

Campus Solution: the Case of the Debrecen University Libraries

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ABSTRACT

After World War II, universities in Hungary were split, and their respective faculties became independent institutions. In the 1980s, even before integration became a government priority, negotiations began regarding the reunification of the segregated institutions of higher education in Debrecen. The Debrecen Universities Association (DUA) was founded officially in 1991. On January 2000, the most respectable and complex educational organization in Debrecen came into existence. Fifteen faculties covering a wide range of disciplines and a 35,000-member student body make the University of Debrecen one of the largest universities in Hungary. Since that time, the University and National Library, with an integrated management and organization, has been a central unit of the University.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Debrecen - the second largest city in Hungary - has always played an important role in the history and culture of the country. Since the 16th century Debrecen has been the intellectual centre of the north-eastern region of the country. Higher education in Debrecen dates back to 1538, when the Protestant College was founded. For centuries this institution has played a vital role in the development and maintenance of Hungarian education and culture. The University of Debrecen (UD) was established in 1912. In that year, the three former faculties (Humanities, Law and Science) of the Reformed College were merged into the new university. Similar in structure and composition to a classic university, a Faculty of Medicine based on the model of a public hospital was attached to the university.

The 1948-49 Higher Education Reform created self-contained universities with narrow profiles and rendered them under the supervision of different ministries. The University of Debrecen was split and its faculties became independent, self-contained institutions, such as the University of Arts and Sciences and a separate Medical University. The Faculty of Law was closed down at that time. By the time the political changes began in 1990, there had been 5 independent institutions of higher education in Debrecen. Negotiations began for the purposes of reuniting and integrating the segregated universities.

THE UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN (UD)

The Debrecen University Association was founded in 1991. Its objective was to attain parity with European universities in terms of the quality and flexibility of education and research, in the form of integration, network development, scientific qualifications and new specialties. Under the umbrella of this organization several initiatives were launched and shared projects had been completed by the end of 1997:

- The completion of an integrated campus telephone system, together with a computer network, was a significant venture.
- The development and implementation of a centralised, computer-based information network for student registration and finance administration were equally important breakthroughs.
- This was followed by the establishment of an integrated library system for the affiliated partner libraries.

The Higher Education Act of 1998

According to the new Higher Education Act of 1998, out of the 32 state universities dispersed in the country 13 integrated institutions were set up, including the [University of Debrecen](#) (UD), which was established on January 1, 2000. Fifteen faculties covering a wide range of disciplines, with a teaching/research staff of 1,700 and a student body of 35,000, make UD one of the largest universities in Hungary. The Institutional Development Plan (IDP), which was subsequently accepted by the prospective members of the new, integrated university, was prepared in 1998. One of the central elements of the Debrecen IDP and the integration process has been the increased cross-utilization of staff and facilities. In the 4 major investment programs 2 pertained to the facilities of a new, reorganised library:

- The construction of a Life Science Building and Library, which would accommodate the newly integrated departments of the three former participating universities.
- To provide potential for future program development and enrollment growth for Social Sciences (Economics, Law, Sociology, and Public Health).

HISTORY OF THE LIBRARY

In 1918, after two years of preparation, the University Library opened to the public with holdings of up to 10,000 volumes. In 1932, when the central university building was completed, the library moved into its permanent premises in the new building, part of which had been designed specifically for library use. The new premises were capable of accommodating hundreds of readers and holdings of up to 2 million volumes. At that time, the steadily growing library collection did not yet reach 100,000 volumes. A large-scale development program took place after 1935. A turning point in the history of the institution occurred when, in 1952, the library was granted the right and task of receiving copyright issues, much the same as in 1997, when the Library Act confirmed its *national library* status. In 1987, the situation caused by the lack of space was alleviated by transforming the nearby university church into a library building. The Periodical and Music Collection, as well as the Special Collection of Manuscripts were moved into the newly remodelled and restored church building.



THE LIBRARY INTEGRATION

Since January 1, 2001, the University and National Library (DEENK) has been a central unit of the university with an integrated management and organization under the direct supervision of the University rector. The library serves shared and identical purposes, primarily to provide access to the latest information to all members of the university community. It functions as a public library with a national collection development policy. The National Document Delivery System of Hungary receives and stores the holdings information of other libraries in its locations database and fulfills requests from its complete collection through the national interlibrary loan service. The current holdings of Debrecen's University and National Library exceed 6 million library items. It has a periodical collection of over 6,000 titles, including subscriptions to 1,600 periodicals from abroad.

DEENK Library of National and General Collections

Holdings: 4,300,000 documents.

Premises: 6,415 m²

This collection contains the full range of materials pertaining to the university disciplines. Its valuable Hungarica Collection is comprised not only of copyright issues received and preserved since 1952, but also acquisitions from the first decades of the 20th century, purchased private collections, and an important collection of rare books.

DEENK Library of Agriculture

Holdings: 162,000 documents.

Premises: 865 m²

Functioning as both a university library and a special public library, its main collection interest covers the full range of agricultural literature and reference materials in related disciplines.

DEENK Kenézy Library

Holdings: 190,000 documents

Premises: 750 m²

As a university library, its primary mission is to collect Hungarian and foreign literature in the disciplines taught at the faculties of the Medical and Health Science Center. The Kenézy Library has been significantly developing its electronic library as well.

DEENK Library of Social Sciences

Holdings: 41,000 documents.

Premises: 1,760 m²

This collection is comprised of books, periodicals, and other documents in the fields of economics, law, public administration, and related disciplines.

DEENK Library of the Faculty of Engineering

Holdings: 65,000 documents.

Premises: 482 m²

The collection covers engineering and its interdisciplinary studies including industry catalogues received as copyright issues and registered in a separate database.

DEENK Library of the Teacher Training College

Holdings: 40,000 documents.

Premises: 414 m²

This library holds a collection of books and periodicals published after 1945 in the fields of education, psychology, sociology, and children's literature.

DEENK Music Conservatory Library

Holdings: 58,000 documents.

Premises: 100 m²

The library collects publications in the fields of music, art, and related disciplines.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIBRARY ORGANIZATION

With 136 affiliated branch libraries and with the individual collections scattered all over the respective campuses, the structure of the University Library was very complicated and extremely uneconomical to operate. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the newly integrated libraries were very different in size and in terms of the level of information technology and working methods. The board of directors therefore prepared a developmental project to improve and harmonize the library structure and workflow. Taking into consideration the distances between the respective campuses and the local character of the library units, the management of the library came to the decision that in the matter of the particular work procedures it would favour a matrix-type arrangement.

As for the improvement of the physical dimensions of the library environment, the Board decided that for making the best use of library space, a completely new conception should be introduced: flexibility for moving and regrouping literature the fastest possible way, according to the readers' needs. Open-shelf reading rooms and diverse options of study spaces are required for the academic community. As regards the continued rebuilding of the specialized library system of the University Library from the reserve collection of the Main Library, our basic working principle is that in the long run self-contained and integrated special collections (Life science, Agriculture, Economics and Law, Technical sciences) should be created and that the documents of the respective disciplines or groups of related disciplines should be located and accessed in the same place.

NEW LIBRARY PROJECTS

While, chronologically, the programme of the Life Science Library (LSL) had been ready years earlier (1998) and completed by the end of 2005, the inauguration of the Social Science Library (SSL) took place much earlier (November 2002). At the time the SSL building was designed, no funding was available and it was merely on the basis of estimated needs and requirements that its addition to the Social Science complex on the new campus was envisioned. However, since the government re-purchased the church building (used for library functions) from the University, the financial resources for construction were made available. To satisfy the additional needs of the library functions formerly provided by those in the church building, the plans of the LSL also had to be re-designed.

The Social Science Library Building

The Social Science Library Building has been laid out on the University's new campus, as an independent entity within the new building complex of the Social Science and Health Science Centre. Its floor-space covers 1,760 m². The volume of the stock to be transferred into the new Social Science Library Building is 180,000 library units, and it is estimated that in the next 10 years this quantity is likely to be expanded to 230,000 units. In the first phase of allocation, the most frequently used section of the stock - about 30,000 volumes - will be made available on open shelves in the reading area. Extra room will have to be generated for the accommodation of an enlarged open-shelf collection. The collection is made up of four major thematic groups:

- Business and economic sciences
- Jurisprudence
- European Studies
- General collection

The Social Science Library serves about 3,500 students. This is supplemented by 500 users from the academic and research community. For this reason, our objective was to create reading space for 210, of which 50 units are equipped with workstations.



The description of the building

Viewed from outside, the building does not look like a conventional structure; owing to its circular arrangement it resembles a grain silo. Natural lighting on the ground floor and the second level is ensured by the windows encircling the building. The basement level accommodates a 300 m² compact shelving storage area, the server room, and a room for technical service (for sorting documents, postal preparation, preparation for binding).

On the ground floor, on the two opposite sides of the building are the public entrance and the deliveries entrance. Right next to the main entrance is the cloak-room and the rows of deposit boxes for handbags. The information counter and the circulation area are located in a jointly shared space. Also on this level is located the computer training room, arranged in such a way that it can be opened to gain access to the public terminal units. The newspapers are available on shelves next to the window. The personnel work area makes up one large unit. Privacy for the librarians is ensured by the separating bookshelves. The bookshelves also ensure space for a small community area.

The first floor accommodates the periodicals and the general collection. The bound and unbound volumes of the periodicals are shelved next to each other. The reading desks are placed in the middle, and the bookshelves are positioned at right angles to the windowless wall. A number of research carrels are also found on this level.



The next floor is the gallery level. The row of windows encircles the wall on the second gallery level, hereby ensuring natural lighting. Here too the bookshelves are at right angles to the wall, with some reading desks between them. On the two gallery levels the reading desks are arranged uniformly facing the inner space. Although the library constitutes one large inner space, the noise level is relatively low. This is due to the fact that the wall is covered with noise-absorbent bricks.



The Life Science Library Building

Through the establishment of the Life Science Library a model was created in which the larger disciplines could cluster in a large library unit for the purposes of an added realization of economicality and professional priorities. These are the following:

- the integration of the Life science, Chemistry, and Biology collections as well as the educational material in one large stock;
- to ensure the conditions of studying, research, computer utilization, and small-group preparation by creating flexible library spaces;
- to develop, by deploying a new acquisitions strategy, basic research and the special literature of education, irrespective of format;
- to develop a new interactive communication system in which, through intelligent teaching programs, the highest level of service can be achieved in the most user-friendly form.

The Life Science Library Building is located in the cross of the two main axis of the main campus with the Life Science Education Centre. This location has many advantages:

- As it is in the centre of the Campus it is very well accessible from every direction.
- It is close to the Main Building and the other teaching premises and the student facilities.

The library floor-space covers 3,600 m². It is a six-level building with a two level storing area.



The description of the building

The library building constitutes a single unit with the education complex, of which the rear annexes open onto the botanical gardens of the university. Between the two buildings there is a small street for pedestrians, which by today has become a principal access route between the university buildings. The shape of the library building is rectangular, and its structure has been designed to meet the priorities of conventional functions. The proper spacing of the concrete columns make the inner spaces adequately flexible. The whole of the northern façade has a glass surface; the reading areas are located on this side. The southern side is more closed and is occupied by the library personnel; the windows here are complete with sun-shades.

In the main entrance hall, a centrally located reception service and information desk welcome and route visitors as necessary on each level. The ground floor houses the media collection, the reference area and also a cafeteria.



The first floor is the book section. On this floor there is a computer room for education purposes and a space for group work also. The information specialists offices, the interlibrary loan service and digitalization service can also be found here.

The second floor houses the extensive periodicals collection of the library, which regularly subscribes, among other items, to more than 1,500 current foreign titles. The library management and the subject specialist offices are also found on this level. A separate room accommodates the medical history collection.



WEB SITE REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT

UD - University of Debrecen. <http://www.unideb.hu/index.php?!C=en>