

## **Leadership challenges in academic libraries in Moldova, Norway and Romania**

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**Abstract:** The main focus in the Moldovan-Norwegian library development project “Development of New Information Services for Moldovan Higher Economic Education”, is on developing the academic library of ASEM, Economic Academy of Science of Moldavia, for the benefit of Moldovan students and scholars. This is done in partnership between the Academy of Economic Studies, Moldova, and the University of Bergen, Norway. However, this cannot be achieved without developing the library leadership as well. In this paper, the leaders of Moldovan academic libraries are investigated in order to find their attitudes to challenges, and their conception of the urgency of the challenges will be compared with similar studies of library leaders from Norway and Romania.

### **1. Introduction**

Academic libraries must support the activities of the universities they serve. This means supporting academic teaching, research and the dissemination of results to the larger academic and non-academic environment.

The Norwegian government has set aside funding for development of academia in the former Soviet Republics through the Eurasia-programme. In this programme, the University of Bergen library applied for funding of a library development project for the Economic Academy of Science of Moldova (ASEM), in collaboration with Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania. The main focus in the Moldovan-Norwegian library development project “Development of New Information Services for Moldovan Higher Economic Education”, is on developing the academic library of ASEM, for the benefit of Moldovan students and scholars. However, this cannot be achieved without developing the library leadership as well.

An important feature in the discussions about librarianship in the future, and especially about academic librarianship, where many of the issues within e-science and information management are likely to be experienced most acutely, is the extent to which academic librarians see the challenges ahead. What challenges do they see as pertinent for their situation?

However, now, the environment is changing so quickly that “it seems as if higher education has been stuck by a fast-moving tsunami filled with obstacles as well with potentials, a tsunami that is striking so forcefully and so quickly that often it is difficult to find safe ground for an opportunity to reflect on what being in that storm of whirling ideas and concepts might mean for us in the future” (Kaufman 2012).

In this paper we will compare the attitudes to challenges, and the conception of the urgency of challenges from leaders of Moldovan and Romanian academic libraries. This will be compared with similar studies of library leaders from Norway.

The paper reports findings from two surveys among academic librarians. One was made in Norway in the fall of 2011<sup>1</sup>. The survey was sent out to 35 university and college libraries and 78 librarians responded the questionnaire. Since the total number of university and college librarians in Norway is 145 (*Statistics Norway*, 2010) response rate is approximately 50 %. In the survey, in addition to demographic information – age, gender, type and size of library, educational background, how long they had been a leader or worked in the library – it was also investigated what the leaders saw as challenges for their libraries in the near future. The probable challenges were set by the researcher, after consultations with a group of library leaders. The questions were posed in Norwegian, and the captions and answers have been translated afterwards.

In the period March 5-April 5 2014 an electronic questionnaire in Survey Monkey was sent to the Romanian Library Association and the Moldavian Library Association. Both distributed by email the link to questionnaire to academic library leaders. The questionnaire contained 7 questions, both questions about background factors, and ranking and scale measurement questions about perception of challenges. The possible challenges were the same as in the Norwegian study. They were posed in Romanian, and translated into English for this paper.

## **2. Leadership in Libraries**

The Norwegian survey which is the basis for the investigation is modelled closely on other surveys of separate groups of Danish and British library leaders. (Johannsen & Pors 2001; Pors 2007; Pors 2008; Pors, Dixon & Robson, 2004). These surveys were planned to look at library leadership longitudinally – and they were not planned for transnational comparisons. Seen together, they give a fascinating picture of Danish library leaders changing focus, from being

mainly concerned about the internal workings of the libraries, to having a much higher degree of attention to the surroundings (Pors, 2007). Landoy & Repanovici (2012) found that this degree of attention to surroundings is even higher for the Norwegian library leaders.

The changing surroundings are concerns for leaders of all kinds of libraries, and to a certain degree all libraries are under the same set of pressures from user expectations and rapidly changing technology with the internet and electronic information sources being recognized as the most prominent. In the academic world, however, there are additional pressures from scholars' needs for access to the best possible and most updated sources of information, and academic libraries that cannot deliver what their students, researchers and academic staff require, will rapidly face threats of economic cuts or even of discontinuing. Many academic libraries around the world are also facing severe economic problems due to the global economic crises, and are looking at more efficient ways of fulfilling their visions and missions. This will among other things include the use of the new technological possibilities to create other sets of services, and to promote them to the users as improvements (Neal, 2010).

In this study the focus is on the different perception of challenges. To what extent do these three samples of academic library leaders perceive the same challenges as important or unimportant, cross-nationally? What can be explanations of possible differences in what they see as important challenges for their libraries in the future?

In the large studies of national cultures done by Dutch sociologist Geert Hofstede or by House et al in the project GLOBE, there is an underlying assumption that neighbouring nations often can be grouped together, and will have similar national cultures. Unfortunately, none of these two best known studies have studied all three countries under scrutiny in this investigation, Norway, Romania and Moldova. However, Schramm-Nielsen, J., Lawrence, P. & Sivesind, K.H. (2004) claims that when the Scandinavian countries' scores on the different dimensions are close together, it has to do with historical, linguistic, religious and geographical closeness. Following that reasoning, one would expect the replies from the Moldovan and Romanian library leaders to be close together, and to differ significantly from the Norwegian leaders of academic libraries.

On the other hand, Romanian and Moldovan societies have developed differently since 1945. Especially after Romania's entry into EU in 2007, after being a candidate membership country, the economic growth has been remarkable. From being in the East-bloc, Romania is now clearly focusing towards the West, also in academia and librarianship. Economically and technologically, Romania is more developed than Moldova. Will this influence the perceptions of challenges between the two samples of academic library leaders, or will other factors have more influence?

When looking at the background factors, gender, age, education and experience, the only factor where there were some dissimilarities were the education, and table 1 shows the educational background of the academic library leaders in the three countries.

**Table 1. Educational background of academic library leaders in Moldova (N=9), Romania (N=9) and Norway (N= 78). Percentages.**

	Degree in LIS	Master in LIS	Degree in other	Master in other	PhD in other
Moldova	45.0	22.0	11.0	22.0	0
Romania	8.9	33.3	16.7	16.7	25.0
Norway	67.9	3.8	11.5	21.8	0

It is an interesting difference in this sample of Moldovan leaders of academic libraries that they to a large extent have their background from the Library and information Science (LIS) field, while their Romanian colleagues to a larger extent have Master in LIS or a PhD in other subjects. Earlier studies have found a similar pattern. They argue that in Romania it is statutory for university library directors to be academic staff, and thus it is probable that a minority have their main education as a lower degree from a LIS school. There are 6 LIS schools in different universities in Romania, and they started after 1990 (Repanovici& Landøy, 2013)

For Norway, the picture is more like Moldova, in that more than two-third of the Norwegian academic library leaders have their educational background as librarians, educated for three-four years in one of the LIS schools either in Norway, Denmark or UK. It is no surprise that there are only a few masters in LIS is small, as the master program at the Oslo University College (where the majority of Norwegian librarians are educated) is relatively new. The Norwegian law for municipal libraries state that library directors or top level leaders have to be educated as librarians from an institution offering LIS. There is no such formal requirement for leaders of academic libraries, and it is only rarely that advertisements for vacant positions mention master in LIS. There are, however, a number of leaders with a degree in leadership subjects, or a master in other academic subjects.

What influence will the different level and kind of education have on the perception of challenges, and will there be differences in what the academic library leaders from our three countries see as important that can be related to their educational background?

### 3. Findings

*The view of challenges*

**Table 2: Moldovan academic library leaders' view on the importance of the challenges in the future. Replies on a scale from 1 – 5, where 1 means “no importance” and 5 means “very important”. Replies with code 1 and 2 have been grouped together. N=9**

	1-2 Not important	3	4	5 Very important
Technological changes	0	11,11	0	88,89
Recruit and retain qualified staff	0	22.22	0	77.78
Efficiency and resource allocation	0	22.22	0	77.78
Economy	0	22.22	11.11	66.67
Quality development and quality management	0	22.22	11.11	66.67
Open Access	0	11.11	22.22	66,67
Relations to publishers	0	33.33	0	66.67
User involvement	0	22.22	22.22	55.56
Development of leadership competences	0	33.33	11.11	55.56
Collaboration with other libraries	0	33.33	11.11	55.56
Performance management	0	33.33	11.11	55.56
Bibliometrics/registration of research output	0	33.33	11.11	55.56
Organisational changes in the library	0	11.11	44.44	44.44
E-books	0	22.22	33.33	44.44
Marketing and documenting the value/impact of the library - by using statistics and indicators	0	33.33	22.22	44.44
Information literacy	0	33.33	22.22	44.44
Partnering with businesses	0	44.44	22.22	33.33
Work environment	0	55.56	11.11	33.33

Organisational changes at the University	0	33.33	33.33	33.33
Multi-ethnic staff	22.22	11.11	33.33	33.33
Accrediting	0	55.56	22.22	22.22
Use of social media	0	44.44	33.33	22.22
Universal design	0	66.67	11.11	22.22
National qualification framework	0	37.5	12.5	50.00
Special services for special groups (local historians, musicians etc)	0	50.00	37.50	12.50
Digitising for making material from own collections available	0	50.00	37.50	12.50

The Moldovan library leaders find technological changes the most important. They also find important challenges both from internal issues in the academic library, and in the relations to the outside world: The economy is an important challenge, and quality, and the relations to publishers. The only challenge where they reply that something is “unimportant” is the issue of multi-ethnic staff. Staffs is important, in recruiting and retaining qualified staff, but the fact that one has to work with staff from different cultures is not considered to be an important challenge for many of the Moldovan library leaders.

At the same time, they consider the challenge of implementing “universal design” – to accommodate students and academic staff with different kinds of physical handicaps – to be of limited importance.

Both Romanian and Moldovan academic leaders see technological changes as the most important, but compared to the Romanian academic library leaders, the Moldovan are less concerned with accrediting and performance management. Both samples of academic library leaders place economy among the most important challenges, as well as efficiency and resource allocation. Their attitude to recruit and retain qualified staff differ a bit, with only 11 % of the Romanian academic library leaders to see this as “very important” – there are however 78 % that sees it as “important” and no one finds the challenge “not important”.

78 % of the Romanian academic library leaders find partnering with businesses a very important challenge, as opposed to the 33 % of Moldovans, but they are equally in agreement (around 60 %) with the importance of collaboration with other libraries. Performance management is seen as a more important challenge by the Romanian than Moldovan academic library leaders – 88 % of the Romanians versus 55 % of the Moldovan see this as a very important challenge.

When comparing with the Norwegian academic library leaders, the picture changes again. There is no consistent pattern whereby the Moldovans and Romanians are similar to each other at the same time as being different from the Norwegian. And with such small samples of respondents – N=9 for both the Moldovan and Romanian samples - it is also difficult to use more sophisticated statistical analysis.

The Romanian academic library leaders seem to be more concerned with developing the leadership competences (77 % sees this as “very important”) than the Moldovan or Norwegian (55 % “very important”). This can be seen as a contrast to the importance of recruitment and retaining, where only 11 % of the Romanian, as mentioned, found this “very important”. 75 % of the Norwegian academic library leaders saw this as a “very important” challenge.

The Norwegian survey was quite large, and the questions of challenges have a lower response rate than 78, which is the number of academic library leaders that have replied “academic” to the question of what kind of library they work in. The first replies have the highest number of responses (64 or 63) and towards the end of this section the response rate drops to around 55. There are, however, two challenges with less than 50 responses – accrediting has 45 and economy has 42. This can imply that the challenge is seen as less relevant for some of the leaders.

#### *Statistical analysis*

Looking at the tables of results from the three samples of academic library leaders we see a motley result, without one clear direction of the replies. In order to gain some more clarity, we will apply a statistical analysis – ANOVA. For this analysis, we postulate that there is no statistical significant differences in the responses from academic library leaders in the three countries.

Ho: There are not significant differences in responses from library leaders in the three countries.

H1: There are significant differences in responses from library leaders in the three countries.

When analysing the data sequences common to the three countries, taking into account each criterion, there are major differences.

We apply Anova: Single Factor analysis.

**SUMMARY**

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
		317.	12.2076	223.197
Norway	26	4	9	5
		22.2	0.85461	18.9895
Moldova	26	2	5	5
		77.7	2.99115	35.1306
Romania	26	7	4	7

**ANOVA**

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
	1892.81		946.407	10.2381	0.00011	3.11864
Between Groups	5	2	5	6	7	2
	6932.94		92.4392			
Within Groups	4	75	6			
	8825.75					
Total	9	77				

**Figure 1: ANOVA single factor analysis for a sample of academic library leaders from Norway, Moldova and Romania**

In this case P-value is  $0,000117 < 0,05$ , that reject  $H_0$ . There are major differences between the groups.

However, when we compare the responses from the academic library leaders from the countries two by two, we get somewhat different results:

**SUMMARY**

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
		22.2	0.85461	18.9895
Moldavia	26	2	5	5
		77.7	2.99115	35.1306
Romania	26	7	4	7



ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	59.3423	6	59.3423	2.19298	0.14491	4.0343
Within Groups	1353.00	50	27.0601			
Total	1412.34	56				

**Figure 2: Comparison of Moldovan and Romanian results in criteria “not important”**

In this case P-value is  $0,144915 > 0,05$ , that reject H1, there are significant differences in responses from library leaders of the three countries. There are not major differences between the groups.

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Varianc e
Romania	26	77.7	2.99115	35.1306
Norway	26	317.	12.2076	223.197

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1104.28	1	1104.28	8.54943	0.00518	4.0343
Within Groups	6458.20	50	129.164			
Total	7562.48	51				

**Figure 3: Comparison of Romanian and Norwegian results in criteria “not important”**

In this case P-value is  $0,005182 > 0,05$ , that reject H1. There are not major differences between the groups but on limit.

## SUMMARY

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
		22.2	0.85461	18.9895		
Moldavia	26	2	5	5		
		317.	12.2076	223.197		
Norway	26	4	9	5		

  

ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
	1675.60		1675.60	13.8372	0.00050	4.0343
Between Groups	1	1	1	4	5	1
	6054.67		121.093			
Within Groups	7	50	5			
	7730.27					
Total	8	51				

**Figure 4: Comparison of Moldovan and Norwegian results in criteria “not important”**

In this case  $P\text{-value} = 0,000505 < 0,05$ , that reject  $H_0$ .  
There are big differences between the groups.

In summary, the statistical analysis (ANOVA) shows that there are major differences between the three countries, but when breaking the countries responses down and analysing two by two, the analysis suggest that the differences between the academic library leaders are larger between the samples from Norway and Moldova, and between the respondents from Norway and Romania. However, the results from ANOVA analysis of the samples of Moldovan and Romanian academic library leaders suggest that there are no major differences.

#### 4. Conclusions

In this study we have compared samples of academic library leaders from three countries: Moldova, Romania and Norway. The academic library leaders from these three countries share some feature: they are predominantly female, experienced and middle aged. The only background factor where we could see a difference, was in the education, where the Moldovan and Norwegian library leaders to a larger extent tended to have a LIS education background, while the Romanian were more academic.

When it comes to perception of challenges, what is common to the three samples is that technological change, open access and economy are particularly important. Information Literacy is a very important challenge in Norway and Romania while in Moldova it is less important, and Development of leadership competencies is seen as having the same importance as a challenge for Norway and Romania and less important for Moldavia.

A statistical analysis with ANOVA shows that there are major differences between the three countries, but that the difference is larger between Norway and Romania/Moldova than between the Romanian and Moldovan samples of academic library leaders.

The suggestion that the similarities or differences in educational background would have influence for the perception of challenges can be discarded.

underlying factor supporting these different perceptions would be a result of the geographical, linguistic, historical and religious closeness between Romania and Moldova (Schramm-Nielsen et al 2004). On the other hand, the three countries are at different stages when it comes to technology and access to information for academia, and the sector of Higher Education is differently placed.

Further research will be needed in order to determine what of several possible factors that are most important in explaining the differences in perception of challenges among academic library leaders.

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<sup>1</sup>Norwegian survey is a part of Ane Landoy's ongoing PhD research to be submitted to the Royal School of Library and Information Science in Copenhagen, Denmark. It includes 243 library leaders from both public and academic libraries. Here only some results from her research regarding academic librarians are presented.