

Cross boundaries - join forces: challenging new frontiers

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Abstract

The paper presents fruitful cooperation between EAHIL members from different countries and successful initiative to prepare a project for creation a Virtual Library for Moldova universities. The idea to prepare the project application came thanks to EAHIL membership and communication between colleagues from different countries during EAHIL conferences and workshops. Project EU partners are EAHIL members from Hungary, Romania, Lithuania and Latvia. The project application *MISISQ (Modern Information Services for Improvement Study Quality)* has been submitted to EU EACEA Tempus program in 2013 and have been granted a one million Euro for project implementation during years 2014-2016.

The main project goal is to create an Academic Virtual Library for Moldova universities. Project objectives are following:

- to purchase and implement modern Integrated Library Information System
- to create institutional repositories for University research output and ETD in Moldova universities
- to prepare course material modules on information literacy for training trainers and deliver courses to Moldova librarians

The project MISISQ ends in November 2016 and the achieved results and benefits for project partners are presented in the paper.

Keywords: International Cooperation, Communication, Projects, Virtual Libraries, e-Repositories, Information Literacy.

Introduction

My presentation goal is to share with you my experience on fruitful international Library cooperation projects that has been born thanks to EAHIL. Many years ago, in 1994 Norwegian SMH libraries sponsored several Lithuanian persons to attend the 4th EAHIL Conference in Oslo.

Elisabeth Husem was a president of EAHIL and we were lucky, that Elisabeth together with other Norwegian colleagues initiated set up a long period partnership program between Lithuanian and Norwegian medical libraries that lasted 15 years. Through the Partnership Program, our medical librarians have gained a great deal of professional knowledge and skills for implementing new library technologies, have had the possibility to participate in the European conferences.

Why I'm telling you this old history? I'm willing to express how important is EAHIL for us and how we can continue and develop our partnership between different countries. I was told to Norwegians once, that we'll return them kindness in future. But Norwegians have everything they need and it make sense to use and pass over our acquired partnership experience and knowledge to others who needs more.

When we have met Moldova participants at the EAHIL Conference in Cluj-Napoka in 2006, we could not imagine ourselves that after seven years, in 2013 we'll initiate and write together a project and apply to European Commission Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency

(EACEA) for grant for neighboring EU country Moldova university libraries. According to the Agency requirements it is necessary to have 3 EU country partners. So we invited to join the project well known EAHIL members Marta Viragos (HU) and Ioana Robu (RO) and our neighbor Latvians.

Project goals and objectives

The project application under the title *Modern Information Services for Improvement Study Quality* (MISISQ) has been accepted and granted for one million Euros to implement project ideas and goals during years 2014-2016.

The main goal is to create Virtual Library and improve information services for quality education in seven biggest Moldova universities.

The main objectives to achieve goals are following:

1. To create information infrastructure for Moldova university libraries and implement Library Information System for creation and sharing union el. catalogue, acquisition and circulation of documents, searching and access to information resources for local and remote users;
2. To create institutional e-repositories for study and research output of Moldova universities;
3. To arise information literacy among academic community that ensures effective usage of information resources and scholar communication internationally;

It was a real challenge to implement these important tasks for Moldova universities during short three years period.

Partners

Moldova country partners at the Project are seven biggest institutions of higher education in Moldova with total number 47 000 of students and four EU Universities from Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Hungary.

Choice of the EU country partners have been determined according to specific project objectives, previous contacts and very short time for collection of documents and mandates from all partners. According to Tempus Agency requirements it is necessary to have at least 3 EU country member partners. We knew from previous contacts, that University of Debrecen has well running e-repository and we knew Marta as an active EAHIL Board member and they could be experts and be responsible for creation of e-repositories in Moldova universities. So we invited to join the project University of Debrecen.

Also we knew well from former EAHIL activities, that Ioana Robu (RO) is high skilled information literacy teacher and could contribute in "Training Trainer" courses for Moldova libraries' staff. Courses and course materials in Romanian language are an advantage, as Moldovans use the same language and any translations and interpretations are needed. So UMF has been invited to be responsible for Information Literacy work package.

My Library of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences and Riga Technical University are responsible for implementation Integrated Library System (ILS) to Moldova Universities as we have experience on ILS, working with *ExLibris* software for a long time.

National Council of Student Organizations from Moldova has been invited to contribute in preparing questionnaire about students' information needs, analyse them and present proposals to improve library services.

The Ministry of Education of Moldova is more formal partner neither practical player, but we hope they will help include information literacy courses in to universities' curriculum.

Total partners participating in the project are 13 members:

1. Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Project Coordinator,
2. State University of Medicine and Pharmacy "N. Testemitanu", the Main Moldova Partner, responsible for coordination Moldova partners

3. Moldova State University
4. Technical University of Moldova
5. Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova
6. Alecu Russo Balti State University
7. Chisinau "Ion Creanga" State Pedagogical University
8. State Agrarian University of Moldova
9. Riga Technical University, Latvia
10. Debreceni Egyetem, Hungary
11. "Iuliu Hatieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Romania
12. National Council of Student Organizations from Moldova
13. The Ministry of Education of Moldova

Project implementation

Integrated Library System (ILS)

The main project task and most expensive in money and time sense was purchase and installation of Integrated Library System. MD libraries had near 1.5 million bibliographic records and they were in the printed card catalogues. Any other library processes (acquisitions, cataloguing, sharing metadata, circulation, statistics, OPAC, serials, interlibrary loan) were not computerized, users can access and use library resources only during library open time. Due to absence of open public access catalogue (OPAC) it was problematic to find information even in physical library. It isn't any possibilities to implement new services for local and remote users without integrated library information system. Due to all these reasons study process at universities met disadvantages to organize in a reliable level.

We wanted to acquire an advanced and modern ILS for joint usage of Moldova universities, that could improve library staff workflow and information services to students and academic community. We were considering for a while time to acquire well known commercial or open source ILS. After several live presentations of *Koha* and *Aleph* providers the decision have been made to acquire one of the best ILS *Aleph/Primo* from *ExLibris* Company.

The offered solution is based on *ExLibris* integrated library system *Aleph* and the delivery and discovery system *Primo* and has been implemented as a shared multi tenancy architecture for all above institutions and hosted local in Moldova:

In detail it means that it is one *Aleph* installation with 7 *Aleph* „databases” and one *Primo* installation allowing each institution to have an own access to their catalogue and additionally to have a common view about all 7 institutions.

Our role as a project coordinator was to prepare ILS technical and functional specification for international tender, to organize and fulfil tender, to coordinate signing contracts and monitor ILS implementation. Lithuanian IT staff configured servers for *Aleph* and *Primo* installations, as MD IT staff does not had such professional qualification. Our staff provided with many remote and live consultations on *Aleph* workflow. Together with Riga Technical University specialists have delivered training courses on *Aleph* modules, *Marck21*, *Primo*.

E-repositories

Moldova Universities' scholar publications, theses and dissertations, education resources were being issued only in printed format and their metadata were also in printed cards and printed lists because of absence of e-repositories in Moldova universities. It was the essential demand for universities to set up institutional open access e-repositories for archiving of education e-resources and research output. Another important project work package was to help create institutional e-repositories for Moldova universities. The comprehensive survey and analysis of university needs, content,

structure, IT staff skills and future plans have been performed by Hungarian partners and it was commonly decided to use DSPACE software platform for MD institutional repositories. Workshop for MD IT staff and librarians have been organized in Hungary, at the Debrecen University, where knowledge on e-repository, DSPACE installations has been shared. Currently seven institutional e-repositories are running and new e-documents are being submitted by librarians and authors. Institutional e-repositories will be integrated with MD Virtual Library searching and discovery tool PRIMO at the end of project this year. User Documentation Kit have been prepared by MD partners jointly under consultations of Hungarian partners. Internet addresses of repositories are available at the MISISQ project website <<http://misisq.usmf.md>>.

Information Literacy

The main goal of this work package is to arise information literacy skills among Moldovan students and teachers in order to improve study quality and extend access and use of information resources. Information literacy level of academic community depends a lot on library staff professional skills and quality of information services at the library. Up-to-dated professional knowledge and new skills of librarians is an essential factor for successful e-library development and implementation of the project. A full-scale of information literacy program have been planned to provide for librarians of Moldova universities.

To cope with information explosion and enable effective information usage and management it is necessary to train trainers from Library staff in order they could organize permanent educational courses for students, researchers on new information technologies, effective usage of information resources and information management under the curriculum or free choice bases.

The survey of MD librarians have been performed and according the results the training program *Training Trainer* for librarians was built by Iona Robu from UMF (RO). Eight training course modules were accepted by the project management group members on hot topics such as *Discovery tools/Searching Primo; Evaluation Research Output; Research and Publication Process; Critical Appraisal of Information; Teaching Methodology; Reference Management tools; Specific DB; Copyright;*

Course modules will be used further for student and library user training on information literacy under the curriculum and free choice bases. Educational materials will be translated into Moldovan language, printed and published on the web. Educational courses are planned to organize in the EU partner countries. To assure quality of course materials, peer-reviewing have been performed by project EU partner experts.

Among the main project development work many dissemination activities were performed by Moldovan and project EU partners: creations and maintenance of project website, publishing of various flyers, posters and souvenirs. Several articles have been published in the local and national journals.

Conclusions

The MISISQ project could be a good example to show, how libraries can cooperate in national and international level and each partner obtain their benefit. Moldova university libraries created Library Consortium and jointly acquired advanced Integrated Library System *Aleph* and discovery tool *Primo*. This enable sharing metadata between Moldova universities, integration of external and internal information resources and jointly maintain Virtual Library.

To be successful and sustainable there must be a two way process and mutual benefits. In our case EU country partners also gained benefits acquiring experience and confidence to be professional experts, managing international and big budget EU project.