

V. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION IN KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

LIBRARY SEMANTIC CODE – SPECIALISTS AND OUTSIDERS POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract. Libraries in Lithuania started taking care of their image after independence. At the moment it is favorite discussion topic for many practitioners and researchers of this field. This article forms the concept of library image; it focuses on separate social groups' perception about the library (semantic code). Using surveys, ratings, quantitative analysis and comparative analysis methods two different groups of respondents - experts and outsiders, and their perception of the library is analyzed.

KEY WORDS: *Library image, Library perception, Semantic communication, Lithuania, Klaipėda.*

Introduction

Interest in perception of Lithuanian Libraries in Lithuania is targeted for a relatively short period of time - only after regained its independence. In Soviet times, the library (especially public) served for party propaganda purposes, the library staff and the local community may have little influence on choosing publications or themes for events (which were usually represented by the Communist Party ideological slogans). Uncomfortable rooms; not motivated staff, who would insert "publication recommended by party" to readers account and reports, and other unpleasant details of the past, encourage searching for ways how to change negative image. Library institution is changing very intensively. Specialists use "the information service center", "community soul", "Culture and Information Center" and other terms to describe the essence of the institution. It is likely that these terms are quite relevant in the closed circle of specialists, while for the outsiders (not connected with libraries) library has very different (traditional, which is negative) image. This situation *expresses the problem of the study*. It aims to develop a theoretical semantic understanding of code of libraries and using survey method to interview two different groups of respondents. On the one side are the specialists working in Klaipėda University Library, on the other - outsiders (the respondents chosen from visitors of Klaipėda Labor Exchange). Data was analyzed using *ratings of statements, quantitative data analysis and comparative methods*.

The **object** of investigation is the image of the library institution, the **aim** - to examine the different groups of people (the library professionals and outsiders) and find semantic differences in perception of the library code. The study was carried out in Klaipėda, so it is likely that the results can be only partially reliable in other places of Lithuania.

The importance of image. The new informational society is in constant social - economic change, the conventional mutual relations are changing, new priorities for actions are found. If the organization is able to adapt to new economic relations and continue to carry out their activities successfully, this usually means that those companies or organizations embraced the need to shape the corporate image, for example, stand out from the numerous similar to themselves, to make the organization known as much as possible, to gain the reputation (Drūteikienė, 2002). Image, as a social phenomenon, affects the lives of each organization. Its significance is obvious: creation and development of a favorable image helps organization actively participate in the competitive environment and successfully develop its activities. This is true not only for businesses.

Image is variable, a combination of a meaningful understanding of the world, ideas and feelings that a person or group of individuals has towards a certain phenomenon or the real thing. Organization's image is the organization's emotive image in people's consciousness, influencing people's attitudes towards the organization. According to G. Morgan, the classic of image of organizations, we "read" organizations trying to form images, which help us to understand them [organizations] (Morgan 1998, 1).

Therefore, for any institutions it is important to shape its own image. R. Matkevičienė's methodology is proposed for library image-making process, in which the main organization or personal image-forming factors are: information management and communication processes. The main directions for the dissemination of information: 1) identification of the organization, that is, the public dissemination of basic information

(name, label, activities, key targets and other), 2) the information, development-friendly organization, 3) information relating to the provision of public benefit services; 4) information provided by the modern organization, it is crucial that the organization is perceived as feeling responsibility for the activities, decisions and etc. (Matkevičienė 2000, 75).

According to A. Glosienė, the library is maintained for the public, and "produces" public products and services (such is the knowledge, information), so the image of the external environment affects the audience (customers, potential customers, politicians, competitors, etc.). It is affected by the prevailing economic, social, political, ethical, technological situation in the country. It is also equally influenced by the library's internal microclimate (Glosienė 1999, 3).

Contemporary cultural institution, according to R. Petuchovaitė, has to know how to show the strengths of successful activities in such a way that it would be acceptable for users. Thus, each library has to take care of their work, create cozy environment, and work towards operational improvement. Work should be designed to meet all the expectations of audiences, be able to continuously adapt the activities, to be flexible and competitive (Petuchovaitė, 2004). All this is reflected in the library's image after a certain period of time.

The image must be continuously maintained and updated, we can see that more advanced countries which has considerable experience in libraries work constantly seek to transform and upgrade the image of the library (Britain Launches ... 2006, 22). For this purpose, the librarians creatively use events, personalities that may have a positive impact on the promotion of library activities. It is noted that this kind of image making is the most visible in society, because it is widely reflected in various media.

Semantic code and the structure of the image

Organizational structure of the image formation process consists: the legal framework, organizational culture, identity and profile (Glosienė 1999, 20). On the base level the law defines the boundaries of the organization's activities and opportunities. Culture is identified as core of values, beliefs, expectations, norms, behavior and symbols of the system, which organizes and integrates people working together and creates a climate in the organization. Culture determines formation of the organization's identity and the image of the organization. Via its identity, organization shows three basic ideas to its audience: what the organization is, what it does and how it does it. There is a way chosen to express itself to the environment, reflect the philosophy of the library, and emphasize those features which it wants to be associated with. By outlining their identities and notifying various groups in society, library creates its image which is as the semantic code (perceived information which creates images) to outsiders.

Understanding of institution by semantic aspect of communication

A term semiotics comes from the Greek words: gr. semeion - a sign, semeiotos - marked. Various signs and symbols construct our world, helps to distinguish the meaning of things, the human spiritual and cultural world, or the organization operating characteristics. World is unthinkable without characters. And they are expressed in symbols which give the diversity to life, because it allows characters to be interpreted and understood differently. In a narrow modern sense Semiotics (semiotique) is a science which deals with signs. (Meškys 2007). Semiotics seeks to restore the meaning, at the same time - to expand perception.

The American scholar Ch. S. Peirce's work was a foundation for semiotics as a science. F. de Saussure continued to develop it in linguistics. Universal nature of semiotics is obvious - no science, no knowledge can survive without signs. Thus, the modern science of semiotics of decoding texts and characters becomes the science of the culture (Meškys, 2007).

Semiotics investigates signs or their systems in these terms:

- a) **Semantic**, which exploring the relationship between marked objects and phenomena.
- b) **Syntax**, which includes the rules and methods of character creation.
- c) **Pragmatic**, which analyzed the relationship between people and language, a system of signs (TŽŽ 2004, 668).

Semantics investigates the relationship between the sign and what the sign expresses. In simplest case, between the sign and its expression is an entity that accepts, interprets and understands the sign.

The sign refers to something other than itself - the object. When the sign is perceived and understood, it is called "the interpretant". This is a mental idea, born from the relationship of sign and the user mentality and the perception of object. Therefore, the focus on the coding process is important. One-way communication from the sign to the user becomes mutual (with user) communication process, in which the decoding of sign is an active and creative action. This indicates that the human thinking and mentality allows interpreting signs at each individual level. Perception of information depends on the user experience, as there is a difference in knowledge of characters and objects (Fiske 2001).

The article presents the survey, which aims to analyze and compare different user groups' (librarians specialists and outsiders) interpretations of the same sign (the concept of "library").

Methodology and process

Survey was prepared and conducted in 2009 April 17. Two groups of respondents were identified, which supposedly have a different perception of the library institution. The first group consists of respondents from Klaipėda University Library staff, the other - a random sample from Klaipėdos Labor Exchange office on a working day. 20 questionnaires were distributed to a selective sample of respondents from both groups.

The questionnaire consists of closed or semi-open questions, multiple-choice answers and open ended questions. Claims for answer choices were selected using the method of observation, by observing what is spoken about the library. Each of the questions has an equal number of potential positive and negative options. The same questionnaire is distributed to both groups of respondents. In the first group of questionnaire sought to learn the respondent's summary data, further - to clarify what the image (semantic code) respondents see in library institution facilities, services, personnel and financing. At the end of the questionnaire sought to ascertain, based on what sources of information, respondents formed the image of the library.

Indicators of respondents age groups, education, and visit the library was quite different. The most part of the library expert group (95%) consists of people with higher education, the average age (from 35 to 60 years) women. Meanwhile, the group of outsiders dominated by people with secondary education (60%), higher education has 25% of those surveyed, 70% of outsiders - men, 30% - women. Composition of respondents by age is also different - 50% of young people (21-35 years). In this way, they do not (or should not) have memories from Soviet time library institution. 50% of those surveyed - medium-aged people, in whose minds the image of the library can be influenced by memories from Soviet era library. Even 70% of this group of respondents does not remember when the last time they visited library was (accordingly 5% visits once a week, 15% - once a month, and 15% - once a year). The data show that the surveyed people can indeed be described as outsiders for a library institution.

In order to define the semantic code of the library, the questionnaire asked to rate statements about library activities, highlighting the most important and less important activities. The obtained data are presented in Chart 1.

Analyzing the data, we see that both sides of the respondents have quite similar perception of main library activities. Experts rates activities higher, but the basic trend remains. Views become quite different only in the fourth claim, which describes the activities of the library as a pleasant communication with the librarians. Experts (80%) almost unanimously rated this claim very low, as well as outsiders, but among the respondents was a separate group (10%), which rated the activity highest. This confirms the findings of a separate practice group of users, that the library institution's activities are related to the need for direct interpersonal communication satisfaction. The most important activities of the library institution for both groups of respondents traditionally are associated with the opportunity to borrow books for free. It just confirms the basic institutional purpose of the public library. However, surprisingly the second place, as both groups of respondents indicated is "the supply of information services." If the specialists' response reflects the reality, then the answer of outsiders illustrates that this notion is widespread enough (established) in society.

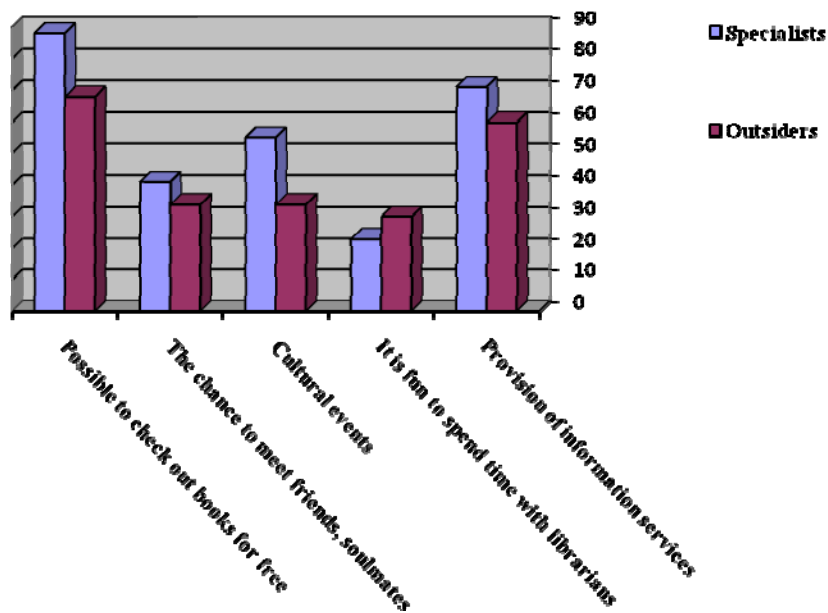


Fig 1. Ranking of library institutional activities by importance

In a next set of questions, respondents expressed perception of library and librarians. The obtained data is presented in the second graph.

It is obvious that outsiders almost uniquely (85%) sees the library as a "cozy orderly room, which combines books and computers, and shelves of local readers." This claim was supported by 45% of professionals. This reflects a modern open space library, the mainstream of developing, or restructuring library design. At the same time outsiders deny "uncomfortable, cold and congested with books" library's image, these claims have not been chosen by any respondent, but 5% of specialists indicated this claim, as best reflecting the image of the library. 5% of outsiders said library is a "modern, comfortable room, where a lot of space for communication, culture, science and progress." This library image is not yet entrenched even in specialists' mind, this is the latest development trends in library institutions (45% of specialists said that this image is the key). The same (5% of the outsiders have expressed the opinion that "the library - this is tidy room with old furniture and equipment and in a need for repair (from the professionals' group this claim was mentioned by 10% of respondents). For 5% of outsiders library is "recently renewed rooms with new replaceable furniture, up-to-date computer".

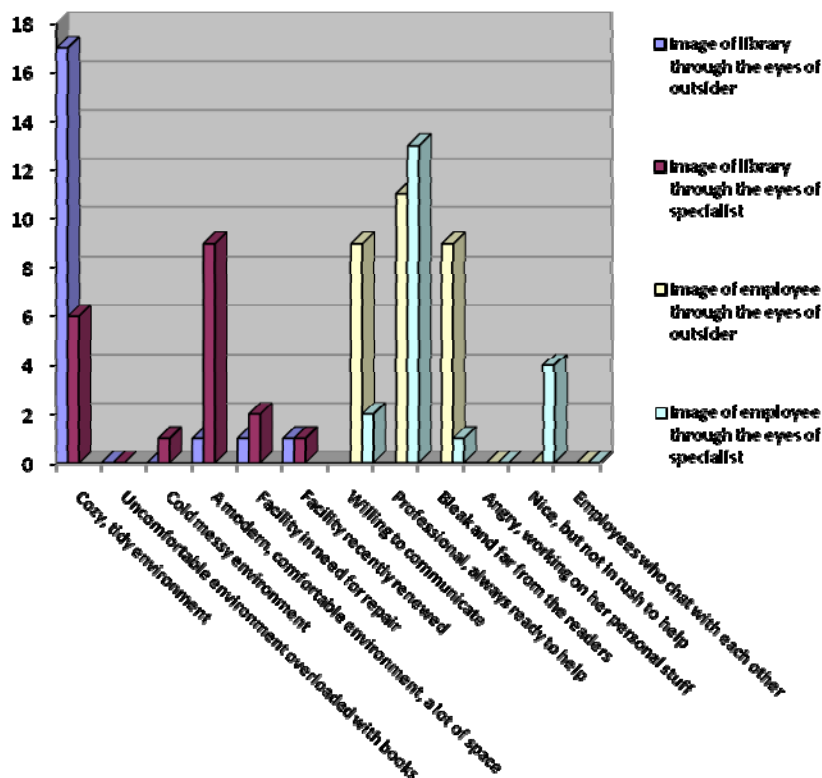


Fig 2. Analysis of library external image and employee

Data about librarians’ image is different: from outsider's view, the librarian is defined as "employee, always communicating, helping to solve problems, who is pleasure to chat with" (55%) and "always ready to help the reader, professional workers” (45%). Meanwhile, the image of the concept of professional librarian quite varied, professionals chose such terms to describe librarians: " employee, always communicating, helping to solve problems, who is pleasure to chat with " (10%), "always ready to help the reader, professional workers' (65%), "not happy that readers interrupt her/him” (10%) and" nice, not in rush to help a reader” (15%).

Modern Library is the institution which provides services to readers; therefore, respondents were asked rate services provided by the library institution. Figure 3 shows the data received.

We see that for both groups of respondents the main services are "the opportunity to use computers, read the documents stored here and get advice on a range of information (outsiders rate this claim 15 points, and the specialists - 16 points). There is still a deep understanding of library, as "the lending literary publications" (10 points - the experts and the 11 - outsiders), although the range of library services has increased. From the both sides, respondents gave quite a lot points (9 points) for the opportunity to read newspapers and magazines (both of these services distinguish library from other institutions for a long time, so it is natural that the idea is strongly expressed). In the eyes of specialists the library service is more often associated with "the opportunity to attend various cultural events and to receive advice in finding a variety of information (7 points), while the outsiders rate such library service only 3 points.

Libraries provide free services to the public, having this in mind, sought to determine whether the respondents recognized the importance of funding for these institutions. Double the number of specialists believes that "the library is relevant to the public, so it should be given more resources" (12 and 6 points). 7 points were given by outsiders who said that they do not think about it, some said the “libraries are funded by government, so they must enjoy what they have”. Respondents from outsiders’ group wrote 6 points for the overall rule of the public library, which is that “the library is funded by taxes collected from us, so their services must meet the needs of the community (this claim was rated 7 points by specialists). One by outsider and two points by the experts given for the claim: "libraries are always lacking for something, apparently, the money goes somewhere else." Interviewed respondents in both groups did not claim that the library may be updated, because it collects the fee for the ticket, although such claim occurred.

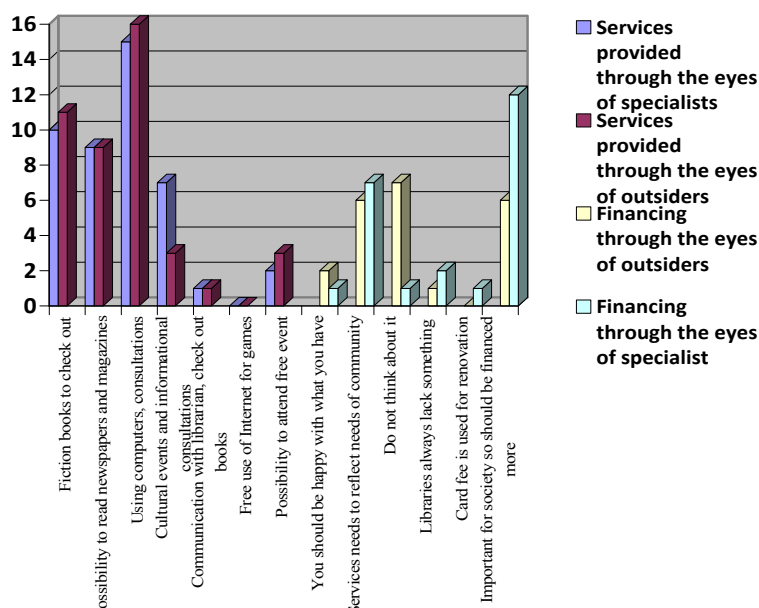


Fig. 3. Analysis of library services and financing perception.

The last question was used to find out on what sources the respondents' base their perception of library. Naturally, all 100% of specialists said that - this is the result of personal experience. While 10% of them noted that additional sources of information in this area is the press and the stories of friends, 5% noted the Internet as the source for creating perception of library. Meanwhile, only 50% of outsiders argue that they created an image of library from personal experience (even though 70 percent of them do not remember last time being in library). It is natural, that much of the information about the library reaches the outsiders from the outside - even 30% of them indicate that the main source of information - TV, 20% of their principal source of information is friends' stories, 10% - the press.

Summarizing the data from different groups of respondents about the library institution's image, it can be argued that they are different, but not critically different. As to the library activities, both groups of respondents preferred to borrow books for free and the provision of information services (!), which means the libraries, as information services institution in Klaipeda, image is spread widely enough.

As to the apparent view of the library, both groups of respondents chose progressive trends reflecting the allegations: "nice tidy room, which combines books and computers, shelves, and the local people" and "modern, comfortable room, where a lot of space for communication, culture, science and progress." Admittedly we note the first image almost unanimously seen by outsiders, and half less by specialists. The second image seen only 5% of outsiders, and almost half (45%) by specialists. It is interesting to note that the image of the library far different - outsiders see only two claims: "employee, always communicating, helping to solve problems, who is pleasure to chat with" (55%) and "always ready to help the reader, professional workers" (45%). Meanwhile, experts tend to criticize ourselves (!), or their colleagues, and maybe still has old Soviet-term image in their heads, because as much as 25% of specialists selected the critical statements about the employees, however also vast majority of them (65%) agrees with the statement that it "always ready to help the reader, professional staff".

Featured image of library services for both groups is associated more with the possibility to use the computer and get advice, nor with the traditional library services - the lending of books or the opportunity to read periodicals. While we note the latter image is also important for both groups of respondents.

Double the number of specialists (60%) linked libraries with the financing of the figurative statement "the library relevant to the public, so they should be given more resources." At the same time - a considerable part of the outsiders (30%) expressed a positive opinion on the subject, the more over; the opposite (negative) statements were chosen less by the respondents polled this group (10%).

Since the majority of the outsiders indicated that they very rarely visit the library (do not remember when it was actually happened, probably more than the year before) and an image of library was not only his

personal experience but also external sources of information support (radio, television, press, friends, stories), can be pleased that this external communication library code is sufficiently positive. It is likely that the influenced by the external design of the Library of Klaipėda renewal, a rapidly modernizing their operations and intensive work in image creation process, also.

Conclusion

Quite different groups of respondents have knowledge and experience which is expressed in different, but not critically different perception of libraries semantic image. Both groups of respondents chose claims in the survey that clearly reflects the changed library semantic code, which is clearly far from the Soviet period and the negative image library.

Therefore, the pre-opinion, that the in professional librarian community is not adequately interpreted by outsiders (people not related to the libraries) was not proven. At the same time outside respondents confirmed that they do not see library as the traditional, which is negative, the way.

It should be noted that the survey was conducted in Klaipėda, so the results reflect the research topic's situation in this city.

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