

SHORT

ARTICLES

FROM

CLOSED

DOORS

TO OPEN

GATES

M

oving the Library of the University of Arts into Digital Space

Albania
Miranda
Bakiasi



The Library of the University of Arts is a higher education, academic and cultural institution. It is the only one in Albania from which future artists graduate. It consists of three Faculties - of Music, Fine Arts and Scenic Arts - that include academic staff, full-time and part-time undergraduate and post-graduate students.

The Library of the University of Arts was founded in 1966. It is the largest and most important art library in Albania. Its mission is to support the teaching, art and education process by serving the university students, teachers, art researchers, artists of different art institutions and scholars all over the country. It holds various types of material in its collections (books, audiovisual, electronic resour-

ses). Its stock consists of about 40000 volumes, many being unique or rare items. Its main collections include music, a sound archive, drama and fine arts. The library has a staff of 7 people with considerable experience in the field of Art Librarianship. There are 1300 library members.

The mission of the Library is to support and assist the teaching process and to function as a centre of art in Albania. We wish to offer our users open and free information access. We are making every effort to change our Library from a traditional service library to a modern and up-to-date one, where new ways of education are offered. The Library vision is to be the portal of art in Albania.



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Uncommon
Culture

The Library seeks to develop its collections to support the teaching and research activities of the Academy by making accessible the outputs of the Academy, alongside content resources for undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral use.

The initial stock of the Library came from those of the Conservatory, National Theatre and various donations from different art funds. In recent years our collection has been enriched by donations from foundations such as Soros, the Swiss foundations Pro Helvetia and Arsimi, the British publishing house Emerson, the German Goethe Institute and from different Embassies in Tirana.

Collections of the Library are processed bibliographically and scientifically, in accordance with all the international standards using AACR2 (Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules), UDC (The Universal Decimal Classification), ISBD (International Standard Bibliographic Description). The main collections are:

- The music collection: reference collection, periodicals, music theory, scores and sheets, (instrumental parts, orchestral parts, operas, vocal parts, piano, etc.) and audiovisual materials (cassettes, CDs, bobbins);
- The drama collection: reference collection, books (drama theory), dramas, translations, comedies, Albanian and foreign literature and periodicals;
- The visual arts collections: reference collection, books (fine arts theory), paintings, sculptures, drawings, graphics, photos, ceramic and architecture.

Equally important are the theoretical undergraduate and postgraduate studies of the students and professors of the Academy. An important part of the stock is the manuscripts of the Albanian composers bought from the AAL.

For many years the library has been creating card catalogues manually but is now seeking to obtain an ILS (Integrated Library System). The Library seeks to develop its collections to support the teaching and research activities of the Academy by making accessible the outputs

of the Academy, alongside content resources for undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral use. The Library has previously won two projects from the Soros Foundation. The second of these made available an open stocks reading room and provided modern facilities (computers, printers, photocopying machines, scanners). The computers also have special art software installed. Since 2004, the Ministry of Education has supported the Library to develop the computerised management of its sound archive.

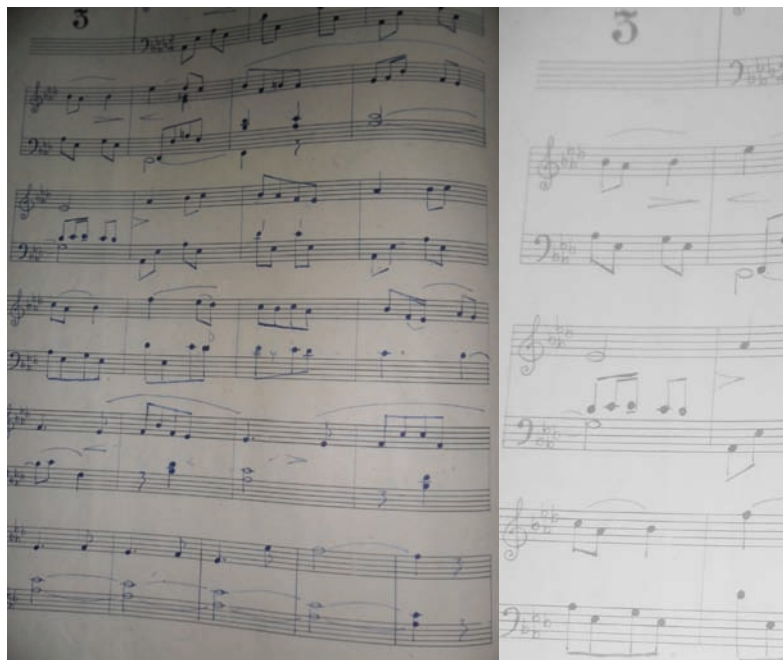
The library is a member of the EIFL Albania consortium, which benefits from electronic resources free of charge (e.g. Cambridge Journal on-line).

- EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) is an international not-for-profit organisation dedicated to enabling **access to knowledge** through libraries in more than forty-five **developing and transition countries** in Africa, Asia and Europe. All Albanian universities that are members of the consortium have access to the following commercial e-resources available free of charge through EIFL:

- BioOne - www.bioone.org - Access to 166 high-impact research journals from over 125 not-for-profit society publishers covering biological, ecological, and environmental sciences.

- Cambridge Journals Online - www.journals.cambridge.org - A multi-disciplinary collection of over 230 leading journals covering subjects including Science and technology, medicine, and the humanities and social sciences.

- IOPscience - www.iopscience.iop.org/journals - Access to 46 high impact journals covering a wide range of areas in science and engineering. Agreement end date 31 December 2010 (renewal under negotiation)



- OECD-iLibrary - www.oecd-ilibrary.org/ - A cross-searchable on-line library containing over 5000 e-books, 500 journal issues, 2500 working papers and 2200 multilingual summaries. Includes 22 statistical databases (including 300+ cross-searchable datasets and 4 billion data points)

The challenge:

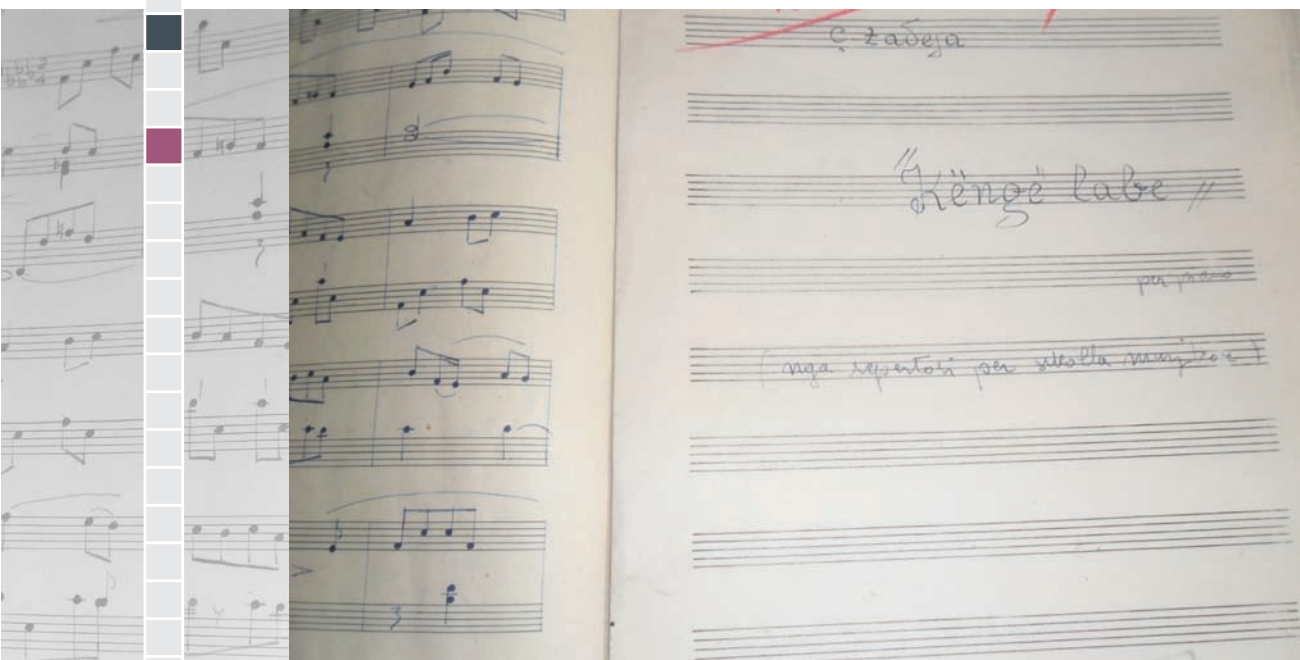
Helen M. Byamugisha (2010) said that the library world has undergone much re-thinking in the last quarter century by embracing the idea of the library without walls.

Countries with economies in transition, such as Albania, are faced with acute problems of limited access to scientific information caused mainly by high costs of scientific journals and the paucity of financing for libraries in the higher education sector. The potential benefits to be gained from adoption of rapidly emer-

ging global initiatives to provide open and free or affordable access to scientific information now provide especially promising ways to address this problem.

According to (Koehler, 2004), the book has undergone a series of changes that have made its storage and use more efficient. The changes include transitions in form from stone slab to papyrus scroll to acid free paper codex to electronic bits. Equally, Higher Education institutions all over the world are experiencing the need to manage their educational, research and associated assets more effectively and transparently than in the past. The technology of information is becoming increasingly dominant in the educational, cultural and commercial institutions through the processes of licencing, softwares, digital libraries, etc. The content is also becoming more interactive and multimedial.





According to Helen M. Byamugisha, (2010), the Internet is not a replacement for books, but it is imperative that libraries reposition themselves within their institutions in order to continue to ensure access to information, education, people, services and ICT.

Ongoing activities at EU level (such as the Bologna Process and the European Research Area) and at national level will give tangible benefits to those institutions that can demonstrate and exploit effective information strategies and systems. Progress made in this area to date in Albania is very limited.

One of the priorities of the Library is to automate the library service and utilise information technology in cooperation with other units of the university library network in order to provide access to internal and external resources and to provide quality services to users.

This is the reason why the conservation and preservation of this academic archive in a contemporary digital system has become a priority. At this time the Library suffers from outdated IT facilities. The digital audio stock room currently operates on Pentium III computers and a 300GB P IV server. The open stocks room operates on P III computers donated in 2000/2001 by the Soros Foundation through the project "Reorganizing of the Open Stocks Room at the Library. The LAN network built with the self-financing of the University in 2002 is obsolete and very inadequate for the needs of the institution.

So far, very little has been invested at the University of Arts in terms of information technology and computer networks. This institution remains one of the few Public Higher Education Institutions in Albania that does not have a stable computer network infrastructure at its disposition, where the lack of



computer labs and facilities constantly manifests itself.

The creation of the Digital Academic Archive at the University of Arts

Michael Lesk, (2005), in his book *Understanding Digital Libraries*, wrote that a digital library can be searched for any phrase; it can be accessed all over the world; and it can be copied without error. This is why digital libraries are coming. Digital information takes less space than paper information and thus may help libraries reduce costs.

This digital archive will contain academic and artistic activities, materials of recognized importance to cultural heritage, support for the teaching process, scientific research and works of the students, professors and art scholars, artistic activities, theatrical performances, exhibitions, concerts, biographies of the personalities and materials that cover the history of

the Academy of Arts, and so on. This Archive will aim to offer access to its vast catalogue both nationally and internationally.

The archive will contain:

The Faculty of Music:

- Scanned copies of musical sheets and scores of Albanian composers (approximately 950 pieces) and digitized music sheets of these pieces (which are currently endangered by the imminent ageing damage and loss)
- Biographies of the Albanian Music personalities
- The digital audio archive of Albanian and world music
- Concerts, activities of professors and students, student diplomas, in video material
- Graduate studies and works, post-graduate works, doctoral theses.

The Faculty of Scenic Art:

- Biographies of Albanian personalities in the field of Scenic Arts.





The Digital Archive of the University of Arts will be a first amongst our universities and art institutions. This project is believed to awaken the initiative of other institutions and later the coordination and distribution of information between them, by creating free access, flexibility and speed of the spreading of information for all users, wherever they are located. This archive will be of great importance not only to the University of Arts but also to artistic institutions in Albania, cultural investment, and national heritage. This archive will assist in managing and attracting intellectual capacities as a part of the strategy of information.

References:

- Performances, artistic activities of professors and students, in video material
- Etudes and projects of the Film profiling students
- Graduate studies and works, post-graduate works, doctoral theses.

The Faculty of Fine Arts:

- Storage of the Fine Art Gallery in digital format
- Exhibitions (images, video)
- Biographies of the Albanian personalities in the field of Visual Arts.
- Graduate studies and works, post-graduate works, doctoral theses.

According to Michael Lesk (in his book *Understanding Digital Libraries*) "Digital Libraries are going to change the social system by which information is collected and transferred. A digital library is not just a collection of disk drives; it will be part a culture".

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