

Stefica Dodig

The development of a medical library: Bosnia and Herzegovina Virtual Libraries Network

Main objective of our project was the establishment of a well-organized medical library, as a core and „brain“ of the newly established medical school. At the time we were preparing this project proposal we anticipated that the financial situation in the years to come would prevent us to organize a traditional library, subscribing to hundreds of relevant journals and with all books one needs collected on shelves. We were aware that a reasonable approach is to lean on global information networks and to aim at becoming a part of international library „visible colleges“. In short, our goal was to provide the ways and means to users (our teaching staff and students, but medical personnel, too) for full and easy access to information, combined with the possibility of inter-library loan and acquisition of photocopies at low costs. At this stage it seemed as the single feasible solution.

This main objective is already achieved: Mostar School of Medicine has a library today, based on the principles mentioned above. This could be accomplished thanks to a grant received by the European Commission´s „Tempus“ program. Here we have to stress numerous and generous donations received mainly from the contracting institution, the Faculty of Medicine of Heidelberg University, as well as strong engagement of other project partners.

It is worthwhile to stress here that, thanks to strong partner support and additional donations, we were not only able to achieve all objectives but also to extend the project to encompass all medical libraries in Bosnia and Herzegovina (in Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Srebrenica and Tuzla). All of them received modern web servers and were networked with the principal centers in Heidelberg and Mostar. We shared with our colleagues sophisticated library software (Aleph), free access to all electronic publications in biomedicine from Springer Verlag (over 170 journals) and hundreds of other links to public databases. We shared our extra copies of books with other libraries, each received an average of 1000 copies. All librarians from the medical faculties were retrained and they are competent now to use all available contemporary resources.

When we take into consideration BH librarians as a target group, they had the opportunity to have a new knowledge and new, up-to-date skills requested by medical librarianship of the new era. Observing teaching staff, students and medical professionals, all of them have enormous benefits: The change from no library and no information access to full information access speaks for itself. From the stage of almost total deprivation of information, they reached the level of high-quality and cost-effective access to information identical to the opportunities existing in advanced academic institutions. An institution without a library cannot be called an academic institution.

As mentioned above, the establishment of a medical library not only had a significant impact on the medical school´s environment, but moreover tremendously influenced the medical community as a whole, not only in Mostar but in BH as well. The results of this project have spread beyond the immediate target group to other libraries in all BH schools of medicine. Finally the medical community as a whole has a great benefit from this project.

-

Dipl. Oec. Stefica Dodig

Sveuciliste u Mostaru
Medicinski fakultet
Knjiznica
Matice Hrvatske b.b.
BIH-88000 Mostar
Bosna i Hercegovina
Email: stefi@sve-mo.ba