

Quality and value of library services from a user's perspective: the case of the National and University Library in Ljubljana

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Abstract: The National and University Library of Slovenia performs the tasks of a national library, a university library, a central state library, and develops the Digital Library of Slovenia. Due to its different roles and functions, beside classical library users, the library's customers also include publishers, other libraries, and organizations in the fields of culture and science and State bodies responsible for libraries. When planning activities and providing services, the library must therefore monitor the needs, expectations and satisfaction of diverse customer groups, and use a variety of assessment methods and tools in the process of library performance evaluation. In this article we will focus on the evaluation results of the quality and value of the library in terms of its active or potential users.

The latest user survey was carried out in autumn 2013, and involved 901 respondents. In comparison with the results of previous studies, we can see that respondents mostly visit the library for the use of its study premises. Their use of electronic information resources and the tools for their detection is still poor. Only a few borrow e-books, more than half of the respondents have not yet used the free wireless network. Only a small proportion of respondents are dissatisfied with the resources and services of the library, and on average, the respondents express a high level of satisfaction with the library staff. The share of those, who value the library as publicly well-recognized, an open, friendly and trusted institution, has increased in comparison with the results of previous research. The same can be said for those, who highly value the impact of the library on the quality and efficiency of their work and study. The contribution of library activities to the development of Slovenian science and culture is identified by 83% of respondents, while 60% of respondents identified its contribution to the socio-economic development of the country.

We were also interested to determine what value the library and its services represent in financial terms to the respondents. An average minimum repayment per annum, in return

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for agreement to the closure of the library, was 1,392€. The unavailability of library services would greatly impact the study and work of 63% of respondents, while only 5% indicated they would not be affected. If materials and services, offered by the library, would have to be obtained elsewhere, it would lead to 708€ of additional costs on average yearly. In case of cessation of budgetary funding of the library, 35% of respondents would be prepared to financially support it, with an average annual contribution of 24€.

Keywords: National and University Library in Ljubljana, Slovenia, library evaluation, user studies, quality assessment, library value

1 Introduction

The National and University Library of Slovenia¹ (NUL) has a long history. Its beginnings date back to the year 1774, when an ancestor of today's library, the library at the Ljubljana Lyceum, was established. The foundation of the library book fond was represented by 637 books, rescued from the fire in the previously dissolved Jesuit College in Ljubljana. At first, the library was meant for Lyceum teachers. It was opened for students and the public in 1794. In 1807 it gained the right to legal deposit copies from the area then called the »Duchy of Carniola«. In the time of the Illyrian Provinces Ljubljana was the capital of this political formation, therefore the library collected legal deposit copies from the entire administrative area. In the 240 years of its existence, the library's roles and functions and even its name has changed several times.

A year after the end of World War I, in 1919, the library was renamed the State Reference Library, thus becoming the central library of Slovenia with the right to receive legal deposit copies from that area. In 1921, the library became the State Library, and deposits of publications from all the regions of the former Yugoslavia started to pour in. Since 1919, when the first Slovenian university (the University of Ljubljana) was founded, it performs the functions of a university library, and after the Second World War it was granted the status of a national library and its name changed to the National and University Library in Ljubljana. After the Yugoslav breakup Slovenia became an independent country and the library became the central state library.

As the Slovenian national library the National and University Library is responsible for collecting and permanently preserving the national cultural and scientific written heritage in traditional and e-formats to make it accessible to current and future generations. The basic library collection called »slovenica« includes all the material, published or printed on Slovenian territory, publications by Slovenian authors, publications in the Slovenian language and publications relating to Slovenia and Slovenes. The library receives slovenica as a legal deposit; the rest of the literature is obtained through purchases, gifts and book exchanges. The library is also responsible for the construction of a basic database of foreign language materials. At the end of

¹ Slovenia, officially the Republic of Slovenia, is a country in southern Central Europe bordering Italy to the west, the Adriatic Sea to the southwest, Croatia to the south and east, Hungary to the northeast, and Austria to the north. It was a part of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (renamed Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1963). Yugoslavia broke up in 1991 and Slovenia became an independent state on June 25, 1991. According to official statistics there were 2,060,663 inhabitants in October 1, 2013.

2013, the library collection of classic material comprised a total of 2.7 million units. Most of the electronic information resources are produced within the COSEC consortium which is a member of an international consortium eIFL.net.

The library performs bibliographic control of Slovenian publications and through the ISBN, ISSN and ISMN agencies is included in the system of international bibliographic control. As the central state library it performs tasks as a national library system development centre and offers continuing education and professional development of librarians and library science exams to be performed by professional staff working in libraries. It also provides professional support for policies, guidelines and recommendations from the experts in the field of librarianship and manages professional support for the development of a national bibliographic system. It is responsible for the construction and development of the Digital Library of Slovenia and actively participates in the development of The European Library and Europeana, taking on the role of a national aggregator of e-content in the field of culture since 2009.

Due to different roles and functions, performed by the library, the groups of customers are diverse. Beside library users, customers are also publishers, other libraries, organizations in the fields of culture and science and State bodies responsible for libraries. When planning activities and providing services, the library must therefore monitor the needs, expectations and satisfaction of diverse customer groups, and use a variety of assessment methods and tools in the process of library performance evaluation. In times, marked by economic crisis and the reduction of budgets for the operation of public services, the library must continually prove the quality of its services and rationality in spending to the funder and the environment, and present the details of the outcomes of its performance. Effectiveness and efficiency are monitored with a

(yet) users of the library. At the end of 2013 the last survey on the quality of library services was conducted. It included questions that allow comparison with results of previous studies, and, for first time, the respondents were also asked what kind of value in financial terms the services of the library have for them. In this paper we will present some of the results of the past evaluation of the quality and value of the library. Special attention will be paid to the results of recent research.

2 Past user studies results

In the first user study conducted in 1987 (Popovič, 1988), 450 respondents participated. Its primary purpose was to identify fundamental weaknesses in the library activities and on this basis to prepare the groundwork for organizational changes and the development of services tailored to users. The results showed that the library was insufficient in promoting its materials and services, that improvements to the management of the library's collections were needed, that it had to provide better physical accessibility of the materials, and pay more attention to educating its users to be able to make better use of the available IT resources. The most common reasons for visiting the library were renting materials or studying in the Main Reading Room, only a small share of respondents came to the library to cater to more complex information needs or to use special library collections. The level of satisfaction with the functioning of the library in general was high, but respondents highlighted a number of areas where improvements should be made. The study posed a dilemma regarding the future of the library's development: whether it wished to remain mostly a place to study materials and provide simple information, or to try to include itself in the modern flow of knowledge and information and thereby attract more demanding customers.

The purpose of the survey conducted in 1995 (Golob, 1995), was to determine expectations and user satisfaction with library services, as well as to obtain the views of the general public about the planned construction of the new library building. The replies of the 229 library visitors involved in the survey showed that the library was primarily perceived as a collector, guardian and provider of library materials and a place with reading rooms intended for studying. Again, it was found that the most frequently used services were the borrowing of materials and studying in the Main Reading Room. Of great importance to the respondents were certain aspects of the library, such as opening hours, availability of materials and the speed of their delivery from book stores, the speed of data acquisition and its integrity, the availability of computers intended for data searches about materials, the knowledge and attitude of the staff to library users and library equipment. Comparison to actual user satisfaction with the library services has shown that, on average, they are predominantly or very satisfied with the above mentioned aspects of the operation, but would prefer faster delivery of materials, a larger number of study seats, a better arrangement of spaces and a larger number of book copies they could be borrow for home use. The views of the public regarding the construction of a new library building

were obtained by field survey (sample included 301 residents of Slovenia). Two-thirds of the respondents were informed about the new building, but one third did not know a construction had been planned. The positive view toward the building was expressed by 86% of the respondents, while only 3% were opposed. The new building was expected to primarily sate the need for space, which would allow adequate conditions for work and socializing. The results also showed that respondents were aware of the wider social implications of building a new library, but also that the library would need to better inform the public about its activities in the future.

At the end of 2001, a study of user satisfaction with the services of the Main Reading Room was carried out (Pernat, 2002). It also included questions about their satisfaction with other library services. The survey involved 200 reading room users. The most widely used library services, according to the respondents, were the Main Reading Room, the borrowing department, Information Centre with personal computers and the Newspaper Reading Room. Only a few used special library collection materials or the information services the library offered. Respondents were most dissatisfied with the time needed to deliver materials. A large number emphasized the importance of the Main Reading Room in the educational process of the student population. Most of them stated that they use it because of the appropriate study conditions and a stimulating academic environment. Results of the study pointed to poor utilization and insufficient promotion of reading room reference collections and an inappropriately designed range of services. User satisfaction regarding the Main Reading Room's services were most evident in the following: reading room equipment, opening times and staff, that should, according to the respondents, be polite, professionally trained and capable of expeditiously providing the most relevant information. Users also thought that physical access to the reading room should be as simple as possible and the availability of resources prompt. The most dissatisfaction was associated with reading room space and equipment, the working hours, which were too short, and, for some of the respondents, the electronically controlled entry to and use of the reading room. A low degree of satisfaction was also expressed in regards to the staff's services and the quality and accessibility of the reading room's reference collections.

The author Slapšak (2010) repeated most of Pernat's survey because she wanted to determine possible changes in the application and user satisfaction with the services of the Main Reading Room. In the questionnaire survey conducted in late 2008, 162 reading room users were involved. The results again showed that the reading room was frequented primarily due to suitable study conditions offered, but that the users had very little knowledge of its reference collection, so it did not get much use. The number of respondents who used library material while studying in the reading room decreased dramatically - 79% stated that they bring their own study materials. The majority of respondents were again satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of the reading room services.

Noticeable was the change regarding to the question which services do they most often want from the staff. While in 2001 most needed help finding materials or advise on the appropriate material, in 2008 they stated that what they needed the information specialists for was the transmission of material from the library collections. User satisfaction with the services of the reading room was mostly affected by the same factors as in the previous study in 2001. The satisfaction did not decrease in any of the factors, but increased in the case of spatial conditions, speed of materials delivery and the proficiency of the reading room staff.

In the years 1986/87 (Knez, 1987) and 1999/2000 (Žagar, 2000) two studies on quality of interlibrary loans were conducted. Data on interlibrary loans for 1986 showed that there were several requests to borrow materials from library collections, and only a tenth of the desired materials were from abroad. Service's performance (speed of the material delivery) was high, since in 69% of cases the claims were realized in one day. A survey was carried out among those who used interlibrary loans, which showed that more than four-fifths of its users were satisfied with the speed of the service and its quality. The study conducted by Žagar (2000) was more extensive; in addition to determining the quality of the service it also included measuring its performance with the use of selected performance indicators. Data on the number of requests for interlibrary loans showed a large increase in the use of this service over the last decade, increasing the share from other libraries or suppliers abroad, while the proportion of positively settled claims was in excess of 90%. The majority of performance indicators have shown that the library is among the highly successful suppliers and lenders within the interlibrary loan network. In a survey among users and non-users of interlibrary loans the author wanted also to determine the degree of the services market penetration and the expectations and satisfaction with the speed of delivery of the ordered items. The results showed that expectations about the speed of supply were much higher than actually observed in the measurements. Results also showed that the market penetration of the service has improved significantly in recent years, but that the library needed to devote even more attention to promoting it.

The next user study was carried out in 2008 (Ambrožič and Badovinac, 2009). Through the survey, the authors wanted to determine how users are satisfied with traditional and electronic information resources and services, how often they use them and if they have any suggestions for improvements. Respondents ranked the following elements: environment, space, equipment, library collection, library staff, rental services, electronic services, other services and the library as a whole. They had a choice between a printed and an online version of the survey, with 94 deciding on the printed and as much as 963 on the online version. The results showed that respondents most frequently visited the Lending and Document Supply Department and the Main and Newspaper Reading Rooms. Regarding electronic services the most commonly used was the library electronic catalogue (OPAC) and its application for the borrowing and

reservation of library materials. The libraries website was only visited by one fifth of the respondents. More than half had never used the web portal for accessing electronic information resources, only a quarter have visited either the Digital Library of Slovenia or the Digital Library of the University of Ljubljana portals and less than a fifth used the online service Ask a Librarian.

The average satisfaction score for all areas that were being rated was 3.7 (the maximum possible score was 5.0). The respondents were most satisfied with the library staff (average score 3.9), the electronic services and lending services, and most dissatisfied with the spatial conditions and the library collection (average score 3.3). In assessing the individual elements of the service, the respondents expressed the greatest satisfaction with those parts of the services that are easy to use (for example the online ordering of materials available for outside loan), and expressed dissatisfaction with those in which the procedures are more complex (for example ordering materials for the reading room and seat reservation in the Main Reading Room). All aspects regarding the library staff, that is neatness, professional competence, professionalism, reliability and politeness, got fairly high marks as well.

The authors were also interested in the opinion of the users about the library as a whole and the impact of its activities on their studies and scientific work. The majority of respondents (88%) agreed with the statement that the library is a trusted organization, a good supporter in their studies and research (72%), an open and friendly institution (60%), which follows the development of information technologies (64%) and is well-recognizable to the public (87%). 64% of the respondents estimated that the library's activities have a positive impact on the quality and efficiency of their study/work, and only 13% disagreed with the statement. However, its activity, according to the assessment of the respondents, insufficiently contributes in the search for and creation of new ideas. The vast majority of respondents however agreed that the construction of a new library building would substantially contribute to raising the quality of services and that there is still a need for a library despite the availability of information on the World Wide Web.

In May 2011 the National and University Library in cooperation with the Central Technological Library at the University of Ljubljana conducted an online survey on the use of reading rooms and reading room services in both libraries, which included 983 respondents (Ambrožič and Vovk, 2011). The research aimed to show the actual interest of the users in extended (night-time) opening hours of the reading rooms and to determine which reading room services would be used during that time. The results showed that the majority of respondents used the reading rooms regularly, i.e. several times a week or at least once weekly, and that the visit usually lasted between 5 to 8 hours. The most important reason for visiting the reading rooms expressed by 89% of the respondents were the adequate working and study conditions the two libraries offer. They mainly used materials they brought with them (84.6% of

respondents), and mostly only had contact with the information experts in case they wish to borrow or return reading room materials. In both libraries the number of visitors of reading rooms began to decline slightly after 2006 but in 2010 it began to rise again. The survey results showed that despite numerous electronic resources and services provided by the libraries, the importance of libraries as physical spaces has not diminished. Firstly visitors look for a peaceful and stimulating environment for individual work and study, but they also want a place where they can relax and socialize. The survey also obtained data on the factors that visitors using the reading rooms found most disturbing and their suggestions for improvement of the reading room services.

Based on the results of the survey the libraries decided to organize a one-month test extension of reading room opening hours. During this time they again conducted a survey (available in both printed and online versions). Reading room users could also express their opinions through a comments book and the library staff included in the project recorded their observations on special forms. The results of the survey, which included 416 respondents, showed that during the extended opening hours the users need a place to study their own materials and access to wireless networks and electronic information sources, other services were only rarely used. In the case of both libraries more than a third of respondents would be willing to co-finance the extended opening hours of the reading rooms by paying higher fees. Contrary to expectations, the majority of respondents received information on the project and the extended opening hours from their friends or acquaintances, or through printed media. Electronic media (website, email, social networks, e-newspapers, etc.) were therefore in both cases less successful than classic communication tools. The responses of both, the survey participants and other library users, who gave their opinion via the comments book, were very positive. Both libraries extended the working hours of their reading rooms in 2012 based on the conclusions of the project.

Although these studies point to a relatively favourable image of the library in the eyes of the users and their relatively high level of satisfaction with most services or their elements, they revealed gaps in some areas of the operation between expectations and actual satisfaction. We note that the library needs to improve its policy in the purchase of materials and the management of library collections, increase the accessibility and availability of library materials, provide better study conditions in the reading rooms and better promote special library collections and the electronic resources and services on offer. They also pointed to an important success factor of libraries, i.e. its personnel, which can, with their expertise and appropriate attitude towards visitors, alleviate the negative impact of other factors on their satisfaction with the services and the operation of the library.

3 The quality and value of library services

3.1 Purpose and objective of the research

The last questionnaire survey researching user opinion about information sources and services provided by the National and University Library was carried out in autumn 2013. In the process of preparing a strategic plan for the period between 2014 and 2018, we wanted to obtain information about whether users are satisfied with traditional and electronic services, how well they know and how often they use them, how satisfied they are with the staff, premises and equipment the library offers and what their suggestions toward improvement of services and the operation of the library are. We were also interested in the general image of the library in the eyes of users - does the environment perceive it as a factor that affects the creation of new ideas and knowledge. In order to assess previous work and set goals for the new strategic period, we observed changes in the volume of individual services and the level of satisfaction with individual service elements according to the results of past research. For the first time we tried to figure out what value the library and its services represent to the respondents in financial terms. Therefore the questionnaire included some questions from the survey *A Study on the Value and Benefits of the German National Library of Science and Technology* (2010).

3.2 Research methodology

To obtain research data we chose a quantitative method, namely the survey method. As an instrument for data collection, we used a structured and standardized written questionnaire. In designing the survey questions we took into account the need to compare the results of this user research to those already carried out. Since we wanted to obtain the views of those who otherwise physically never or rarely visited the library and used its electronic services and resources, we decided to form an online survey.

The online survey was designed using the tool 1KA², which also enables the processing of statistical data, statistical analysis and different forms of result presentation. The questionnaire had been made available through the library's website from 22 October to 17 November 2013. It included 28 questions with 133 variables, with the number of questions needing to be answered by the respondents varying depending on what library services they used until the day of the survey and whether they used them in the library or only from a distance.

The target population of the survey included both users and non-users of the library. Non-users answered questions of visibility, social and economic value of the library, and, in addition, we also wanted to determine why they have not used the library's services. The population of the library users is otherwise very diverse. Its services and resources can be used by individuals that are members of this library or one of the libraries in the University of Ljubljana's library system, or even other interested individuals either inside the library, via remote

² 1KA is a tool for web surveys. It was developed by researchers at Department of Social Informatics and Methodology at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. See more: <http://english.1ka.si/>

access or the library's website. Because of the latter we could not obtain accurate data on the characteristics of the target population, which would allow a pre-formulation of the model or a selection of one of the methods of probability (random) sampling. The selection of units in the population sample that's way was based on the improbability sample of respondents obtained on the basis of random sampling. Although the survey results cannot be generalized to the entire population of library users without risk, they can aid us in assessing changes in their perception of quality and a starting point for planning actions to improve the quality of services and the activities of the library in general.

The Likert scale with values from 1 to 5 was used in the questions regarding the satisfaction with library services or the ones that expressed agreement with a statement. We did not include questions on expected and acceptable levels of quality in customer satisfaction measurements, as this would significantly increase the scale and complexity of the survey and result in a smaller response. As an acceptable average value of the estimates, we considered a value equal to or greater than 4.0. The interpretation of the results, the tables and images, use abbreviations for individual statistical values of the following: M = arithmetic mean or average value; Me = median; Mo = mode; SD = standard deviation; n = number of samples.

3.3 Results

In total, the online survey included 1,427 people, but 526 (37%) did not complete it; therefore the analysis only includes 901 completed surveys. Overall, only 560 respondents answered all the questions and 341 skipped some (mostly demographic). Among the respondents 71 (8%) have never used the library's services or have only started using them recently, so they could not answer the questions about the use and quality of service, nor did they evaluate their economic value. 44 (5%) of the respondents did not answer the questions regarding staff and premises, since they have not visited the library before the day of the survey.

3.3.1 Respondents' demographic characteristics

The sample was similar to that of previous studies with the age of most of the respondents between 18 and 25 years (53%), only 105 (12%) were older than 46. 72% were female. 57% of the respondents in the sample had more than a high school diploma and similar to earlier studies - the majority were students (61%) or employed (23%)³. Since the library's traditional focus is in humanities and social sciences⁴, most of the respondents came from those areas, namely from the field of humanities and social sciences, 38% to 30%, they were followed by respondents from the field of medicine (12%). For the first time the sample included 10% of the unemployed, reflecting the unfavourable economic

³ In the year 2013 64% of library members were students.

⁴ Other fields are better covered by the Central Technological Library at the University of Ljubljana and other, specialized academic libraries.

situation in the country and a high percentage of young people without a job (24% in September 2013). As in previous studies, the number of respondents that did not answer the demographic questions was quite high (an average 37%).

3.3.2 The frequency of library visits and the use of services

Among the respondents, the majority (29%) visited the library infrequently in the last year (only once or a few times a year), 14% visited it several times a month, and 18% came to the library at least once a month or more often. 26% of the respondents were frequent visitors (at least once a week or several times a week). Compared with the 2008 survey, this survey sample captured 3% more frequent users and those, who only used its electronic resources and services, and the same proportion of those who rarely visited the library (on average once a month or less).

Very often (several times a month or more frequently) the majority of respondents (35%) used the Main Reading Room, the Lending and Document Supply Department was attended by 20% and 13% used the Newspaper Reading Room. In comparison with the results of the survey from 2008 the number of respondents who most frequently visited the library to borrow materials for home use or used the Centre for Reproduction of materials significantly decreased, while the share of those who visited the reading rooms and spaces for socializing (NUL Café) increased. As in previous studies, once again only a negligible share (a few percent) of respondents indicated that they had already visited the library's special collections, store or exhibition hall or used the services of the Information Centre (66% of respondents have never even visited the Centre).

As the most common reason for visiting the library 51% of respondents indicated the use of reading rooms, 39% the borrowing or returning of materials, only 2% for professional assistance and advice from library staff and 1% a piece for the use of computer workstations, the free wireless network or socializing with colleagues. Attending free classes on the search through information sources was the most common reason for visiting the library indicated by only three respondents. A quarter of respondents who answered the question, most often visit the library in order to study their own materials in the reading rooms. Respondents, who have not visited the library or used its services, mostly stated that the services of other libraries satisfy their needs.

3.3.3 The use of electronic resources and services

From among the electronic resources and services on offer, in the last year respondents most frequently used the library electronic catalogue (OPAC) - it was used by 73% several times a month or even more frequently, and its services (extending loan periods, ordering materials, etc.) by 65% of respondents who answered the question. The least frequently used services were the rental of e-books and online reference services (Ask a Librarian, Ask NUL).

The library's website was never visited by 12% of respondents, 55% never used the portal for e-resources, and 64% never used the search engine that simultaneously searches several e-resource databases, the Digital Library of Slovenia was not visited by 45%, the Digital Library of the University of Ljubljana by 57% of respondents. 83% never borrowed e-books, 85% never used the online reference service, and 81% never used the national bibliography portal. 60% have not made use of the wireless networks. Compared with the results of the 2008 survey, the use of e-resources, and in particular of the digital library increased, but that of the reference service or the national bibliography did not. The service of borrowing e-books from other providers was only available for a year, so its use could not be compared with the data from older surveys. Slightly less than half of the respondents who have used e-library resources and services prior to the survey (also) access them through mobile devices (at least once a week or more often by 12%).

Although the results of the survey and annual statistics on the operation of the library indicate that the use of e-resources provided by the library has markedly increased in the last five years, we still find that the users mostly and most often use the library as a place to study and borrow traditional library materials.

3.3.4 The satisfaction with the library's supply of information resources, services and staff

Respondents were first asked how satisfied they are with the location of the library, the opening hours, conditions for individual and group work, markings on the premises, the number of study spaces, computers and its facilities and equipment. The highest satisfaction was expressed as to the location of the library ($M = 4.6$), conditions for individual work ($M = 4.1$) and the comfort of the library environment ($M = 4.0$), the lowest level of satisfaction were with the conditions for teamwork ($M = 3.3$) and the number of reading room spaces and available computers ($M = 3.6$). In comparison with the results of the survey conducted in 2008, the level of satisfaction is higher in all items listed, and the respondents are more homogenous in their evaluations (lower values of standard deviations for all items).

A higher average level of satisfaction ($M = 3.5$; 2008: $M = 3.3$) is expressed in regards to the information resources provided by the library. But despite the fact that in comparison with 2008, the library provides a significantly more extensive and diverse collection of electronic resources, respondents again expressed a higher level of customer satisfaction with the offered traditional sources (books and magazines). They are least satisfied with their own impact on the shaping of the library collection ($M = 3.1$) and the number of copies of the materials available for home use ($M = 3.2$).

The level of satisfaction with the lending of library materials is highest in the cases of online ordering and reserving of materials ($M = 4.4$) and the length of the borrowing period ($M = 4.2$), with other evaluation categories (allowed

number of simultaneously borrowed materials, ordering materials for the reading room, interlibrary loan) approaching the desired average value with a 3.9. Compared to 2008, the level of respondents' satisfaction with all aspects of the lending services is higher.

The average value of satisfaction ratings with electronic resources and services (OPAC, e-resource portal, library's website, Digital Library of Slovenia, Digital Library of the University of Ljubljana, online reference services, Slovenian bibliography portal, e-books rental, wireless networks) is 3.9 (2008: $M = 3.8$). Respondents were most satisfied with the library electronic catalogue ($M = 4.1$), and least with the Slovenian bibliography portal and the Digital Library of the University of Ljubljana ($M = 3.7$). Compared with the survey from 2008 the level of satisfaction has not increase only in one element of the evaluation, i.e. the Digital Library of the University.

In the context of questions about satisfaction with other library services and offers the respondents evaluated the following elements: providing information about and from the material, information on events and services, courses for users, the copying of materials, seat reservations for the Main Reading Room, exhibitions and other cultural events, the NUL café, cloakroom and Shop NUL. The average value of satisfaction ratings with these services and offers was 3.9 (2008: $M = 3.7$). Respondents were least satisfied with the Shop NUL ($M = 3.7$), and most with the provision of information about and from the material ($M = 4.1$) and the services of the NUL café ($M = 4.1$).

In comparison with the results from the 2008 survey there is a significant increase in the share of respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with the staff of the library, in all aspects of the evaluation (Figure 1). The average satisfaction score increased from $M = 3.9$ to that of $M = 4.2$. The highest level of satisfaction was expressed in assessing the expertise and professionalism of the employees and the accuracy and reliability of the responses provided to the users ($M = 4.3$), only slightly lower ($M = 4.2$) with the attitude of the staff towards users and their willingness to help. They are satisfied with the orderliness (outward appearance) of the employees. In their evaluations of the staff the respondents are also more homogenous than in 2008, as the value of the standard deviations for all elements of the assessment is lower.

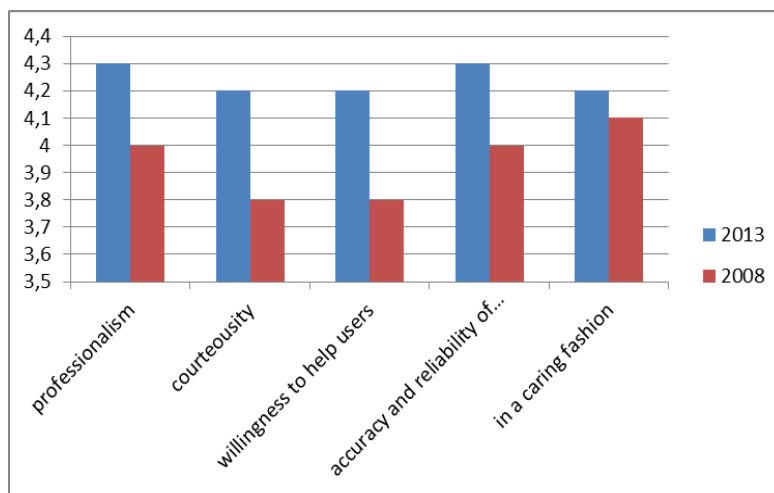


Figure 1: The satisfaction of the responders with the library's staff in 2008 and 2013 (M – arithmetic mean)

3.3.5 The evaluation of the library as a whole and its impact on the respondents and the wider environment

Respondents were asked to evaluate the library as a whole, expressing their opinion with the degree of agreement or disagreement with several statements. We also wanted to know how they assess its impact on their studies and work, and for the first time, we included questions that evaluate the impact the library has on the development of Slovenian culture and science and the socio-economic development of the country.

90% of respondents who have used the services of the library and have answered this question agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the library is a well-recognized institution, 93% that it is a trustworthy institution, and 76% that it is open and friendly. 73% agreed that it follows the development of new technologies and 73% that the construction of a new building would contribute substantially to raising the quality of service. 12% of respondents believe that the construction of a new building is not necessary because all the information is obtainable via the Internet, while 69% disagree with the statement. The construction of a new national library building should be one of the priority objectives for the country in the opinion of 60% of the respondents, while 14% were not convinced.

77% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the library provides a good support for their studies or work (5% disagrees), 75% of them believe that the library's services affect the quality and effectiveness of their study or work (6% do not agree with the statement). The library contributes to the development of Slovenia's culture and science in the opinion of 83% of respondents, while less, a total of 60%, also believe it contributes to the socio-economic development of

the country (one-third of respondents could not decide whether they agree or disagree with the statement).

The statement that the library listens to the wishes of its users does not sound true for 7% of the respondents, while 52% think the opposite. 19% of respondents believe that it does not help in the search for new ideas, 44% of them believe that it does. In the question of the effectiveness of the library's notification of its users and the general public about its activities and events 54% of respondents estimate that it is effective, 10% believe the opposite, while 35% could not decide whether they agree with the statement or not.

Table 1: The library's public image and its social value

Statement	2013		2008	
	M	SD	M	SD
NUL is a publicly recognizable institution.	4.3	0.70	4.3	0.84
NUL is a trustworthy institution.	4.3	0.63	4.2	0.75
NUL is an open and friendly institution.	4.0	0.89	3.6	1.05
NUL follows trends in information technology.	3.9	0.78	3.7	1.00
NUL effectively informs its users and the public about its activities and events.	3.6	0.90	-	-
NUL services provide good support for my studies/work.	4.0	0.86	3.9	1.01
NUL affects the quality and efficiency of my studies / work.	4.0	0.91	3.7	1.01
NUL helps me find new ideas and solutions.	3.4	1.00	3.0	1.01
NUL reacts to the needs and wishes of its users.	3.6	0.85	3.2	1.01
NUL contributes to the advance of culture and science in Slovenia.	4.2	0.75	-	-
NUL contributes to socio-economic development in Slovenia.	3.7	0.94	-	-
The new NUL building would substantially contribute to the quality of library services.	4.1	0.97	4.1	1.11
Building the new library should be one of the countries priorities.	3.8	1.17	-	-
Building the new library is not necessary since all the information is available online.	2.1	1.18	2.0	1.12

1 – strongly disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – neither agree nor disagree; 4 – agree; 5 – strongly agree

The results show that the library has managed to improve its public image and its perception as a factor that significantly affects the user's work or studies, compared to the results of a survey conducted in 2008 (Table 1). The respondents evaluated its impact on the development of culture and science to

be high, but are more hesitant when evaluating its impact on the socio-economic development of the country. Respondents who have not used the library's premises or services prior to the survey or have only recently become members gave the library a lower impact on the socio-economic development of the country than those who used the library longer time.

3.3.6 Assessment of the economic value of the library

We endeavoured to determine the economic value of the library with a contingent valuation. The method examines the "willingness-to-pay" for a particular commodity that is not generally available on the market. It creates a hypothetical market for the respondents and examines how much they would be willing to contribute for a certain (non-material) asset of the public good should a market exist, and for what amount would they be willing to give it up. Although we explained why the survey contains questions of this type in the opening speech, the response was very negative⁵. In their comments, they argued that even if it is a hypothetical situation, it is inappropriate and offensive for an institution of national importance to wonder about the amounts of money for which its users would be prepared to "betray" it. They were also outraged over indications that the government might not provide public funding to library, as this would not guarantee equality of access to information and knowledge. Some also explained that they wrote 0€ or an unrealistically high amount of money because no monetary compensation could replace what the library means to them. With this in mind we assessed that the data obtained was not sufficiently reliable for a more serious economic value analysis of the library. The results showed that while more than half of the respondents estimated that the library's work represents a certain economic value for them, the standard deviations in the case of calculated average values is so high as to be useful only in an informative sense.

Respondents were first asked what would be the minimum monthly amount of financial compensation that would be expected from the state, in order for them to agree to the dissolution of the library (Figure 2). The question was answered by 467 (56%) of the 830 respondents. Since the calculated average monthly value ($M = 1,269€$) was unrealistic (for example, as many as 11 respondents inscribed the amount of 99,999€), we only took into account the answers of respondents who indicated amounts from 0 to 10,000€. That included 95% of responses. The calculated mean values are as follows: $M = 116€$, $Me = 125€$ $Mo = 100€$. An average annual compensation expected from the government by the respondents is therefore 1,392€.

⁵ One of the few contingent valuation analysis conducted in Slovenia in the field of culture was carried out in the context of research into the effects and benefits of the project Maribor - European Capital of Culture. Its authors note, among other things, that the respondents disagree with the statement, that culture can be monetarily evaluated. The mean value of their agreement was less than 2.5 (on a scale of 1 to 5, where the value 5 represent the highest level of agreement) (Kovač in Srakar, 2013: 75).

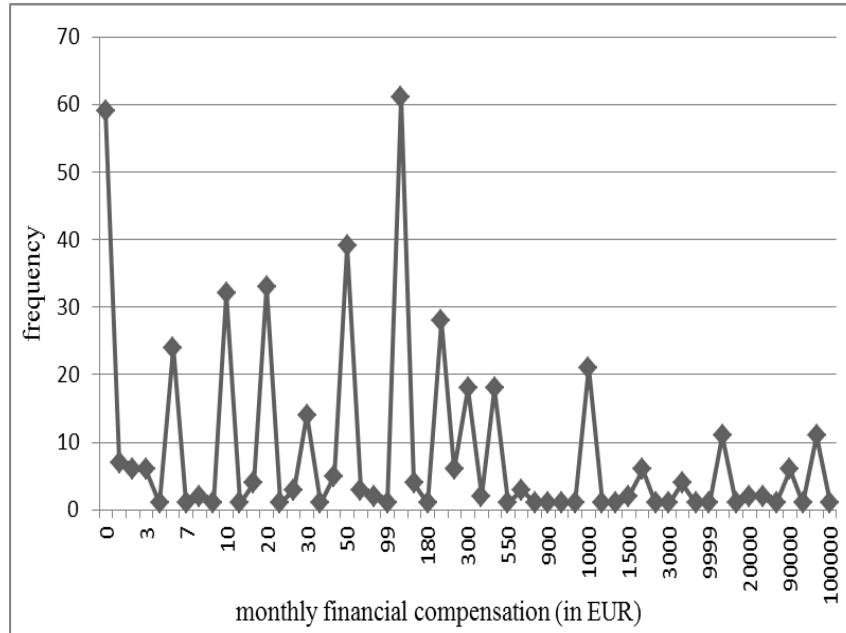


Figure 2: The expected monthly financial compensation from the government in the event of the dissolution of the library (n = 467)

Furthermore, we were interested to know how the study or work of respondents would be affected if materials and other information resources as well as library services would no longer be available. The question was answered by 509 respondents. Only 5% of them stated that they would not miss the resources and services the library offers, 31% may be affected to a lesser extent, while the work or study of 63% respondents would be strongly affected. Respondents who visited the library more often are more likely to state, that they would be affected to a higher degree.

When asked if they could assess what their additional monthly expenditure would be, should the library close and they be obliged to cover the cost or access the materials and other information sources elsewhere, only 463 respondents answered. Among them 5 wrote down a number higher than 10,000€ (2 the amount of 99,999€). Since the calculated average monthly amount ($M = 547$ EUR) for the above values was unrealistically high, we conducted further calculations in this case by only considering values from 0€ up to and including 10,000€. The latter included 458 (99%) of the respondents, mostly (102 or 22%) with 0€, the next most common amount is 100€ expressed by 59 (13%) of the respondents (Figure 3). In average, the monthly cost per respondent would be 59€ respectively 708€ per year.

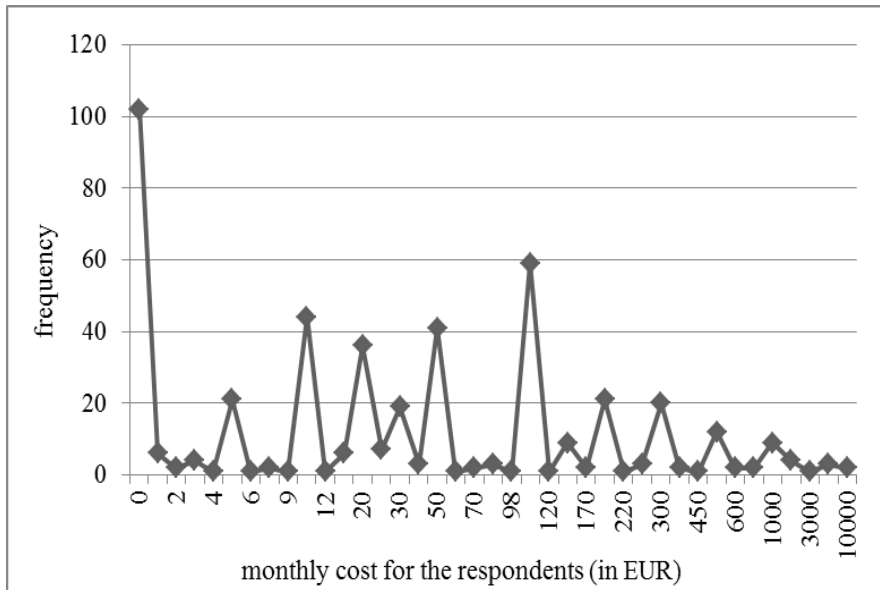


Figure 3: Monthly cost for the respondents in case of library dissolution (n = 458)

If a decision to cut public funding to the library would be made, 58% out of the 504 respondents who answered the question would be prepared to support it with financial contributions. Respondents, who visit the library more often, are more willing to financially support it.

Respondents were asked what would be the maximum annual amount they would be willing to contribute to the operation of the library, if it was left without public funds. The amount was stated by 288 respondents, among them one amount of 99,999€, which was excluded from the analysis. The minimum amount (1€) was indicated by two respondents, the maximum (2,000€) by one (Figure 4). The calculated mean values are as follows: $M = 24\text{€}$; $Me = 58\text{€}$; $Mo = 50\text{€}$. If we consider the average value, the respondents would be willing to contribute an average of 24€ annually.

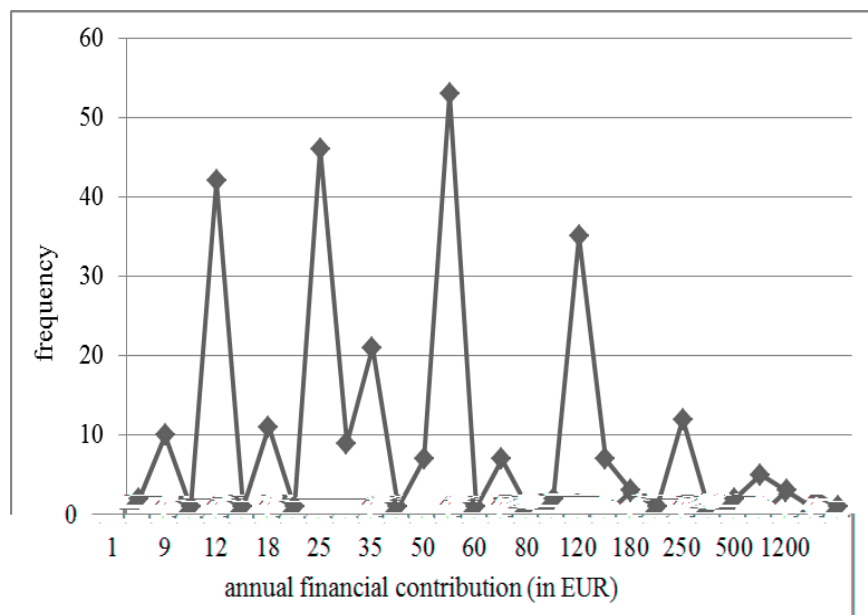


Figure 4: Annual amount with which the respondents would be willing to support the operation of the library (n = 288)

Compared to the average annual financial amount that respondents would expect from the government as compensation in the event that library services would no longer be available and the estimated costs, which could befall them personally in such an instant, they were themselves willing to contribute far less for the operation of the library.

4 Discussion and conclusions

Comparing the latest results of the National and University Library user study with the results of previous researches shows that the most frequent reason why respondents visit the library remains the use of its premises for studying and borrowing of printed materials. The usage of a wide range of electronic information resources and tools for their detection is small. E-books are borrowed rarely. More than half of the respondents have not yet used free Wi-Fi. Only a small share of users is in need of expert help and advice from library staff. The majority of respondents use only the library electronic catalogue OPAC (local or union catalogue of Slovenian libraries). We believe that the survey sample influenced the results; the majority of the sample was younger users of the library, i.e. students. A survey on the accessibility of study materials, carried out by the Student Organization of the University of Ljubljana (Kragelj and Lasbajer, 2012)⁶, has revealed that students mostly study from their own materials (75%) and textbooks (43%). Scholarly articles from

⁶ 4,500 students participated in the survey.

domestic and foreign printed journals are studied by less than a fifth of respondents. Almost half of respondents never used e-books and more than half of them never searched through e-journals. Only one-tenth of the respondents use e-books or e-journals often or very often. Therefore the library will have to increase its activities in promoting usage of information resources and services between academic staff. The latter is necessary because academic staff can significantly influence the behaviour of students and their use of information resources with their teaching process and requirements.

Satisfaction with the library and its activities was rated higher than when interviewing in 2008 in all of the elements. Elements rated lower than the targeted, i.e. $M = 4.0$, were library space and the collection of printed materials. The number of copies of printed materials available for home lending is not sufficient. Lower rating of the library space is the result of the library building characteristics (the rooms are too small and non-functional, since the building is a protected cultural monument and changes to the structure are not allowed). The satisfaction of the respondents with all of the rated elements of traditional and digital services is also higher than when interviewing in 2008. The 2013 survey shows dissatisfaction of respondents in the case of the national bibliography portal, store and library promotional material. What is encouraging part is that the level of satisfaction with the library's staff is significantly increased in all of the rated elements. In recent years the quality of library services from a user perspective has increased. The survey included only a small proportion of scientific research workers, so a different research methodology should be used to obtain their opinions and estimations in the future.

The share of respondents who value the library as publicly recognizable and trustworthy, open and friendly institution has increased in comparison with the results of previous research. As has the share of those who think the library brings considerable benefits to their studying and work. What remains unsatisfactory is the assessment of the impact of the library as a generator of new ideas and its response to user preferences. The library is also not yet sufficiently successful in presenting its activities to the environment. Contributions of library's activities to the development of Slovenian science and culture are recognizable to 83% of the respondents (average degree of agreement with the statement: $M = 4.2$). Fewer of the respondents (60%) believe that the library contributes to the socio-economic development of the country ($M = 3.7$).

Due to the unreliability of the collected data, we cannot calculate the economic value of the library; as we cannot consider other calculations to be reliable. This kind of evaluation was performed for the first time on a library, so the experience can be used in planning future research. Respondents indicated 116€ as the average monthly minimum amount of compensation in return to agree with the closure of the library. If the library services would not be accessible, it would greatly affect the studying and work of almost two-thirds of the

respondents who answered the question and only 5% would not be impacted. If users would need to obtain the materials and services offered by the library elsewhere, this would have resulted in the annual average amount of 708€ of additional personal expenses. In the event that budgetary funding for libraries would stop, 58% of those who answered the question would support its activities with financial contributions; on average their annual contribution would be 24€. The comments of respondents indicate that the provision of funds for the library operation is regarded as the duty of the state, which has to use public funds to provide equal opportunities for accessing materials and information to all citizens.

In 2013 information resources and library services were used by its 11,152 members and 13,708 members of other libraries of the University of Ljubljana. If we consider only the first group of users, they would expect a compensation for the closure of the library in total average of 15.5 million euros annually. If we take into the account both groups of users, the compensation would be 34.6 million. Closure of the library would cost its users 7.9 or 17.6 million euros annually. In the year 2013 the library received a 7.0 million euros budget resource for its operation.

Of course the results cannot be generalized; however, they are relevant for the library. On the one hand they show that more than half of the respondents recognize the economic value of libraries one way or another. On the other hand negative comments of respondents about including questions about the economic value of the library in the questionnaire indicate that the Slovenian environment sees such valuation of public sector services as something unusual. Also the need for the evaluation of the impact and value of public services is not sufficiently recognized neither by their funders nor contractors.

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