

Management of Academic Libraries in Poland During the COVID-19 Lockdown

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Abstract

Purpose/Thesis: The article considers the management strategies employed at Polish academic libraries during a crisis situation, using the lockdown imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic as a case study. The lockdown is defined here as the period between March 12th and June 2020. The study identifies the most significant obstacles to operating efficiently in the unstable VUCA environment.

Approach/Methods: The author uses research methods of sociology, collecting data from the directors of Polish academic libraries by the means of an online survey, with the response rate approximating 30%. The survey included questions about the organization of information and library services during the lockdown, and about the management obstacles the libraries faced.

Results and conclusions: The results suggest that both directors and staff of academic libraries did their best in the crisis situation. They adjusted the information and library service procedures, seeking to efficiently organize remote work, and manage the dispersed work environment. The most often mentioned management obstacles included the necessity for rapid adjustment, the impossibility of long-term planning, and the changing duties. However, the libraries implemented a number of solutions, which may serve them in the future if need be, such as rotational shifts, higher flexibility of organization, and task-oriented approach to professional duties.

Practical implications: The study presents procedures to be applied in the case of another lockdown, identifies good practices, and relays the experiences of other academic libraries in order to improve information services at the reader's place of employment; it may inspire them to optimize information and library processes.

Originality/Value: It is the first such study of the activity of Polish academic libraries during the lockdown. The results may contribute to discussions about the organizational flexibility of academic libraries and their capacity for adjustment, and well as about the future development or phaseout of certain areas of their activity.

Keywords

Academic libraries. COVID-19 epidemic. Lockdown. Management. VUCA.

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1. Introduction

In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic – a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 strain of the coronavirus – paralyzed the entire world. It was first identified in China; from there, it spread to the rest of Asia, the Americas, and Europe. In many countries, the situation had

rapidly spun out of control as healthcare systems operated above their maximum capacity, while the number of infections – and deaths – continued to grow. The airborne transmitted virus, for which there had been no cure, nor vaccine, pushed all other problems into the background. Following the advice of experts, epidemiologists, and health professionals, many states decided that only a strict lockdown would effectively slow down the spread of the disease. The governments imposed severe restrictions on public life and on the economy. Businesses, schools, airports, cultural institutions, restaurants and offices were all closed down. Free movement was restricted, and the borders closed.

The world stood still, but in many areas, rapid and unpredictable changes followed. Institutions, corporations and organizations, in some cases for the first time, faced the conditions described by the acronym VUCA. The VUCA environment, characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, forced many leaders to reexamine their management methods and procedures for internal control (Worley & Jules, 2020). The concept of VUCA, developed in military education and leadership practices introduced in response to the 2001 crisis, became acutely relevant to everyone affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The capacity to make agile and bold adjustments to the unexpected became more important than ever.

Volatility might be defined as the difficulty of predicting future events and their pace, which results in an increasing sense of anxiety and uncertainty. Uncertainty may disrupt decision-making processes and make it necessary to prepare for a number of different scenarios, or to approximate the likelihood of certain events (determine the risk). Complexity, simplicity's opposite, is a result of an overlay of a multitude of events and information; it is characterized by large, varied, and shifting sets of data and system dynamics. Ambiguity is a feature of unfamiliar or unclear situations, which cannot be explained on the basis of logic or previous experiences.

On the one hand, we suddenly found ourselves in a VUCA environment; on the other, it was necessary that the information shared at this time was reliable and verified. Muhammad Yousuf Ali and Peter Gatiti (2020) identified the most important duties of library and information services in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic: raising awareness of public healthcare, supporting research teams, scholars and lecturers, providing them with the newest research results and relevant literature, as well as fulfilling the basic needs of library users. They emphasized the crucial role that information specialists and librarians play in ensuring access to reliable and verified information on COVID-19 and in combating fake news and conspiracy theories – which became so wide-spread during the pandemic that a new term “infodemic” was coined to describe the phenomenon (VSSE, 2020).

The conditions of VUCA may paralyze leaders, tempt them to take more control than necessary, or provoke them to make reckless decisions. However, for many it might be an opportunity to redefine their organizations' aims, practices, and methods for managing human resources, thus increasing the organizations' overall efficiency. How did information services fare in the new conditions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic? Did the library directors and staff meet the challenges these conditions posed? How did the information and library services cope with uncertainty, complexity, and unpredictability? What were the most difficult problems the situation posed, and what were the opportunities it offered? These questions, and the author's personal experience of managing an academic library during this period, were the basis and inspiration for the following study.

2. Legal conditions and guidelines regarding the functioning of universities and other institutions of higher education

During the lockdown period, i.e., between March 12th and early June 2020, Polish academic libraries functioned in the accordance with the regulations introduced by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and the restrictions imposed by the authorities at specific universities, following those regulations. Specific guidelines regarding the functioning of academic libraries were published by the Ministry of Economic Development, Labor and Technology and by the National Library; more general recommendations were published on the websites of the Polish Librarians' Association, EBIB, and on the social media pages of related groups. Executive decisions regarding the activity of universities were left to the rectors. Although information, recommendations, and regulations abounded, they were ambiguous and contingent. The library directors had not prepared for the circumstances they had suddenly found themselves in, and had to make quick decisions, protecting life and safety of the staff and fulfilling the information needs of academic community – which became very dependent on academic libraries during the lockdown.

On March 11th 2020, following the recommendation of the Government Team for Crisis Management (GTCM), the Ministry of Science decided to introduce preventive measures to counteract the spread of the COVID-19 at the institutions of higher education (MNiSW, 2020a). On March 12th, the universities suspended classes, stressing that the measures were not intended to stop research activity itself. Executive decisions regarding operating of specific universities, their administrative work and provision of online classes, were left to the rectors. On March 13th, the Ministry published guidelines for online teaching, suggesting maximum use of e-resources and online channels of communication. These guidelines had implications for the academic libraries, as they prescribed that the institutions “make use of already existing support structures as they develop teaching e-resources to offer help and advice to individuals without experience in this area”. On March 16th, following the introduction of further restrictions and an imposition of a sanitary regime, the Ministry published a new set of guidelines on limiting the work of university staff, including those without teaching responsibilities, recommending remote work, or the system of rotational shifts in the case of jobs that cannot be performed remotely, as well as restricting the access to university buildings. On the same day, the Ministry's website published a notice that university staff would no longer be required to report for duty, unless it would be absolutely necessary in order to maintain the continuity of the university's functioning. The Ministry opined that the universities were obliged to maintain their accounts and pay their employees, as well as maintain laboratories, and care for animals. The staff of university libraries were not considered to be as essential. The Ministry of Health's declaration of the state of epidemic emergency on March 20th informed the following decisions regarding the operations of the education system: on April 10th, the universities were closed – initially with the intention to reopen on April 26th, then on May 24th. In the meantime – on April 28th – the Ministry of Economic Development published extended *Guidelines Regarding the Functioning of Libraries During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Poland* (MR, 2020), which included recommendations for ensuring safety of the library staff and inside library buildings, as well as suggestions of procedures in response to a suspicion of an infection. They included extending the distance between employees to min. 1.5 m., limiting the number

of employees in common spaces, providing the librarians with means for personal protection, and following the rules concerning cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, as well as limiting the use of touchpad devices, and restricting the access to open stacks and to paper catalogues. At the same time, the National Library was publishing recommendations for the public libraries. Although public libraries had been allowed to reopen since May 4th, academic libraries functioning in a university system remained physically closed.

On May 22nd, the Ministry of Science notified the public that the restrictions imposed on universities would be gradually lifted, e.g., allowing exceptions to the rule that all teaching should be conducted online. The Ministry also published guidelines for establishing new procedures, accepted by the Chief Sanitary Inspector, and intended to ensure safe functioning under the threat of COVID-19 infection (MNiSW, 2020b). As far as the libraries were concerned, the guidelines were in accordance with the abovementioned recommendations published by the Ministry of Economic Development on April 28th (MR, 2020), and emphasized the necessity of limiting the number of people allowed inside the building, providing the staff with means of personal protection, i.e. masks and gloves, introducing an online borrowing system to reduce the contact between the patrons and the library staff, and establishing conditions for contact-free service, disinfection of hands, and use of gloves.

In early June, while university continued to provide most of the teaching remotely, academic libraries began to reopen to the public, following the sanitary regime and ensuring safety of the patrons and the staff. Although they implemented various solutions, most shared the following practices: they limited the number of people allowed to be in the building at a single time, occasionally designating specific rooms as “open areas”, installed plexiglass shields at stations where direct contact between the staff and the patrons was necessary, enforced the use of masks and hand-disinfectant, put returned items under a quarantine, ensured regular air circulation in rooms, disinfected surfaces, provided the staff with masks, gloves and face shields, changed opening hours, and restricted access to computers and reading rooms. It remains to be seen which of these safety measures will remain in place, and which will disappear as the epidemic fades (Mousumi, 2020).

3. Provision of information and library services during the lockdown – an analysis of personal research

The author employed research methods of sociology to investigate the functioning of Polish academic libraries during lockdown (defined here as the period between March 12th and early June 2020). An online survey was shared with the Conference of Polish Academic Libraries Directors’ mailing list. To collect the data from the directors of the libraries attached to private institutions, the author also sent the survey to the libraries at the top ten private universities, as per the 2019 ranking in the *Perspektywy* (Perspectives) magazine. The data was collected between June 29th and July 10th 2020. As the response rate approximated 30% (37 filled surveys were returned), the results should not be considered representative for all Polish academic libraries. However, they give an overview of the principles according to which Polish information services operated during the lockdown, and into the associated management processes; thus, they contribute to the discussion of individuals’ capacity for adjustment to changes and functioning in the VUCA environment.

3.1. Research sample

To adequately characterize the research sample, we should note the size of the staff at the libraries considered, as in many cases it informs the management strategies, and the capacity for flexible adjustment in a changing environment. The directors participating in the survey managed libraries with varying numbers of employees (Fig. 1). However, the majority of the libraries studied hired between 16 and 50 employees. 84% of the libraries studied were attached to public universities, as opposed to privately-owned institutions.

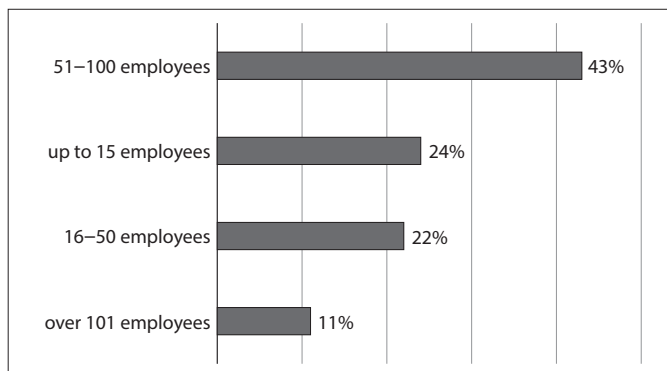


Fig. 1. The number of employees in the libraries studied

The research sought to uncover the principles which informed the management of academic libraries, and to examine their capacity for adjustment to the VUCA environment, characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. The research asked the following questions: How was the academic libraries' activity organized, and in what mode did the staff work? Which information and library services were prioritized during the lockdown? Were there any new procedures introduced? Which phenomena disrupted the libraries' management processes? Did the modifications of management introduced during the lockdown succeed, and if so – which? May they be successfully redeployed in the future? The research answered most of these questions.

The definite majority (89%) of Polish academic libraries provided information and library services during the lockdown (Fig. 2). However, the service provision was limited. Among the libraries studied, only one in ten institutions (10.8%) was entirely closed to the readers (which does not mean it did not provide online services). It is not surprising that the period of lockdown witnessed an intensified provision of e-resources; more than half (57%) of the libraries studied purchased access to additional resources; even more (84%) libraries "opened" licensed resources to free access for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is worth mentioning that every fifth library studied organized online events targeting its users (e.g. talks with authors), which they had not done before. It was a perfect example of a successful and creative adjustment to the situation and the readers' needs.

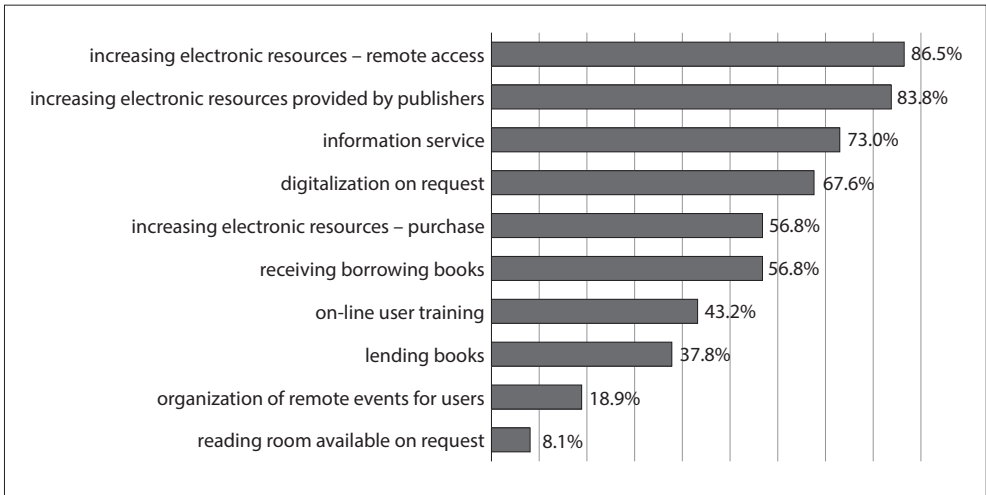


Fig. 2. Services provided by academic libraries during the lockdown

3.2. Organization and supervision of work

Majority of the directors declared that, according to the guidelines published by the university authorities, they were free to decide how to organize work at the library. Only 8% of the directors responded that these decisions were not their to make. Did they articulate any strategy? It turns out that the best response to the unpredictability of the pandemic was to be flexible, as in 81% of the libraries studied, the strategy was articulated in response to the current situation. Only one survey participant answered that no specific strategy was articulated.

Did the decision-making processes change after the lockdown was imposed? The research shows (Fig. 3) that in over half of the libraries (57%), the decision-making process did not change. However, it should be emphasized, that in many cases the situation did change: in 27% libraries, the mid-level staff was more involved in the decision-making process than it had been before, and in 11% of the libraries, heads of individual departments were excluded from the process. It is surprising that it was primarily smaller libraries that changed their decision-making processes; in majority of the institutions employing above 50 people, these processes did not change. It would suggest that the complicated conditions of VUCA do not admit simple, formulaic and universal solutions, applicable in every case.

Organizing work in a dispersed and shifting environment was not easy. The survey asked questions regarding the information flow and the dominant modes of communication (Fig. 4). It turns out that the most common modes of communication were e-mail and telephone calls. 41% of the libraries purchased paid communication applications; every fourth library relied on free external programs. The applications mentioned in responses to the open question were as follows: MS Teams, Zoom, Slack, Big Blue Button, and Google Meet. It should be mentioned that the survey suggested “maximum limiting of information flow” as a possible answer to the question, but no participant chose it. It confirms that the communication processes were adjusted to the situation, rather than limited, or eliminated.

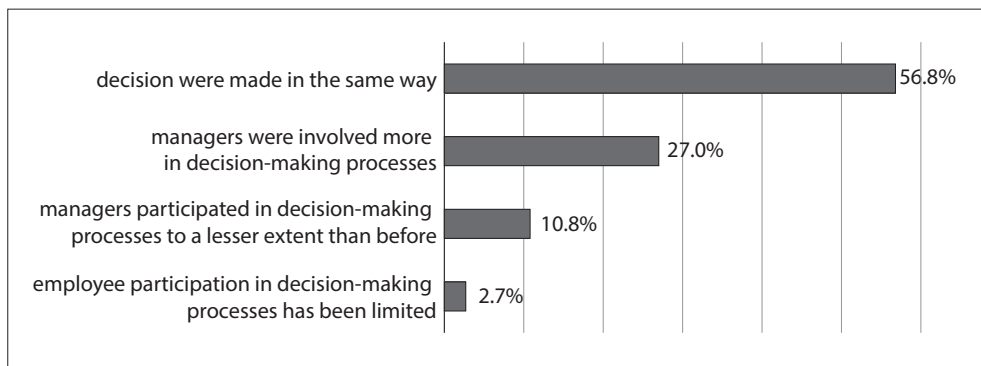


Fig. 3. Decision-making processes in academic libraries during the lockdown

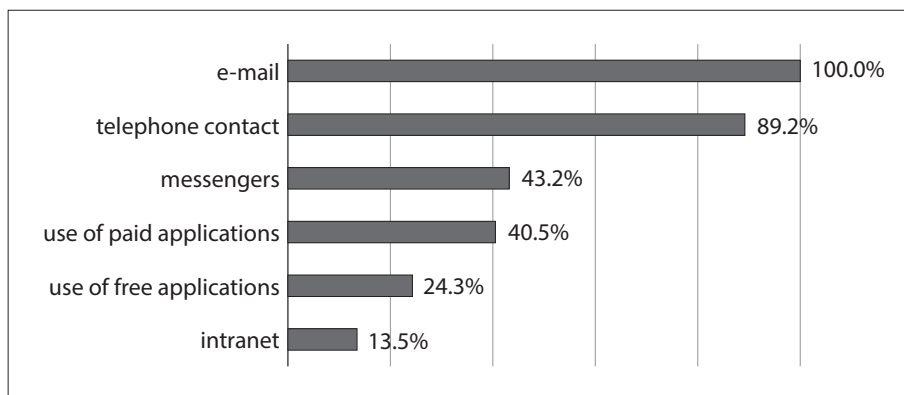


Fig. 4. Communication and information flow in the academic libraries during the lockdown

Were the employees supervised, and how? The research shows that the most common methods of supervision were regular online meetings (a method employed at 35% of the libraries studied), weekly reports to the immediate superior (30%) and supervision of work with the use of computer systems (24%). In every fifth library studied, the mode of reporting was determined by the superior's decision, and occurred irregularly, if the need arose. Although the methods of supervising work varied, no director left their staff unsupervised.

Answers to the question regarding the changes introduced to the employees' duties (Fig. 5) complement previous insights into the organization of work. In many cases, the librarians whose previous activities were impossible to move online, were keen to find new tasks. A definite majority (84%) of libraries changed the scope of their employees' duties – in most cases, this took place informally. It is another example of the flexible approach to managing under VUCA conditions.

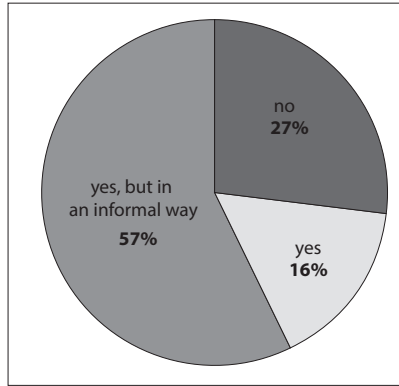


Fig. 5. The changes to staff duties introduced during the lockdown

Many doubts and ethical issues came with the decision to put some of the employees on standby, i.e., to pay them their wages while they do not work, or work remotely, or in a rotational system, when they are at home while other employees are working. The employees were put on “standby” in more than half of the libraries studied. However, it is worth mentioning that the libraries rarely put more than 25% of their staff on standby; usually only larger libraries, employing more than 50 people, took the decision to put some of them on standby.

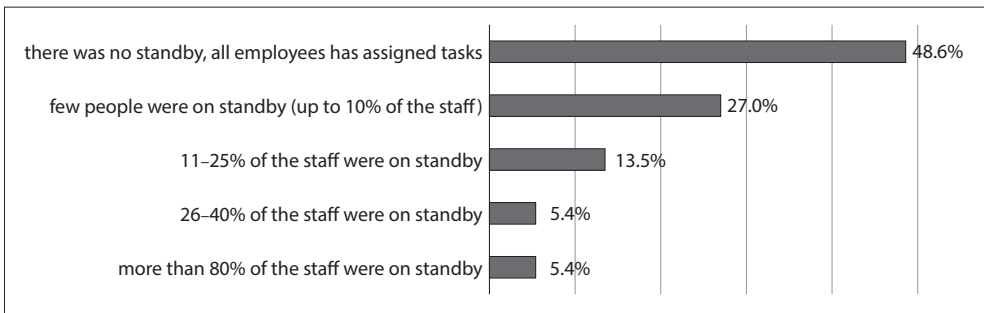


Fig. 6. “Standby” in academic libraries during lockdown

3.3. Remote work

The Ministry of Science and Higher Education recommended that the universities reduce the size of the staff working on campus. This informed the decisions the directors of academic libraries made regarding the organization of work during the lockdown (Fig. 7). The research shows that the most common model of work was a combination of remote work with rotating shifts in the library. It has to be said that a large part of librarians worked remotely, which had not been a wide-spread practice before. Many libraries employed the rotational system, with different methods of organizing shifts: alternating work on campus with remote work, or alternating shifts with “standby” – a mode without a precedent in the activity of Polish academic libraries.

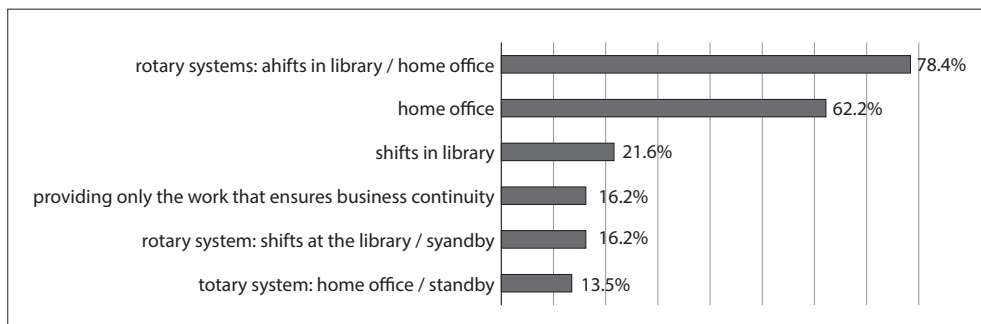


Fig. 7. Organization of work during the lockdown

The survey included questions about the specifics of remote work organization. It is not surprising that many librarians (at 54% of the libraries studied) relied on their own computer devices for work. In 19% of the libraries studied, the staff used their own devices. In a similar number (18%) of the libraries, the staff were provided with the required devices by the employer. Some libraries provided the staff not only with computer devices, but also with extra data plan.

What IT solutions were used to work remotely? The most common, implemented at more than a half libraries studies, were: VPN access to library servers (implemented at 59% of the libraries) and access via remote desktop (54%). Other solutions included the cloud (40%), as well as dispersed offline work, which was later “uploaded” onsite into the central system (19%). The majority of librarians was supported by the library IT specialists (at 49% of the studied libraries), or by the university IT department (40%). The survey also asked about the procedures for ensuring the safety of information processed over the course of online work (e.g., if the staff used their personal devices, did ensure the safety of their temporary place of work, did they lock their documents by password, and so on). It turns out that more than a half (51%) of the studied libraries had already developed relevant procedures, which proved adequate for the current situation. Every fourth library (24% of replies) had to update their procedures and adjust them to the lockdown conditions. In 10% of the libraries studied, the procedures were introduced as the situation developed. Surprisingly, a few libraries adopted no procedures to ensure the safety of information processed online – a state which continued until the time of writing this paper (July 2020).

The survey also encompassed the mode of work and, thus, the types of tasks performed remotely. The participants were asked to indicate on a scale which tasks were performed, and to what extent. Figure 8 shows the task which, according to the participants, were always or often performed remotely. It does not come as a surprise that the librarians prioritized communicating with the library users (89%) and maintaining social media accounts (86%) – these tasks dominated the remote work. Many librarians worked on documentation (65%), which usually involved completing the records of the scientific output of the library staff, as well as correcting the data collected in the Polish Scientific Bibliography (*Polska Bibliografia Naukowa*), which were to migrate to the new version of the system. They also prepared bibliometric analyses (59%) and library queries (54%). It is worth noting that in almost 60% of the libraries studied, librarians devoted this time to personal self-development. Other answers to the question were interesting as well. In many cases, librarians

were included in university e-learning teams and worked alongside university professors to prepare specific digital learning materials (written, audio, and audiovisual). Furthermore, they were developing procedures to ensure safety and other legal-organization tasks; they also purchased drop-boxes and prepared promotion materials.

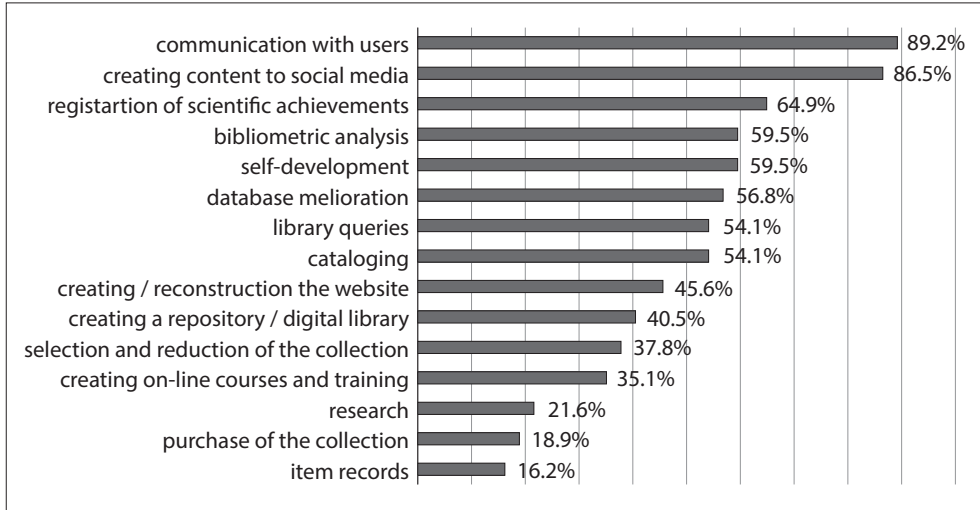


Fig. 8. Tasks performed remotely during lockdown

3.4. Problems, chances, challenges

Alongside investigating the principles which determined the organization of information and library processes, the research sought to identify the problems the directors faced in managing the academic libraries during lockdown. Figure 9 presents the issues which according to the directors came up always, very often, and often. It turns out that many problems were caused by the need to quickly develop new procedures in a VUCA environment, characterized by unpredictability which makes it impossible to form any long-term plans. Other issues included the perceived injustice of distribution of work between the employees, and the need to assign new meaningful tasks which the librarians may perform remotely. The dispersion of employees and the lack of physical contact made the directors feel that they did not have control over the situation, nor the tools to effectively motivate their staff. Responding to the open question, the directors additionally stressed the palpable lack of immediate contact with their staff (“social and emotional bonds”). They also mentioned the inflexibility of data base distributors and electronic platforms when it came to extending access to their resources, and the inadequacy of copyright in the current conditions.

Occasionally, the participants noted the lack of emotional stability among their staff. It justified the question whether the librarians were provided with mental health support. It turns out that in in most cases (at 78% libraries), they were not.

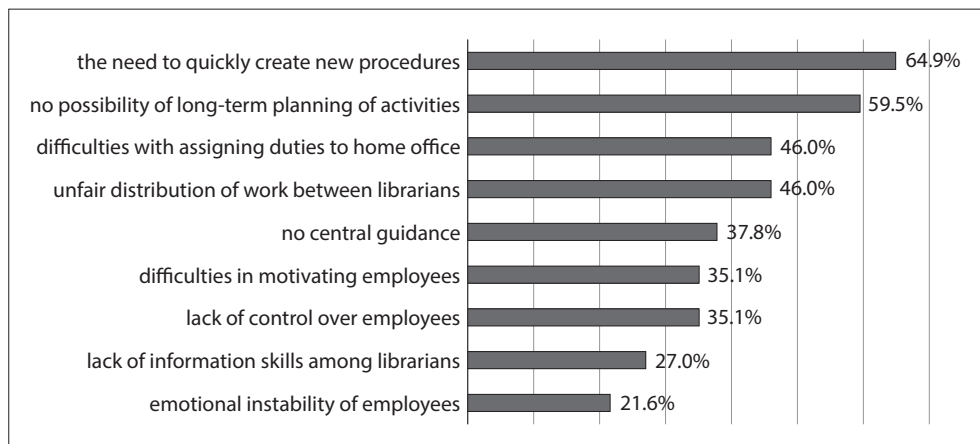


Fig. 9. Management obstacles at the academic libraries during lockdown

Without a doubt, it was difficult to manage an academic library during lockdown. It was equally difficult to prepare for the reopening following the central guidance and the imposed sanitary regime, ensuring the health of the librarians and the users, and fulfilling the users' information needs. The survey asked the participants to evaluate on a scale whether the process of "returning to normal" caused any problems. It turns out that there were no problems with securing financial means for the purchase of basic sanitary equipment (e.g. masks, face shields, plexiglass shields), nor with their timely introduction. However, the participants pointed out that it was difficult to secure funds required to implement additional safety measures, e.g. drop-boxes, or smoother organization of the processes made necessary by the sanitary regime. The participants also mentioned the "human" factor: the employees' anxiety about the return, and the sense that the tasks had not been distributed fairly. It is worth emphasizing that, according to the participants, the university authorities and library users accepted the rules libraries introduced after reopening.

Which management solutions implemented during the lockdown were successful, and which will be used in the future? Figure 10 presents the practices which, according to the participants – asked to evaluate the probability of implementing them in the future on the scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 meant none, and 5 absolute certainty) – had the probability of 3, 4, and 5. Without a doubt, remote work proved successful and this is confirmed by additional comments which the directors shared in their responses to the open question. The task-oriented approach, as opposed to work "from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m." also worked well; 62% of the participants expects these practices to be continue; 57% of the participants expect a further development of the IT tools and solutions, which facilitate the flow of information and documents, as well as make it easier to perform professional duties remotely. Organizational flexibility and rapid adjustment to the situation are also expected to be a part of future management processes. The participants emphasized the importance of close collaboration between the librarians and the university professors when it came to preparing didactic materials and groundwork for further research.

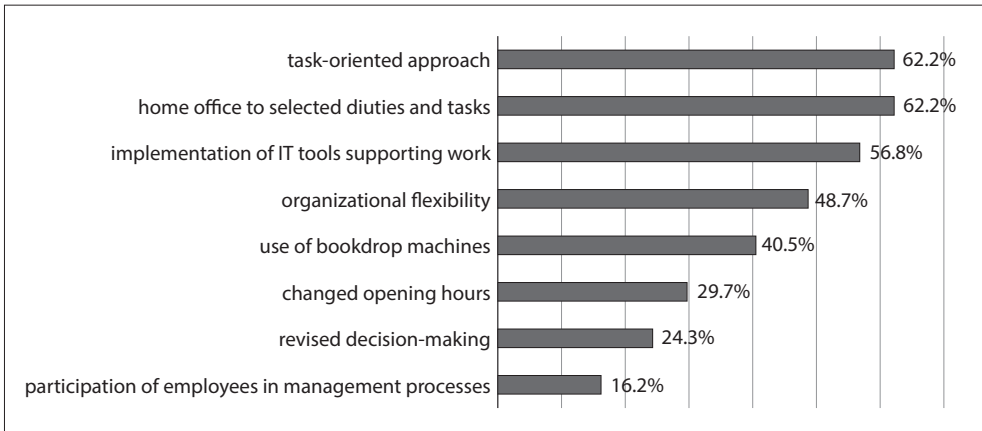


Fig. 10. The solutions introduced during the lockdown expected to return in the future

Finally, it is worth citing select answers to the open question about the “take-aways” from the lockdown regarding management, and additional comments and observations, which the participants shared. They offer an important conclusion to our discussion.

- *A lesson in efficient management, often without the superiors' support. Quite a practice in humility in the face of the employees' fears, without showing personal weaknesses and worries.*
- *The need for quick and meaningful decisions and reactions in response to sudden difficulties and predicting possible future problems.*
- *The library remains overstaffed.*
- *The threat of coronavirus forced us to change our system of work, to solve problems creatively, to react quickly to new needs; it is necessary to reevaluate current organizational solutions, rethink the ways in which the directors manage the team and communicate with them.*
- *Emotions cannot be ignored.*
- *It is necessary to assign tasks clearly and precisely, as well as to supervise them to their completion. The employees need to be in constant contact with their superiors.*
- *Remote work will be very useful in the future.*
- *Remote work is possible in a library; 50% of the staff may remote work on a permanent basis; only immediate service requires that the librarian is present. Purchases, cataloguing, base control, bibliometrics, scientific information – all these can be conducted online.*
- *1. Account for the development of a platform for remote work in future budget plans. 2. Plan a purchase of an outside drop-box. 3. Change the terms of the contract with PKN [Polish Committee for Standardization], giving the users the access to the subscribed content.*
- *The need to reorganize the collections in the open stacks – how they are accessed, to facilitate digital access, create an educational base founded on digital copies of documents, adjust the library's tasks to online teaching.*

4. Conclusions

Managing an organization under the conditions of VUCA – volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity requires a certain flair, but it is not impossible. Bob Johansen (2017) from The Institute for the Future established the “Vuca Prime” model, which recommends that the organizations responding to the conditions of VUCA counter them with Vision, Understanding, Clarity, and Agility. Johansen’s model should replace a specific and rigid plan; a manager’s responding to uncertainty should learn how to receive external feedback (from the employees, customers, suppliers). To cope with the complexity of the events, they should precisely define tasks and procedures, as well as collect information required to make a sound decision. Flexible and agile management of an organization under the VUCA conditions also involves experiments and tests combined with the capacity to adapt quickly and carry out reforms. Did the directors of Polish academic libraries acquire these skills?

The results of the study, and the following analysis, show that the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lockdown which the pandemic made necessary, forced the librarians to consider their organization from a new perspective. The directors coped well with certain challenges – they established a new model of work, where duties were performed rotationally, alternating between remote work and shifts at the library; they redefined the staff’s tasks; they took a flexible and task-oriented approach to work; made plans based on the analysis of the ongoing situation; developed a system of remote control and supervision and smoothly organized the processes relying on IT (often with the use of free tools). These and other practices were successfully implemented during this difficult period. In many ways, they embody Bob Johansen’s ideal. It is apparent that the managers sought a more flexible mode of work, appreciated the role of open communication and clearly defined tasks, attempted experiments and tests (assigning new duties and new tasks to those working remotely), and put more trust and responsibility in their staff.

The time of lockdown was also an opportunity for a critical re-evaluation of previous methods of management and organization of the information-library services, and inspired the directors to consider possible improvements. It turns out that the functioning of academic libraries, until now largely based on standard procedures, should be flexible, creative, and based on trust, too. It must use digital and IT solutions to a greater extent, even if this will require a purchase of a license. Many tasks can be successfully performed remotely, even if it seems that they would require the librarian to be physically present in the library. E-resources supplied by the distributors, or developed by the librarians collaborating with teachers might successfully replace the multi-thousand collections stored onsite. Inevitably, a question arises: after the libraries coped relatively well with the lockdown, is there any rationale behind their continued existence in their previous, “old” form? Is this not the moment where crisis creates an opportunity to permanently redefine the principles that shape the work of academic libraries?

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Zarządzanie bibliotekami akademickimi w Polsce w okresie lockdownu spowodowanym epidemią COVID-19

Abstrakt

Cel/Teza: Celem artykułu jest bliższe przyjrzenie się strategiom zarządczym w polskich bibliotekach akademickich podczas sytuacji kryzysowej na przykładzie lockdownu, a także wskazanie największych problemów utrudniających sprawne funkcjonowanie w niepewnej rzeczywistości VUCA. Okres lockdownu, wprowadzony w związku z epidemią COVID-19, rozumiany jest jako czas od 12 marca do początku czerwca 2020 r.

Koncepcja/Metody badań: Przeprowadzono badania metodą socjologiczną wśród dyrektorów bibliotek akademickich w Polsce, wykorzystując jako narzędzie kwestionariusz ankiety on-line; zwrotność ankiet na poziomie 30%. W ankiecie pytano m. in. o sposoby organizacji usług informacyjnych i bibliotecznych w okresie lockdownu oraz o bariery utrudniające procesy zarządcze.

Wyniki i wnioski: Wyniki badań wskazują, że zarówno dyrektorzy bibliotek akademickich, jak i bibliotekarze stanęli na wysokości zadania w tej konkretnej sytuacji kryzysowej. Wprowadzono zmiany w procesach świadczenia usług biblioteczno-informacyjnych, starając się skutecznie organizować pracę zdalną oraz zarządzać rozproszonym środowiskiem pracy. Do najczęściej wymienianych barier i problemów utrudniających zarządzanie zaliczyć należy: konieczność szybkiego stworzenia nowych zasad i procedur działania, brak możliwości długofalowego planowania oraz zmiany zakresów obowiązków. Wdrożono szereg rozwiązań, które w przyszłości mogą być nadal praktykowane,

m. in.: rotacyjna praca zdalna, większa elastyczność organizacyjna oraz zadaniowe podejście do obowiązków zawodowych.

Zastosowania praktyczne: Opracowanie procedur działania na wypadek ponownego lockdownu, określenie „dobrych praktyk”, zapoznanie się z doświadczeniami innych bibliotek akademickich w celu poprawy jakości własnych usług informacyjnych oraz optymalizacja procesów informacyjnych i bibliotecznych.

Oryginalność/Wartość poznawcza: To pierwsze tego typu badanie działalności polskich bibliotek akademickich w okresie lockdownu. Wyniki badań mogą być cennym głosem w dyskusji nad elastycznością organizacyjną bibliotek akademickich i umiejętnością dostosowywania się do zmian, a także nad przyszłością lub schyłkiem wybranych obszarów działania.

Słowa kluczowe

Biblioteki akademickie. Epidemia Covid-19. Lockdown. VUCA. Zarządzanie.

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