

Pomeranian Library (Książnica Pomorska) in Szczecin – Professionalism of the library staff and modernisation of workplace

What does this case study demonstrate?

The changing way of functioning of the organisation and use of technological solutions, in particular digital technologies influence the improvement of access to knowledge, information, and cultural goods the depositary of which is the library.

The employees are trained in the use of digital technologies in the library and are provided with digital devices which facilitate their daily work.

Communication and information flow within the organisation are implemented through the intranet. Despite the hierarchical organisational structure of the entity, alongside traditional meetings of the management with the employees, capabilities of digital communication are also used for contact with individual employees. The technical and organisational solutions implemented in the entity encourage the employees to present ideas to improve working conditions, increase productivity and the effectiveness of the procedures.

Workplace innovation elements:

Improvement of working conditions, employee commitment, dialogue and communication, learning and thinking (Library's Internal Academy), pro-social initiatives, improvement of the image of the Library.

Context

Stanisław Staszic Pomeranian Library (Książnica Pomorska im. Stanisława Staszica) was founded in 1905, as Szczecin city library. Its functioning made it possible to merge valuable scientific collections in Western Pomerania. Currently, the Pomeranian Library is a self-governing cultural institution and the central public library for the whole Western Pomeranian region. The library employs 183 workers directly dealing with contact with readers as well as the handling of resources and making them available to external users.

The traditional social perception of the library – as an entity closed to changes taking place in the outside world – is changing. The management uses its organisational capacity and its employees' potential, to adjust to the trends and requirements of open access to written resources. In 2009, the Western Pomeranian Digital Library "Pomerania" was launched in the library. It constitutes the digital platform of Western Pomeranian Regional and Scientific Information System, which gives online access to historical and contemporary collections constituting the national or regional cultural heritage and documenting its development. Thanks to the platform, external users have access to the information stored in various repositories throughout the voivodeship (area) in one place, without the need of going out of their place.

The staff willingly assists the readers in the process of becoming familiar with new opportunities offered by the library's digital resources. Many facilities for readers have been implemented, including access to e-books and standardisation documents in digital version. Along with the development of technology, organisation of work in the library is also changing, adapting to the needs and requirements of customers, i.e. readers.

The employees of the library are aware of the difficulties in understanding and adapting to the changes by local libraries, which is why the library organizes individual training and study visits for local librarians, in order to familiarise them with modern technological methods to access the resources of knowledge.

WPI – Professionalism of library staff and modernisation of workplace

The management of the organisation is aware that effective implementation of modern technologies and familiarising the readers with open access to knowledge resources would not be possible without the involvement of employees and their well-founded professional knowledge in this domain. Long-term stability and maintaining the leading position in the field of deposition and sharing knowledge resources with general public in the region and strengthening of the positive image of the organisation depend on each employee's individual activity. The employees need to feel that their voice does matter in the organisation and they have real influence on the way of fulfilling their obligations.

The heads of departments encourage their subordinates to present ideas on improving their work or on the organisation of activities promoting access to knowledge and information among the local community. The managers committee discusses ideas given by employees and presented to department managers. If they are evaluated positive as enhancing performance they are implemented.

WPI – Library's Internal Academy

Since 2010, at the request of the Scientific Secretary, the library has been implementing the initiative called the Library's Internal Academy, offering the opportunity to participate in lectures and topic-oriented training courses for the employees. Subjects of the lectures relate to innovations in librarian science, effective communication techniques, together with topics on healthy working conditions and cultural events and actions in Pomerania. Topics presented on the forum are usually those suggested by individual employees who want to improve their working conditions, understanding of work-related subjects or just want to learn more. External guests are invited to give lectures in the library and to present information on events, interesting places and achievements of the inhabitants of the region of Pomerania. Thanks to the information and knowledge acquired, the librarians are able to assist the readers and users of the library resources in their search for new, unconventional sources on the topics of their interest.

At the same time, the Academy is a place where the library staff can also share their experience, knowledge, and skills. It is precisely during the meetings within the framework of the Academy where training sessions attended by employees, or the conclusions of conferences attended by the representatives of the organisation, are presented in a cascaded manner. The Academy is a sort of knowledge and consultation forum for ideas emerging in the library.

Who benefits?

The innovation implemented and change in the approach to the readers influenced the increase of the percentage of people using the knowledge and information resources in the library.

The employees are satisfied with their work and opportunities for the development "... part of the staff are happy if they can become familiar with a topic, complete their knowledge..."; "... in the framework of the Academy, not only do our employees transfer the information, but we also invite people who simply give lectures from different fields free of charge..." (quotes from the employees' statements).

Positive image of the library, corresponding to the contemporary reader's needs and open access to knowledge.

Prognosis

The new model of access to knowledge resources and information in the library, in combination with significant involvement of employees, has transformed the conditions of work in the library. The involvement of individual employees and their sense of responsibility for the organisation result in

positive relations with the environment and readers. The employees feel they have influence on the functioning of the library and share their ideas. Seeing real results of their work, they are more efficient and receptive to the reader's needs.