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The Research Support Role of the Library of the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences

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Abstract

This paper presents the analysis of the survey accomplished by the Library of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (hereafter – Library). This Library is one of the main Lithuanian university's libraries and specializes in acquisition, accumulation and storage of resources that focus on education, didactics and teacher training. It also participates in various activities and working groups in order to investigate the informational needs of the university's researchers and students. The aim of this research is to discover how trainings and services, organized by the Library, influence the competencies of information literacy in the academic community. The study was conducted by a questionnaire that was provided to the academic community. The results of the statistical analysis indicate how educational services, provided by the Library, changed the quality of information literacy of the university's researchers and students. The results also show the model of respondents' approaches to the Library's activities and the Library's role in the support of research at the university. Moreover, the study results demonstrated that the Library itself also changes rapidly: it forms an important part of the educational environment and becomes the mediator between information and users.

Keywords: Information literacy, research support, library services, library role, trainings.

Introduction

Owing to the modernization of the higher education system, which includes noticeably increasing the usage of information technologies, and due to the appearance of such concepts as open science and open access to scientific databases, academic libraries are obligated to change their working methods that lead to the reformulation of their role in the everyday life of the university (Alvite and Barrionuevo, 2010). Academic libraries typically identify research support as a central pillar in their mission; but they need to examine how their mission statements relate to the perspectives of researchers themselves (Hart and Kleinveldt, 2011). New forms of teaching and learning, combined with new forms research, scholarship, and publishing, combined with new forms of media and expression are resulting in a game-changing era for higher education (Mathews, 2014).

These days the role of the modern library is not only to archive resources and provide them to users; now, it also assumes the role of guidance, helping researchers during their research process, providing ideas about possible ways to popularize research, introducing them to the complicated world of scientific publication, organizing courses and seminars in order to form a scientific network, and building virtual learning environments (Stonkienė, 2016; Tautkevičienė et al, 2010). The library's function is based on direct and interdisciplinary interaction. It is not limited to collecting and distributing resources. In this way, the library turns to its user and becomes related with expectations of academic community (Juchnevič, 2015; Jucevičienė and Tautkevičienė, 2004).

Koltay (2015) indicates that as librarians explore services related to Science 2.0, such as alternative metrics for scientific output and scholarly networking sites, data literacy will remain at the forefront. It has become a critical component of supporting researchers in Research 2.0 environments. Libraries must commit to developing and deepening resources, training and expertise in this area. In this way, they can meet related challenges that include complying with existing and emerging research data mandates, staying up to date with new resources, such as data journals and platforms, and motivating researchers to engage in the best practices around research data.

Brophy (2007) offers five areas where opportunities beckon for academic librarians willing to enter into significant collaboration with users and developers, and suggests that librarians should become more heavily involved in this kind of work. These areas are: embedding the library in learning, promoting literacies, publishing outputs, integrating environments, and curating data. He also has concluded that „there is no doubt that new roles are opening up for academic librarians, roles which build on their traditional skills but challenge them to acquire new ones. However, what will underpin success in adapting to the new networked world will be a willingness and determination to meet users in their own environments, learning their terminologies and their languages, and wholehearted adoption of constructivist notions of how effective learning, and effective research, takes place. In other words, librarians need to become much

more visible and much more active in the learning and research processes. They need to embrace change".

Other authors (Shumaker and Columnist, 2009; Drewes and Hoffman, 2010) also emphasize the collaboration between librarians and researchers in support of library work. They claim that academic libraries should implement new services and methods, in order to be innovative in their work with researchers. The importance of embedded librarianship is a challenge for spreading and introducing new quality services for academic libraries.

The most important function and method, which nowadays is involved in communicating with researchers and improving the quality of library services in scholarly communication at the University, is embedded librarianship.

According to Kaatrakoski and Lahikainen (2016), „embedded librarians may take part in the research process in collection, management, the re-use and preservation of data, and documentation. In addition, embedded librarians can contribute to funding application processes as well as to dissemination of research outcomes." On the other hand, this is stressful for librarians because it places them in new contexts.

Shumaker and Columnist (2009) challenge library directors and public services managers to let librarians out when they say: „Reference and user services librarians are embarking on an exciting and challenging journey. They're getting out of the library and heading for classrooms, labs, and even tour busses. They're embedding themselves with research groups, faculty members, and courses. They're building new relationships and delivering new, valuable services. Yet, as they do so, they raise new challenges for user services management."

Petraitytė (2012) has analyzed research publications on the different academic groups' approaches to the role of academic libraries and argues that the academic library positions itself as a valuable coworker, as a leader of the scholarly communication process, as a publisher and a curator of scholarly data. Petraitytė (2012) concludes, „an academic library shifts more from traditional to new role, but this shift is difficult, because the traditional role is strongly fixed and taken for granted, whereas the new roles need legitimation. One of the ways a library constructs its role is through establishing new positions and expert knowledge. In this way, the new role gets a stable institutionalized basis which in the course of time becomes taken for granted and unquestionable."

The topics of academic libraries and their collaboration with researchers and information literacy training needs, as wel as new services related to this, are very present in Lithuania. The comprehensive study „Research into the scientists' and researchers' usage of scientific e-resources education: needs, content and scope" has been carried out in 2009. The research was implemented by the project „eMoDB.LT: Access to Electronic Scientific Databases for Lithuania (project SFMIS No. VP1-3.1-ŠMM-02-V-01-002)" financed by the European Union and the Lithuanian co-financing funds under a program the Human Resource Development, Priority 3, Researchers Competence Intensification the measure VP1-3.1-MES-02-V Scientists and other researchers qualifications and competence development (scientific databases, e-documents) (Tautkevičienė et al, 2010).

The aim of the study was to evaluate how the huge amount of electronic information resources and trainings, provided on this topic and organized by academic libraries, influenced the scientists' and researchers' competencies of information literacy. They also analyzed the dynamics of quality and quantity of scientific publications published from 1996 to 2014.

The study revealed the scientists' and researchers' information competency levels and information literacy needs. The study results showed that in order to develop informational competence it is very important to understand the particular university's academic community needs. Also, it is important to have a systematic approach to the trainings of information literacy and information competency skills. The positive attitude and initiative towards information literacy training and the development of higher education from institution administrators ensures the successful integration of information literacy study programs into the study process. The Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science must also contribute to preparing standards for information literacy in higher education (Tautkevičienė et al, 2010).

The study shows what kind of activities in academic library services should be given more attention, as well as what areas of service to develop for supporting the researchers' information competencies and needs (Tautkevičienė et al, 2010).

The study also showed that there are gaps in scientific communication processes. The majority of researchers and scientists have little competency about this and do not know where to search scientific evaluation impact factors. Most researchers are not familiar with the standards of managing information resources or citation styles; and so, they rely on the notes to contributions when writing publications (Tautkevičienė, 2010).

It is also important to develop researchers' skills in both advanced and simple searches for information. With regard to individual needs, researchers should be provided opportunities for choosing training programs different in terms of complexity, topics, extension, and interactivity. The trainings should be adapted to researchers' specific and individual needs and related to their field of research (Tautkevičienė, 2010).

The Library takes on the role of creator and the leader of the scientific communication process, becomes more collaborative, and develops joint projects with the University and academic community.

The results of this national study revealed the situation in the academic community and information literacy competency field. Under the influence of this study, the Library of the University of Educational Sciences organized their own research of academic community needs at the University.

This paper presents the analysis of the survey about the quality of services provided by the Library of the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences. The results of the research encourage the consideration of the future goals of the Library, such as direct collaboration with the academic community, modification of its infrastructure, creation of new spaces for investigation, based on IT, initiating intercultural partnerships, and increasing staff abilities.

Background: The Academic Library Services at the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences

The Library specializes in acquisition, accumulation and storage of educational, didactic, teacher training and methodological literature. The Library participates in various activities and working groups at the University in order to find out the informational needs of the University's researchers and students.

The main task of the Library is to support and empower the academic community in studies and research, enabling improvements to competencies in information literacy for their research activities and scientific communication processes by implementing new services, such as trainings, management and coordination of their scientific publications, as well as creating and developing open access repositories.

According to these processes, the University Library's structure has changed since 2014. At present, the Library has five departments; one of them was established recently – the Open Access and Research Communication Department, whose main task is to support research communication.

The Library's information resources include printed and electronic collections. In 2016, the Library's main stocks consisted of 156,035 titles and 584,670 items. The Library acquires scientific and methodical periodicals in Lithuanian and foreign languages.

The Library also offers the following collections: Scientific Publications of the University (2002-) Database, University Electronic Thesis and Dissertations (ETD) Database and Open Access Institutional Repository (2014-) [Open access policy since 2014], Publications about the University (2002-) database, and the Scientific Publications of the University (2002-) database. These databases are integrated in the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library (eLABa) integrated system/repository.

Searches for items are realized through the Library's electronic catalogue, the Virtual Library platform and the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library (eLABa) integrated system. The Library also subscribes to 30 databases (of which three are collections of electronic books) through which users have access to 24,949 titles of full text periodicals and 159,701 titles of electronic books. The Library also provides reference management service using *Refworks* tool. Library licensed electronic resources are available to users not only from the University network, but also from remote access computers - via *EZproxy* service.

The library subscribes to most of the foreign databases through a project financed by the EU Structural Funds, the "eMoDB.LT3: Opening of electronic science databases to Lithuania – the third stage".

The Library not only develops and maintains local databases, but also generates reports of scientific publications for University researchers, and helps them find and consult potential publishing locations for their scientific articles, studies, and research.

The library has constantly learning staff who are able to transfer their knowledge to the academic community. The Library organizes regular trainings

(see Table 1) on information literacy and about information resources, as well as how to manage the scientific communication process.

Table 1. *Trainings in the Library*

Nr.	Training participants	Trainings	Hours	Training participants
1.	Students	78	156	953
2.	Researchers	18	36	102
Total		96	192	1 055

As the Library is in a process of change, it integrates a lot of new services. It was very important to find out whether these Library services fit the academic community's needs.

The Object of the Research

To determine the needs of the users of the Library of the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences.

Research Aims

To investigate how the services provided by the Library of the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences suit the needs of its users.

The Goals of the Research

1. To review the services provided by the Library of the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences and to emphasize the ones that are most relevant to supporting the research developed by the academic community;
2. To present conclusions and recommendations for strengthening the role of the Library and improving the quality of its services.

The Method of the Research

1. Quantitative analysis through an electronic questionnaire that was prepared and made accessible for all the academic community of the University, including researchers and students of all levels of study and administrative staff: http://leu.lt/biblioteka/lt/paslaugos/paslaugu-kokybes-2016-anketa. html;
2. Collection of data and statistical analysis using MS Excel.

The Content of the Research

The electronic questionnaire consisted of 16 closed and 2 open questions and was presented on the Library's webpage to all academic affiliates of the

University (3513 students and 375 members of academic staff (teachers and scientists)). The information about how to fill it in was submitted to the academic community by email-based group: visi@leu.lt.

The questionnaire was not mandatory. It was filled in by 212 respondents who were active in using the Library's services.

The next step was to analyse the obtained data and show the distribution of answers in percentages.

The report presents data from the survey of the academic community from 8 University faculties (Faculty of Philology - 13%, Faculty of Education - 30%, Faculty of Lithuanian Philology - 14%, Faculty of Science and Technology - 13%, Faculty of History - 11%, Faculty of Sports and Health Education - 4%, Faculty of Social Education - 8%, Professional Competence Development Institute - 1% and Administrative Staff - 6%).

The occupations of the respondents were distributed as follows: academic staff - 39% (professors - 6%, associate professors - 18%, doctors of science - 3%, lecturers - 9%, assistants - 3%), students – 49%, administrative staff - 12%.

The respondents were 21% male and 79% female.

Analysis of the Data of the Research

In order to clarify how the quality of the Library's services satisfies the needs of the academic community, the questionnaire was divided into four blocks:

1. Attendance at the Library;
2. Services that are the most useful for the academic community;
3. Satisfaction of users;
4. Open questions for critiques and suggestions.

Attendance at the Library

The research revealed how often the users come to the Library (see Table 2). 35% of the respondents come to the library once a month; 30% visit it once a week; and 13% go every day, while 6% use the library only through virtual platforms.

Table 1. *Attendance at the Library*

Do you attend the Library?	The number of answers
Yes, everyday	27
Yes, once a week and more often	64
Yes, once a month and more often	74
Yes, one a semester and more often	31
Only virtually I visit Library only virtually (I use only electronic services)	13
Do not come to the Library I'm not attending the Library	3
Total	212

In order to obtain a complete view about the reasons why a user may not visit the library, we also asked the participants of the survey to explain their motives for choosing not to use the library. 24% of the respondents marked that they do not use the library because it lacks the resources that are necessary for their research and study; 16% indicated the inconvenience of the opening hours; 18% choose to use other libraries that are closer to their living area; 5% responded that they do not enjoy being at the library because of its strict rules; 9% indicated the lack of electronic services in the library; and finally, 9% responded that they were demotivated by the lack of computers available in the Library (see Table 3).

Table 3. *The Reasons why Users Do Not Visit the Library*

| If you are not visiting, what are the reasons for your absence?	The number of answers
Too often I do not get the necessary literature	13
Too little computerized working places for readers	4
Too little electronic services (databases, e-books)	5
Uncomfortable working hours	9
Excessively strict library rules	3
Going to other libraries (please specify)	10

Due to the fact that the Library of the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences is divided into various departments, during the research we also tried to investigate which one of them has the highest rates of attendance. The results showed that the Loan Department has an attendance of 58% (38% in the Main campus of the University and 20% in the branch library of the University). 25% of the respondents visit reading rooms of the Library, and 12% use the Learning Resources Centre. 5% of the users turn mostly to the specific areas for group studies.

The Most Useful Services for the Academic Community

In order to evaluate the services provided by the Library, it was necessary to ask our respondents which services they use most frequently. From the data

provided in Figure 1, it can be observed that the most popular service is the borrowing of resources, which reaches 29%. Around 17% of the respondents use sources only in the Reading rooms.

Figure 1. *The Main Purposes of Library Visits*
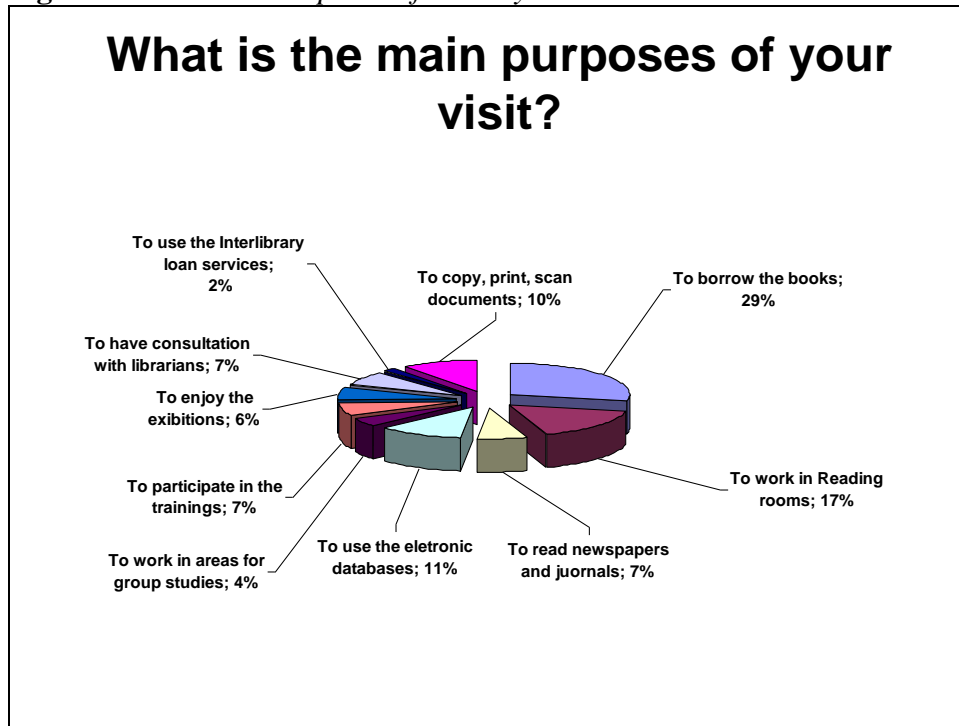
7% of the respondents come to the Reading rooms of the Library to consult scientific journals and newspapers. 11% of the users approach online databases (at this moment the Library has access to 30 different databases). Moreover, there is a significant portion of users who come to the Library because of the trainings that it organizes (7%) or in order to have a private consultation with a librarian (also 7%). Some respondents (around 10%) go to the Library in order to use its other services for which they are charged extra, such as copying, printing or binding. The survey also revealed that users of the Library are interested in the expositions held there: around 6% go to the Library for such events (see Figure 1).

Since a significant number of Library users are not capable of physically visiting, it also provides virtual services. According to the survey data found in Figure 2, the most frequently used facility is the electronic catalogue (around 23% of respondents). Moreover, the virtual library also seems to attract attention, since 14% of the respondents indicate that they are used to consult it. The popularity of these two tools is linked to the fact that they let users easily find necessary resources and check when a book should be returned to the library in order to avoid fines.

Figure 2. *Usage of the Library's Virtual Services*
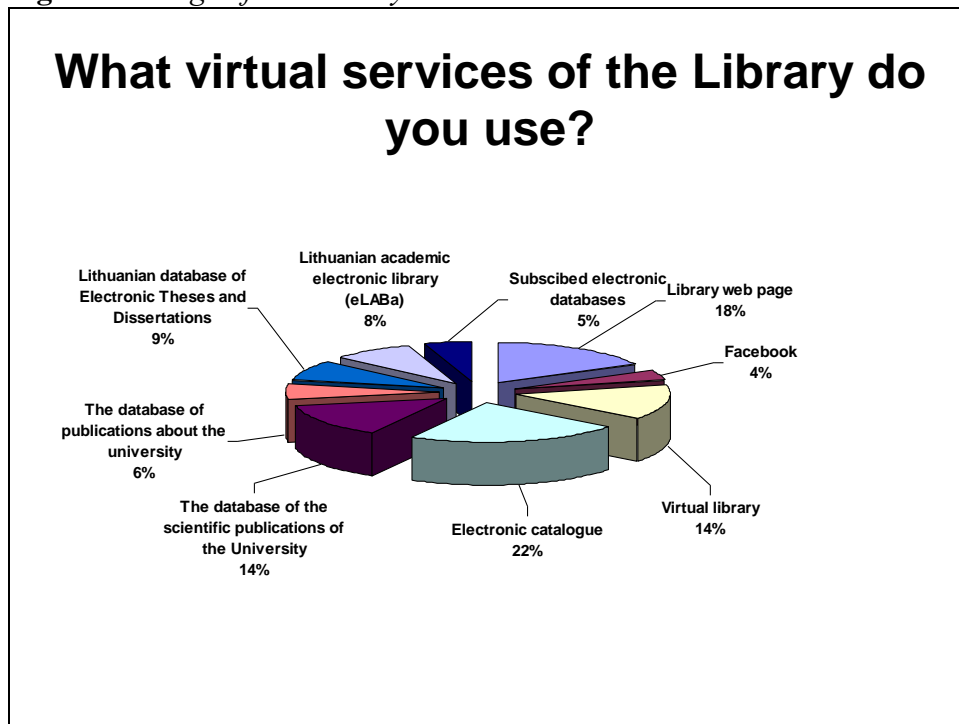
Almost the same number of respondents use databases created by the Library (8% use the Lithuanian database of Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 6% consult the database about the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, and 8% approach the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library (eLABa)). The most popular of the databases created by the Library is the database of Scientific Publications of the University, used by 14% of the respondents. 18% of users show interest in the web page of the Library, but only 4% visit its profile on Facebook.

Furthermore, it is important to know if users have sufficient information about the services provided by the Library. In order to answer that question, we asked our respondents if they thought they knew enough about what they can get using the Library. 69% of the users indicated that they had sufficient information and 3% mentioned a lack of knowledge in this field. The conclusion that could be made based on these results is that the Library staff is keen enough to provide all the necessary information about the services provided by the Library.

Satisfaction on the Quality of the Services

Since one of the most important factors that determines the quality of services provided by the Library is its staff. We asked the respondents to evaluate the abilities and competence of the librarians. 47% of the users expressed that the staff of the Library could be described as very high quality specialists and the same amount (47%) thought that it is high quality.

In order to make the survey as precise as possible, we asked the users to evaluate the quality of different departments. Figure 3 shows that the largest percentage of respondents is satisfied with the work of Loan Department, though the General and Periodicals Reading Rooms also show quite high levels of satisfaction.

Figure 3. *Quality of Services of Different Library Departments*
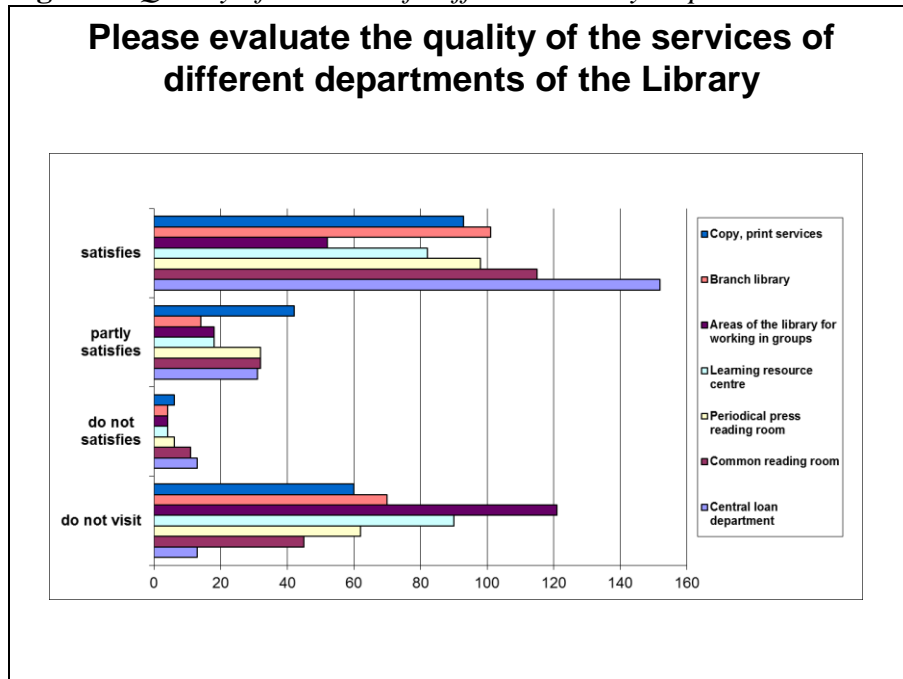
As was mentioned previously in the text, the Library also provides virtual services that the respondents evaluated. In this case, the electronic catalogue and the webpage of the Library achieved the highest scores. Additionally, users seem to be satisfied with the quality of the Database of Scientific Publications and Virtual library.

We also asked the respondents if they have ever critiqued the performance of the Library staff. 81% of the respondents did not have any critical observations; 12% indicated that they did have some, yet did not know where they were supposed to address them; and only 5% have actually turned to the administration in order to express their disapproval.

Finally, the frequency of referring to a librarian for a help was questioned. 64% of the respondents indicated that they always turn to the librarian with questions or when in need of some advice; 25% said that they only ask a librarian when they have some specific questions; and 10% indicated that they were capable of resolving their doubts without any help.

Open Questions (Criticism and Suggestions)

In the end of the survey, we asked the respondents to provide us some suggestions or to express some criticism about the quality of the services of the Library, in order to make necessary improvements. After analyzing all the opinions that were received, we managed to group them into five categories that sum up the most important aspects mentioned by the users:

1) Move the Library into a new and more ergonomic building;
2) Improve the quality of work done by the Library and its attention to users;
3) Change the opening hours of the Library;
4) Reduce the charges for additional services to users;
5) Improve the web page and virtual services functionality of the Library.

Conclusions

The quality of services provided by the Library is determined by the interaction between the one providing the service and its users, during which time the provider is trying to make its services attractive for its potential users and to meet their expectations. As the research showed, the factors that determine the quality of the services provided by the Library are similar to the ones that predominate in other areas related to giving and receiving services. Due to the predominance of human interaction, one of the most important criteria is the competence of the Library staff, since it is the sector that not only creates, maintains and controls the major offerings of the Library, but also is in direct contact with the users. To keep both physical and virtual visitors satisfied, it is necessary to dedicate time and finances to the training of the staff in order to keep the librarians up to date with the academic community.

In the case of the Library of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, despite some factors that should be discussed and improved (such as schedules, Facebook profile and further modernization of the Library via the application of new IT possibilities), the users are happy with the staff and the majority of services. However, respondents mentioned a clear need for the improvement of their physical surroundings. One of the most important discoveries made during this research was that visitors tend to establish a direct connection between the commodity, modernity and cosiness of the Library building and the quality of its services; this has a significant influence on the general opinion about the Library.

To sum up, nowadays the quality of the Library is no longer described only by the resources that are in its possession, but also by the events that it is capable of holding, its active intent to approach the user via direct interaction or social media, the personal attention provided to every user independent of their position in academia, its dynamism, and its capacity to develop scientific and intercultural communication with global knowledge management.

The results of the research showed that there are some gaps between the Library's services and the academic community's expectations. The academic community would prefer to work in a modern library with good infrastructure, though the University's strategic goal is to have a modern library-information center. For this purpose, since 2004 a project of a 500-seat canteen reconstruction in the library-canteen is underway. In 2016, they received money from the State Investment Program to continue the project, but these funds were not enough to complete the reconstruction work. Thus, this situation was not able to improve the environment and the study, educational and research processes at the University in a most convenient, flexible way for the academic community and all other users.

The results also imply that the following services at the Library needed immediate attention: the Library should focus on supplying needed information for the academic community by using social media and network tools, virtual services (tutorials and guides), improving the Library's webpage functionality, and installing more computers in the Library. The researchers stressed the need for individual training opportunities at the Library.

The research recommends that the Library should seek and implement new approaches and methods in order to raise the quality of research support at the University. This would include introducing more innovative services, strengthening its activities on social media and network tools, implementing online training courses for the academic community and, of course, moving to a new building.

According to Mathews (2014), libraries and their partners enable students and scholars to ask new questions and to tackle old problems in new ways. Our future will be filled with fertile, and perhaps currently unimaginable, collaborations resulting in the development of new tools, disciplines, methodologies, metrics, pedagogies, techniques, workflows, genres, art forms, practices, literacies, algorithms, interfaces, interpretations, formats, communities, programming languages, credentials, applications, distribution channels, frameworks, solutions, services and business models. People will be able to investigate new problems and ask new questions that have never been asked before. Mathews (2014) predicts that the future success of libraries will not be measured by the collections they are able to provide, but by the business models they devise and implement. Thus, librarians are on the verge of the most exciting era yet in the field of librarianship.

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