

Stakeholders and Public Library Mission

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Abstract

Paper tends to find out core missions of public libraries and identifies their stakeholders. It explains relations they create by focusing in the same goal. Objectives preserve to present the complexity of services of public libraries and stakeholders' commitment level in the evaluation process about missions as culture, education, information and literacy are in a comparative point of view. Qualitative-quantitative approaches are aligned together to explain stakeholders' position and role toward public libraries missions. A synthesized questionnaire for comparison purpose (library activities, service measurement) was prepared for managers of libraries. Another questionnaire (about relations, interest) was distributed to every public library stakeholder taken in consideration. Different categories of stakeholders as: public library and school directors, librarians, city councillors, representative of library association, publishers, users (included volunteers) were interviewed. Results through evaluation process discovered a colourful assessment about the most important mission that a public library should have nowadays according to their interest. Five public libraries taken in consideration are an important data for the research, but they don't entirely represent all cities libraries and all kind of possible partners. It limits the judgement about a detailed report of all Albanian public libraries.

Key Word: Stakeholders, Public Library, Mission, Assessment.

Introduction

Generally public institutions but especially public libraries are an important center of information, created to serve to all the community to which they belong to, on the basis of equality of access for all by using all their services as well as they can. (Payette, S., 2001). Access to all means that a public library is considered as an open institution to all involved parts that benefit from its services. It's obvious that being an open public institution, the public library is exposed to everyone with its everyday actions. Around Europe libraries are transforming their close environment into a large cooperation with other partners (Davies, R., 2007). Library gives them all its services. Other parts take what they want from library services. They can also give to library their active or passive support. Considering parties, public libraries and stakeholders, and especially their contribution toward the most successful mission, the objectives of this research are: to clarify that public libraries work as system and as a complexity of services, explaining where the strength is and why problems appear to take place; to explain that public libraries are not isolated institutions, but they exist in full collaboration with other partners. These partners should acknowledge the actual role of a public library as well as their role to the development of the community; to perceive stakeholders commitment level as active factors that have the right to think about where library should invest on for further directives; to compare stakeholder's assessment for the most successful mission which a public library has nowadays. This give and take process focused on the problem of library mission and stakeholders' evaluation requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods which can explain stakeholders' position and their evaluation for the same research question. Qualitative part explains how to identify concrete public library stakeholders and to understand their role. Work paper purpose is focused on the observation of how a public library system acts in combination with other parts (institutions, organizations, etc.) to whom library services (missions) might be depended on. This part deals with library stakeholders' role in library mission assessment. Explanations based on similar cases are used on to find out

stakeholders position toward library. The explanation is also important if a process of cooperation occurs between two, three, or more parts in order to get the same goals. Payette (2001) reminds us that in IFLA guidelines the most important public library missions are connected with education, culture, information and literacy. Descriptive analyses are used to understand whether a stakeholder's interest conditions the way of assessing the library missions. Quantitative method is used to gather data and provide information to measure the services of public library. In order to reveal the concrete missions and distinguish if one mission is more successful than others, the investigation requires concrete assessment by respective stakeholders. Serving this purpose there have been chosen five public libraries of Albania and specific questionnaires were prepared. Practical result comes from concrete answers and concrete assessment of each stakeholder point of view.

The definition of the problem (stakeholders and public library mission) and the methodology used serves as a guide to concentrate on providing answers to the following three key research questions:

- Public library stakeholders' identification and their role toward public library. There are some stakeholders' main groups typically evident for library issues. (Who are they and what do they do?) Considering them as resources whom all the needed information will be taken from, they will be perceived as a collaboration team for the same goal, mission. Which of the missions do stakeholders prefer most?
- Public library missions identification (which are they and why it is so?) Identifying missions determine public library investments.
- Assessment of missions (how it is made the evaluation of the most important mission by public library active stakeholders and why it differs?)

The analysis of library services and the stakeholder's opinion over which is the most successful public library mission serves as an orientation for the future policies and actions of libraries. This is the motivation for understanding stakeholders' cooperation, in order to underline prospective for public library priorities.

Stakeholders and library Missions identification

Public library and its partners contribute on library issues by playing their certain roles even they might have different judges about the activity, role and values of a public library. Stable and project (Babou, S., 2008), primarily and secondary stakeholders (Fedorowicz, J., 2010) contribute in all kind of libraries by using power and legitimacy (Mitchell, 1997), interest Freeman, 1984) etc. in evaluating the most important mission of a public library. According to their position influence it is possible to explain their policy and interest toward the most targeted mission of a public library. It is possible to measure their level of commitment too.

The reason of continuing presence of public libraries in our society is related to its values and they come from successes of services weather public library's role is seen as a flexible one adopted as time request updating of services. Mission should be understood as the values and the purposes of public libraries. Missions are highly related with library active roles. Partners might have different judges about the activity, role and values of a public library. Mission's identification is based on international guidelines of IFLA/UNESCO manifesto for public libraries and there are some main lines as: education, culture, information and literacy. To present this collaboration in Albania, five public libraries which present the most important cities (E, D, F, B and V) were chosen and a survey was made about them.

Research (Methodology And Data Collection)

Data collection of the survey was two-folded. It was basically a collection of statistical data about public libraries and their services. Then a questionnaire, covering different stakeholder's relations, attitudes and

interests toward public library and evaluation of their missions was used. It's been assumed these libraries represent the public library situation in Albania. These five different public libraries are located far from each other representing so different parts of Albania. Due to respondents privacy protection it was judged not to name them by names in the presentation of the results. There are used letters E, D, F, B and V instead.

The identification of stakeholders based on Schmeer stakeholders' categorizations, (1999) allows classifying stakeholder's position toward library as an institution in the community. It takes also in consideration their continuous, although different, influence on library work, especially their services. On the other side this (adapted) categorization allows also an international comparison. Stakeholder groups classified as: a/ administrative stakeholders (important also for financing) represent Ministry of Culture [The directorate of the Book directory], local government is represented by municipality (City councilors); b/ professional stakeholders included ALA, library managers and librarians on one side, and school libraries, publishers on other side; c/ civil stakeholders were represented users (and also volunteers). A questionnaire was given to: Director of the directorate of book and libraries in Ministry of Culture; 5 city councilors; 1 representative of library association; 5 public library directors; 5 school directors and 5 school librarians; 5 publishers; 50 librarians; 100 users (including volunteers). Each of these respondents represents the different group of stakeholder and total numbers of the respondents was 177.

Hypothesis:

The hypothesis was based on the assumption that public library should meet the needs of every stakeholder group and most decisions should not end in supporting one stakeholder against the other. Public library must be an institution where stakeholder interests are aligned. Although the importance of certain library services, as seen in the light of public library missions, will differ from stakeholder to stakeholder. The focus on public library services clarifies what roles and missions are fulfilled. It shows how roles and missions determinate library services and form a library system that is perceived by different stakeholders groups. The very first aim present these services based on public library data, information, and statistics, gathered from a specific questionnaire prepared for managers of five public libraries of Albania. The questionnaire purpose was to create a clear picture of public libraries' services, so these could be compared with the idea of public libraries as a public institution by stakeholders groups. It was structured in three sections covering: a/ library services; b/ relations and cooperation of library; c/ users. The first section of the manager's questionnaire contained 23 questions. It reveals library through library activities, different services, employee's qualifications and age, membership, collections, budget etc. Second section was structured in 15 questions which covered relations between library and the manager's point of view on relations and cooperation with different library stakeholders. Third section gave basic information about the users. This part of research was followed by the final questionnaire, distributed to all chosen stakeholders. Since the questionnaire is an excellent approach for measuring users' level of satisfaction (Burns, 1978) it was assumed that all library stakeholders would perceive the questionnaire in the same way, as it deals with mission evaluation from each stakeholder point of view. There were asked respondents to give their opinion and evaluate the importance of each mission by percentages and evaluation was composed of 24 questions. The assessment of mission was expressed in percentages from 1%-100% and divided between four missions: education, culture, information and literacy. Collected data, which allows comparative stakeholder's evaluation, found out differences and similarities regarding four basic public library missions among the four basic ones. This was also a test of the hypothesis.

Research-Concrete Part for Public Albanian Libraries

Referring to Schmeer guidelines (Schmeer, K., 1999) defining stakeholders its underlined that: These "interested parties," can usually be grouped into the following categories and regrouping Schmeer (1999) stakeholders into a recomposed schema with the same functions helped on the purpose of the study.

Schmeer stakeholders' Albanian analog public library stakeholders

Donors	1. Donors
National political	2. Government ; municipalities / Library law
Public	3. Ministry of Culture
Labor	4. ALA ; Publisher's ; school libraries
For profit/non-profit org.	5. Non- profit org. and assoc.
Civil society	6. Civil society
Users	7. Users

Donors: The main part of Albania public libraries establishment started as private donations of collections where owners offered their personal collections, buildings and the financial support for public access on. In such cases donors usually are identified with individuals like: writers, citizens, journalists, doctors etc., who occasionally donate their personal collections (local, national, international). Politic and economic changes in 1990 had influenced in the Albanian society as well as in the library system. It was time when international donors were offered for public libraries through different projects of integration as Soros Foundation, UNDP, and UNICEF etc. As time passes by donations occasionally appear on.

Government/ Municipalities/ library law: Ministry of Culture take the role of Legislators, governors (Schmeer, K., 1999) where public is ministry, so it's an administrative stakeholder and a stable one. The task of the Ministry is to design and implement a cultural policy in field of book and libraries. According to ministry a policy should be a common mission of all actors. Municipality gives regulations and indexes about functions of a public library. It's the local administration which decides mostly the pragmatic future of public library. It foresees library yearly budget. The direct contact through the instances of Municipality and library **are city councilors**, who play a double role. Being at the same time a representative of library's interests and projects are at the same time municipality's voice for library's budget. It's in their will and devotion to be fully integrated in library demands or to be just inter institutional negotiator remaining in diplomatic position. They present library interests and priorities in the municipality board. **Law:** The main Albanian library law was fully completed in 2000. It is organized by six chapters in which number 6 corresponds to Types of libraries. (Law, 8576, official magazine, 2000) So the establishment, the organization and functionality of Public Libraries is in the general frame of Legal bases, which includes all types of libraries. There is not a special law covering **only** the public library, even though this category presents the biggest number of libraries after school libraries.

Professional stakeholders (ALA, school libraries, librarians, etc.) ALA (Albanian Library Association). Professional associations help respective institutions to develop and guide them toward a better state against present obstacles. The only national association in the field of libraries in Albania is ALA, set up in 1993 and legally recognized by the government. **School libraries** are considered as one of the most important partners in evaluation of mission of libraries. School libraries become partners for the same goal as the youth education mission is very important. Collaboration between public libraries and school ones are clearly visible in different activities as promotions, expositions, exchanging materials creating so a dual-fold relation of libraries.

Managers and librarians (library) Managers and librarians are identified as a primarily (Fedorowicz, J; Gogan, J.L., Culnan, M. J., 2010) and an internal stakeholder. Managers not only give directions but should consider library as a place where roles are in continuing development giving priority to user needs wherever libraries are located on.

Volunteers: they are considered even libraries' human sources. They're active and useful to library and community all time. Albanian Public libraries statistics show different numbers of volunteers involved in during a calendaric period. **Users:** Is the most important part of a library service. They might be supporters or critics. It obvious big libraries have a higher number membership than others Users frequent library because of their need of information. Their satisfaction is an indicator of the values of library.

Albanian Public Library Functionality

Public libraries have in their functions traditional services and try to be adoptable for future one. There is not a concrete effort gathering the public libraries databases in public library network sharing their bibliographic records and there is no an intranet. Information reveals that only some of libraries make publications and a few of them have web page. The others don't have a budget to create and then to maintain a web page. Based on traditional services public library managers declare that the main part of activities result to be *the book promotion* for local celebrities or for new published books. All kind of activities are done by the librarian's cooperation with contributors (writers). Public libraries managers and librarians act as a team. They organize and arrange a calendar of promotions based on user's demands and writers will of sharing their works promotions with public libraries. Librarian's position as an internal stakeholder who knows perfectly the situation in and out of library foresees communication with users as a constructive discourse between partners which lead in objectivity of evaluation of public library missions. Statistics show that librarian woman are more involved in the profession and they fill the most part of library employees. Librarians evaluate the library as a center of formation and information.

Relations and Missions Evaluations

The *Directorate of Books and Libraries of the Diaspora and Minorities* (Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports of Albania) confirmed 45 active public libraries on Albania and only some of them fulfill the law criteria to be considered at the first level, the others belong to the second and so on. At this point of view the promotion of: education, information, culture and learning are conditioned also by library level. The population number gives priority to capital (Tirana) public library to be organised in eight separable public libraries. This happens because public libraries are under commune's dependence and have no financial relations between them. Their services and funds depends from the commune budget delegate them. Tirana doesn't have a central public library. Public libraries which act in Tirana are not considered as a set of branches, but act independently in the area they're located. Other cities of Albania have only one public library and only some cities have private libraries.

Municipality and library. Comparing budget data of five chosen libraries it's evident that libraries differ in it. Some of them have direct contact with municipality administration and others take their yearly budget delegated from Art Center funds. The direct contact with the city councilor gives to the library the chance to raise their budget. Libraries depended from the Art center coordinator take a lower yearly budget.

City councilor role. Usually library projects are supported by the administrative stakeholder, coordinated by city councilor role. The city councilor is as an intermediated structure between library (managers, librarians) and municipality (mayor, board, financial department etc). Role of the city councilor is crucial as he gather data and take notes from manager of library and presents library needs to attract municipality attention. His ability of convincement signifies a lot for library projects and whole library process. The city

councilor now is not an institutionalized representing of two partners, but often he becomes a real person who is relatively close to concrete public library actions, plans, and projects.

Results

Identification of concrete stakeholders, their active role, the set of data and statistics taken on the five chosen libraries helped to point out these main results: Actors involved in certain institutions, known as stakeholders, (like public library in this case) are identified by the same pattern categories around the world. Their identification helps to analyze their role toward institution. Stakeholder's influence on public library is conditioned from their position, interest and action toward library services. Stable stakeholders are the most important among all partners because they invest; act through all time with public libraries. Relations and services determine also public library success and project future library goals. That's why all stakeholders have different opinions about which is the most needed mission for the public library. The identification of definitive stakeholders for public libraries comes from three main groups which cover: library status and legislative dimension, finances, and services.

Paper purpose required the choice of which mission was overestimated. This was revealed by undertaking a comparative analyze of relationships between stakeholders. The result gives the general view of an assessment process where the final goal is to find the most important mission of a public library for its community. Evaluation of the final questionnaire reveals that each mission's level differs and the assessment depends by stakeholder's point of view, where sometimes they're aligned together to information mission.

Discussion

In public library stakeholders and missions evaluation, the very first research question was how to identify stakeholders as they play role in everyday public library actions. Through international analyses and examples it seems there's a universal way of identifying them. It differs only from their level of commitment. International stakeholders analyses suggest how to build a chain of partners basing in their status (Schmeer, 1999), power and legitimacy (Mitchell, 1997), interest (Freeman, 1984) and role. Explaining partners' position and contribution by a theoretical point of view it's important to understand that everywhere around world almost exists the same theory of identifying public library stakeholders. Stakeholders have their specific characteristics which impose determinative actions. There is a colored relationship between categorized groups as administrative, professional and civil are. Inside of these main groups there are differences in mission's evaluation process. In Albanian public library context stakeholders groups are presented by government, municipalities, professionals, library and the civil society.

Conclusions

Public libraries are important to their community. Their success is conditioned by partner's involvement in library issues. Partners build relations with library and their relationships influence in future library mission's orientations. Internal stakeholders (librarians, managers etc.) and external one (active and potential users, volunteers, other public institutions etc) participate together in public libraries issues creating so a whole process of taking and giving benefits. The cooperation helps to build an organized service system. It produces a set of useful services for all community. Stakeholder's contribution depends on stakeholder's position. Their position helps to identify them as active, passive or potential stakeholder. Partners who contribute directly in library activity should be well organized, especially the stable or primarily one. Depending on their contribution toward public libraries stakeholders are identified as in: administrative, professionals and civil positions. Administrative group is presented by directorate of books and libraries in Ministry of Culture. Professional stakeholder is presented by library association library staff

by one side and publishers, school libraries by the other side. Civil partners are presented by users' volunteers etc. Each of them sees public libraries in different point of view. In one way or another they have an influence in library issues, because library missions and specifically one of them enters in their interests.

It's a known fact that international guidelines of IFLA/UNESCO (1994) manifesto direct public library's missions toward: culture, education, information and literacy. It was necessary to test the hypothesis if there was a preference among stakeholders for a certain public library mission; if the preference was the same or it differed from one stakeholder to the other; and if there was a winner mission. Evaluation and process estimation about revealing one mission above the others was not easy, but it resulted useful and it was possible to distinguish the most wanted mission among stakeholders. The evaluation briefly was: in the administrative partners Ministry voted literacy and Municipality voted culture, so they weren't internal aligned. The professional partner as ALA is voted information. Publishers voted culture and school library voted education mission. Civil partners and librarians voted information. Based on this process it's compressive that a public library nowadays **is not only** a culture, education or an information center. It is "de facto" a multisided institution where all missions are supported by respective stakeholders in one way or another. Stakeholders and missions are closely related. Even though besides keeping stakeholder's attention on the library missions by the other side public libraries of Albania should be more flexible to time changing. Changes require long future plans where stakeholder's involvement should be well foreseen. Altogether they may pass transitory problems. Public libraries and their stakeholders should also take in consideration suggestions like: **1 Role of a positive partnership:** A continuing partnership and a better collaboration between stakeholders support library emergences. There should be branches of public libraries for rural areas to cover the most part of population and this is not foreseen in policies of administrative part. (Central and local). **2 Same goals.** Partners should be in the same line, contributing for the same goals. If they work disorganized there is no positive result. Stakeholders evaluate a certain mission close to their field of interest and benefit. Only interactions between them must attract their attention to other mission or to focus their interest in combining mission. **3 Reinforcing quality services.** Public libraries should improve quality and quantity of services (there are no differentiated services i.e. for disabled people), because in this way stakeholders may give, but also take benefits from library. **4 Enlarging cooperation.** An opening and an enlarging system of partners bring positive impacts for public libraries missions. Public library success might be improved also by an opening system of partners, considering so project stakeholders involvement. Other not specified (categorized) stakeholders can be involved temporarily with public libraries according to their project interest. **5 Open institution.** Public libraries should not be considered as isolated information centers. A process of stakeholder's integration leads to success of library missions. It's crucial to think about future public libraries goals. Future plans and projects should be nearly the same for all parts of stakeholders. They should contribute altogether for a successful case of social, information, culture, education and literacy centers as developed samples of public libraries around the world nowadays are.

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