

PAID SERVICES AT THE LIBRARY FOR FOREIGN LITERATURE: NEW OBJECTIVES, EXPERIENCE, PERSPECTIVES**

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Abstract: In some fields Russian libraries seem to be rather progressive. Facing great financial problems many libraries had to find a way to earn money to survive and maintain their collections in the late 80s. The All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature was one of the first to break the barrier of Lenin's dominating idea „Libraries - free of charge for everybody“. The Arts Department of the M.I. Rudomino State Library was one of the first to initiate paid services and by now it is quite experienced in the field.

The paper describes all kinds of services provided by the Arts Department, identifying those which may or may not be charged for, financial and administrative regulations, exceptions for special user groups, co-ordination and application of new technologies.

Russian libraries were institutions that faced great financial problems in the country's changing economic system in the 1980s; but their defences were very weak. Traditionally they had no sources of finance other than state or local budgets and they were never expected to earn money or raise funds. Amongst workers librarians were the poorest in terms of salary and also the most conservative in terms of changing their approach to their profession and abilities.

The very idea of charging for some library services was considered as shocking and indecent. There was also an important ideological reason - Lenin's thesis: „Libraries- free of charge for everyone“ - that didn't allow even thinking about charging for anything in libraries. At that time the only service which was acceptable to charge for was photocopying. But libraries' expenses began to increase immensely. In the late 1980s it became vitally important for survival that

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libraries made a choice between „fee or free“. The new economic situation challenged us to look anew at what we had and how we were working, re-evaluating possessions and public interests from a commercial point of view. At the same time some new groups of library users were ready to pay for information, such as TV and film studios, publishers, etc.

The Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow and its Arts Department was one of the first in the country to introduce fee-based services for special user groups and then for the general public. From the very first we had to make it absolutely clear to ourselves what kind of services we could and could not charge for. We had to consider the basic principles of free and equal access to information, accepted throughout the world. We also had to consider the privileged position of our Library in terms of the foreign materials we possessed, being unique in the country by being supplied with hard currency, even in the most difficult periods of our history. In our country there were only a very few other libraries and only a few individuals who could acquire foreign publications.

This privilege made the choice even harder because from one point of view we had to share our rich collection with everybody deprived of hard currency and thus provide access to foreign publications. From another point of view, we had to preserve and maintain our collection for future generations. When in 1989 the State stopped providing the Library for Foreign Literature with hard currency we were forced to search for non-traditional sources of finance. At the same time insufficient salaries (at the time lower than the official standard of living and remaining so) made many professional librarians look for more profitable jobs and thus leave the Library. Such staffing problems helped to accelerate changes in the traditional approach to library services.

I will not speak about fund-raising in the Library in general. I will mention only that changing the Library into an International Cultural Center immediately brought about some good results. Combining traditional Russian-type public and research libraries with libraries of different foreign Cultural Centers under the same roof provided the core Library and its users not only with funds necessary for new acquisitions, but also with access to the collections of these other libraries and their information resources. Library staff and users benefited further from this development since new information technologies and modern equipment at these centers became available to everyone.

The continuing low salary problem forced us to analyze our own options and resources in order to identify what sort of services we could add to the wide range of traditional library services. We didn't want to deprive library users of anything or to make them feel unhappy in the Library which they loved. So the main

problem was to find a proper balance between free and paid services. We formulated our main approach by bearing in mind two sides of a coin: staff and users' interests: all the traditional basic library services - receiving readers' cards, searching in the catalogues and special card-files, ordering and using library materials, reference assistance, attending exhibitions, public lectures, meetings, etc. - are and should be free of charge. Only additional or supplementary services may be charged for.

The Arts Department of the Library was one of the first to examine what resources we had to offer users in addition to traditional services. We realised that not all specialized cardfiles compiled by the Department, though they are quite well presented, were widely used by readers because only a few of them had sufficient knowledge and skills in bibliographical work to conduct searches themselves.

All the Guidelines and leaflets produced in the Library were of little help since it was always easier for the reader to ask the reference librarian for assistance than to read the Guide or to examine the samples on display. The reference librarian cannot do all searching for readers, he can only give advice on how and where to search. Rearranging the Art files in the most convenient way for users would be of little help either.

Iconographic searches cause even more difficulties than bibliographic searches. I do not mean ordinary requests for some well-known images or pictures of specific artists; these do not cause any problems since we have enough reference tools to help. But again the reference librarian cannot do a search on behalf of the user, as we usually have about 100 readers a day in our Department. However, it is evident that an art librarian can do this type of search more efficiently and quickly, using the same tools as readers but adding professional skills and intuition. It was therefore obvious that we could institute image research as a fundraising additional activity.

I have to mention that the majority of art publications in our Library are kept in closed stacks. In total the Library collection of art materials include more than 100,000 volumes and more than 150,000 current periodical titles. Only about 4,000 books and current periodicals from the last two years are on open access in the Arts Reading Room. Departmental staff therefore have to use the same catalogues and files as readers, the only difference being that art librarians compiled these files themselves and therefore had experienced the contents of all publications included and also a visual memory of them.

Whatever we did to make the reader's searches easier, we had to assume that it was impossible to foresee all types of reader requests, and therefore we

concentrated our efforts in rearranging files following general and typical questions only.

We found that many people were willing to pay to have searches done for them since it would be done better and quicker than if they did it themselves. They preferred to save time and get the best results passing the job to specialists. Moreover, they are mostly hired specialists doing a job financed by others, so they were not using their own money.

Gradually a circle of permanent clients was formed and some of them, like the slide manufacturing studio „Diafilm“, relied on our knowledge and vision of the subject. The editors gave us only the titles of proposed slide sets and left it to the Art librarian to select the images. I would like to name a few of these sets: „Mother-images in art“, „Male portraits in art“, „Games and gamblers in art“, etc.

Various film-makers and film- and TV-directors are also among our permanent customers. We selected photos for films on Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Greta Garbo, Clark Gable, Alida Valli and many others.

Among the themes that required much time were „Bars and restaurants as the site in modern art“, „Cruelty in modern art“, „The world of the Holy Bible“, „Magicians, tricks and freaks through the ages“. Compiling images for the last one we even had to find the pictures of Mesopotamian clay tablets with the cuneiform magic words „Ahalay-Mahalay“ inscribed.

In responding to these requests it is not only money which concerns us. It is a very practical way to raise intellectual interest in our jobs, to make routine work more creative and to develop the subject knowledge and reference skills of the librarians.

The subjects of requests are studied in depth in order to make a good selection of images. We also use all available reference tools and the searches provide us with an opportunity to examine our Library collection in terms of gaps, strengths and weaknesses.

One of the latest subject requests, which encouraged staff members to study a lot, was on the subject „Sun signs and symbols“. At first it seemed to us to be easy to find the necessary images, having good reference books on myths and mythology. But the more we got involved in the subject, the more sides to this seemingly endless theme were revealed. We had to cover every period of human history from the very beginning to the present, every field of art and craft, various folk ornament patterns, urban design and, of course, religious and ritual objects.

Eventually our eyes were so well tuned to discover Sun-signs that we noticed them everywhere, even on the patterns of the jackets of our colleagues and visitors.

Another type of request which we met with an additional service was to allow materials which were to be used only in the Reading Room to leave Library premises. The most frequent reasons for such requests was that it was necessary to reproduce or photocopy plates using special equipment which could not be brought into the Library, e.g. stationary TV equipment etc. At other times such requests were made because images had to be shown to Chiefs who refused to come to the Library because they thought themselves to be too important!

Responding to such requests we had to find means to insure materials and we require official letters for such requests indicating the purpose, preservation measures and payment for insurance. Unfortunately, even an official letter does not guarantee that borrowed books are returned on time, though payment usually makes people more responsible. We feel that the only secure way to handle such requests is to accompany the borrowed materials but that is seldom possible and we therefore still consider this kind of service as extraordinary, although it generates attractive sums of money.

Photocopying is a service which almost every library provides, so I do not need to say much about it. In this context we are mostly concerned about allowing the reproduction of our materials, copyright, the physical condition and value of the material involved.

A completely different kind of service concerns education. Our Department is closely connected with the Arts and Architecture Faculties of Moscow universities and colleges and as a result students and faculty members use us regularly. We support their curricula and acquire necessary materials and put them on open shelves. We also arrange displays for exams, etc. We do not charge graduate or post-graduate students if they need to make slides from our books for use in presenting papers or in dissertations. We also help school art teachers to select visual materials for their classes, they can borrow slides and we allow them to make slides of their own at a nominal price.

Taking the initiative the Arts Department created a Children's Reading Room. Since much of our material is in foreign languages the main difficulty for children was the language barrier and so we decided to teach foreign languages as well as the history, art, literature and customs of the countries of the language concerned. In the past children were not welcome in libraries but nowadays many former libraries for adults accept juvenile readers. In almost every Russian regional or city children's library language and art classes are now arranged. This kind of

service is paid for by attendees. Since we provide a supplementary education it is up to the users whether to take this option or not. These classes are taught by both invited specialists and by members of the Library and Departmental staff. It is my responsibility to manage this business and we set prices ourselves. For us it is very important to attract children from the families with low and medium income.

In our educational activity we combine teaching of children with sharing our experience in the field with language and art students from pedagogical colleges and universities. Every spring we arrange a two-week seminar and training for students and teachers. We show them how to use the Library's information resources and introduce new educational methods and tools. Our idea is „not to try to feed everybody but to give them a fishing rod and to teach fishing“. To teach future teachers seems to us very effective. The colleges which commission such a training pay only a nominal charge, about 60R .

Our pricing policy is not to get as much money from clients as possible but to set reasonable prices to make all our additional services available to all categories of users, including librarians and teachers. In 1987 the Library received the first „recommended“ price-list from the Ministry of Culture for additional services such as photocopying, translating, taking pictures and making videos. This has been our basic document since then although prices in the country increased immensely in the early 1990s.

For the services not mentioned in this basic list we had to make our own calculations, taking into account the average time required to provide the service. The salary per hour plus all taxes and expenses of a library professional with the highest qualifications were used. As prices are linked to the State salary rate we have to update the price-list regularly but we do not raise prices every time salaries increase since we realise that we might lose some of our permanent clients as a result.

We balance our charges between having to produce income and the capability of the user to pay. Since we wish to make our services available to clients with a low income we developed a system of reduced prices and even excluded certain groups of users from payment: students, school teachers, museum staff, retired people, church, State cultural institutions, non-commercial film studios producing films for educational purposes, restoration workshops, etc. Sometimes the clients of these categories refuse to pay such a reduced fee as they wish to contribute to the Library's development by paying full fees. For example, an English merchant's warehouse of the 16th-17th centuries in Moscow Zaryadje was restored prior to a visit to Russia by Queen Elizabeth II. We assisted in this job by selecting samples of English warehouses of that period. We did not want to charge for the work but

since the project was sufficiently financed the restorers insisted on paying for the work we had done for them.

Payment can be made in several ways. We accept cash and in such a case we give a receipt to the customer, pass the money to the Library cashier who transfers it to our bank account; payment can be made directly into our bank account.

Library regulations require a special procedure for administering and managing the paid services provided by different departments. In this we are supervised by the Budget-planning and Financial departments. A special agreement is signed between the Library Administration and the Department outlining mutual responsibilities, duties, a list of services and the procedure to regulate money. 30% of each fee earned goes into the Library budget, 10% to the Departmental budget, 10-20% is paid to the staff of the relevant department and the remainder is paid as extra salary to the staff of the department who were personally involved in this particular transaction.

Although we feel ourselves rather advanced in terms of using our heads and hands for these services we are still quite confused by the options of new technologies. At present our readers are not very interested in information about publications or their location. They need original texts and images here and now. They are not like businessmen or lawyers who urgently need current information in any medium and at any price. Our users mostly deal with universal values and are not so eager to get current news. It is not absolutely clear to us what type of on-line search or information delivery we could charge for in the future. For us it is still a big question.

We co-ordinate everything concerning paid services with other similar libraries in Moscow. We share our experiences at meetings of ARLIS/Mos and at seminars with colleagues from all over Russia. We wish to have the same price structure in similar cities, or at the least in the same city, since there is no state regulation of this process. We really need an international discussion on this issue.

I hope that in the nearest future our users will learn to value information regardless of the location of the original book and we will become as advanced in providing services using electronic tools as we are with brains and hands. Time will teach us.

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