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Continuing Professional Development in Library and Information Science in Serbia

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Introduction

Continuing professional development (CPD) for public library employees has been an inseparable part of the history of librarianship in Serbia. From its very beginnings, employee training was crucial because as libraries developed, so did the complexity and specialization of library work. Until the mid-20th century, these roles were not supported by formal education.

In recent decades, the rapid development of digital technologies has brought changes to the definition and name of the library profession, as well as to the scope and type of knowledge and skills that modern library and information work demands. Therefore, non-formal education and specifically planned professional development have gained special importance. Since 2013, CPD has been legally regulated in the Republic of Serbia.



Legal Framework and Responsibilities

The legal framework for accredited CPD programs was established by the **Law on Library and Information Activities** from 2011 and the **Rulebook on Continuing Professional Development** from 2013. These regulations mandate that employees are required to continuously develop their skills, and the National Library of Serbia (NBS) was entrusted with the task of program accreditation.

Funding for development is provided by the library's founder, while the minister responsible for culture prescribes the method of accreditation and implementation. The NBS, through its Accreditation Commission, issues a public call for programs, reviews applications, and makes an official decision on program accreditation. Although the NBS conducts the accreditation, the implementation of the programs is the responsibility of the institutions or individuals who propose and conduct them.





Public Call and Program Implementation

Every year on September 1, the NBS issues a public call for program accreditation for the following year. The application period lasts for 30 days, and the documentation includes the biographies of the authors and reviewers, as well as a statement on the secured resources.

The NBS provides consultations and information about the programs and collects data on their implementation through surveys and reports, but it does not participate in their organization or funding.



Statistics and Analysis

A survey conducted from 2014 to 2017, but reports from later period as well, showed that the initiators of development were most often the parent libraries, superiors, or the employees themselves.

Despite expressed interest in professional development in specialized areas of librarianship, user services, IT, and digitization, the number of accredited programs in these specific areas decreased from 2018 to 2021. They were more interested in AI, and specific fields such as communication, user services, acquisition etc.



Number of Accredited Programs and Challenges

Year	Number of Programs
2014	24
2015	26
2016	16
2017	18
2018	15
2019	14
2020	13
2021	16
2022	15
2023	20
2024	13



Thematic areas of accredited programs:

Information literacy; New media; Encouraging reading; Processing library materials; Bibliography; Acquisition; Preservation; Digitization of library materials; Collections – special, digital; Local history; Laws, regulations, standards; Statistics; Libraries – profession, management, innovations

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although a large number of employees show interest and fulfill their legal obligation, the existing legal regulations leave room for improving the model of implementation. To improve the system, it is necessary to:

Research the current state and educational needs of librarians.

Amend and supplement the **Rulebook on Continuing Professional Development**.

Form a competent body with professional and technical capacities for accreditation, monitoring, and developing the professional development model.

Improving the professional development system would certainly result with very good results because employee interest exists.



Thank you.

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