potential and effectiveness in reaching recipients.

The considerations presented here do not contradict the position that, if possible, libraries should return to a large extent to traditional forms of providing services and promoting culture. Cultural institutions play an

important role in accessing information and preventing digital exclusion. Even the most professional online activities will not reach audiences who do not have Internet access (Holcomb; Dunford; Fopofoluwa, 2019).

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