

USE OF MOVABLE CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH LIBRARIES IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract

Research purpose. Cultural heritage in movable or immovable form contributes with its tools to the creation of a coherent and inclusive society. The cultural direction of the society should be built on the basic principles of inclusion, equality, participation and availability with the help of marketing and marketing communication. The aim of the contribution is, on the basis of the data database of culture, which is implemented by institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, to determine the use and sustainability of non-periodical publications registered in libraries in the Slovak Republic, which should lead to the creation and maintenance of mutual understanding between them and the public with the ultimate goal of supporting knowledge the society's potential.

Design / Methodology / Approach. The object of the research were 1738 libraries of the Slovak Republic, using the statistics for period 2016-2020. We used eighteen different indicators, such as „active library services users“, „library visitors“, etc.

Findings. There is a strong statistical dependence based on the obtained results for the research questions and the multiple correlation dependence between the number of libraries and indicators such as the number of book units, the number of loans, and the number of visitors. Because of this, it was possible to outline new recommendations to support the sustainability and development of public libraries in the Slovak Republic.

Originality / Value / Practical implications. Through the continuous generation of knowledge and data in this area, the research activity and results of this work could contribute to increased awareness of the importance of culture and the building of the society's good reputation. By developing a public relations communication tool, public administration institutions could significantly contribute to the development of knowledge potential not only in the Slovak Republic. This requires building relationship management and strengthening the communication of the investigated institutions towards the public with the intention of strengthening these ties.

Keywords: public relations, marketing, libraries, utilisation, sustainability, Slovak Republic

JEL: M31, H52, M14

Introduction

In 1954, the European Cultural Convention was negotiated in Paris between the members of the Council of Europe, to which the Czech and Slovak Federative Republics also agreed, which came into force on May 10, 1990. The General European Cultural Convention was also aimed at supporting the study of languages, history and the education of the other contracting parties and the education that is common to all of them, among the citizens of all member states of the Council of Europe and those other European states that accede to this convention. The convention also states that each contracting party will take appropriate measures to protect and promote the development of its national contribution to Europe's shared cultural heritage. As a learning society, the Slovak Republic is fully aware of the importance and impact of cultural heritage on the development of its country.

The goal of the paper is to find out the use and sustainability of libraries in the Slovak Republic on the basis of the data database of culture, which is implemented by the institutions under the establishment authority of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic.

Through the evaluation of eighteen measurable indicators for five years, by applying basic statistical methods such as standard deviation, variation range and multiple statistical dependence, we determined the extent of service use in 1738 libraries of the Slovak Republic, which also register non-periodical publications. Through 4 research questions, we searched for the causes of differences in their use and examined the justification for the existence of the number of these entities financed from public sources. Within the eight regions of the Slovak Republic, we determined the region with the minimum and maximum usability of these publications registered in libraries. Identifying the consequences of the difference in the use of non-periodical publications in regions with marginal minimum and maximum values resulted in recommendations that could support the development of these services.

Literature review

In the Slovak Republic, the establishment of libraries, the rights and obligations of libraries, the rights and obligations of library founders and library founders, the library system, the scope and performance of professional library activities, the declaration, registration, protection, making available, import and export of historical library documents and historical library funds regulated by Act 126/2015 Coll. on libraries and amendments to Act no. 206/2009 Coll. on museums and galleries and the protection of objects of cultural value and the amendment of Act of the Slovak National Council no. 372/1990 Coll. on offences as amended. From this legal regulation, it follows that "a library is a cultural, informational and educational institution that supplements, professionally registers, processes, preserves, protects, uses and makes available its library fund, provides library and information services, helps to satisfy cultural, informational, scientific research and educational needs of users and supports their lifelong learning, information literacy, creative personal development and linguistic diversity" (Zákon 126, 2015).

The contribution of literature is the identification of dependencies and assumptions about the relationship of selected variables within the employer brand-building process and the proposed methodological procedure for employer brand building (the EB Concept) that should contribute to the easier implementation of the employer brand-building strategy in the labour market. This methodological procedure is based on theoretical knowledge and the basis of available literature in building the employer's brand and the authors' practice. The methodological procedure can be applied to companies with different characteristics. They can be of different industries, different legal forms, the number of employees, and operating in the B2B or B2C market. The application of the methodological procedure requires support throughout the company. From the CEO through top management, middle management, and the employees themselves (Skýpalová et al., 2021).

One of the characteristics of business competitiveness is business performance. Managerial decision-making is one of the main factors that can affect a company's competitiveness. Financial and economic analysis is an inseparable part of financial management in the practice of business entities (Štefko et al., 2019).

Trends in the job market taking worker knowledge, abilities and skills into account show that the demand for qualified, experienced workers has been rising and that the trend will continue into the future. Accordingly, companies must put a life-long learning and development strategy in place so that even older employees (55+), the proportion of whom has been rising in organisations and the marketplace, may maintain their positions in the job market for as long as possible. Any efficient solution to demographic development in the enterprises studied here, however, must be based upon an overall change of attitude coming from both entrepreneurs and company leadership focusing on young employees, as well as older employees themselves, where their ability to pass on their experience to younger coworkers is stressed. Continuous development is important for both categories to maintain economic prosperity (Urbancová & Hudáková, 2015).

Population ageing is not a uniquely European problem but is now becoming a global issue. Such a change in demographic potential brings with it an increase in pressure not only on the provision of services, particularly in the social and health sectors, but also significantly affects public finances. In 2022, the population of post-productive age in Slovakia accounted for 17.85% of the total population, and the ageing index reached 110.95, corresponding to a declining age structure of the population. Compared to 2011, the number of pensioners in Slovakia increased by 40.31% (Papcunová et al., 2023).

Information literacy can be viewed from several perspectives. We can perceive it as a skill that has an impact on everyday life, as a competence in four different contexts: education, workplace, health and well-being, and civil society. Bellérová and Džuganová (2021) add that libraries fulfil the role of "a different kind of social reality (a three-dimensional kind), which by its very existence teaches a system of values that goes beyond the fiscal framework. They argue that libraries are not, or at least should not be, engines of productivity. They should slow people down and seduce them with the unexpected, the inconsequential, the strange and the inexplicable. Productivity is a destructive way of justifying the value of the individual in a system that is inherently communal; it is not an individualistic or entrepreneurial zero-sum game to be won by the hardest working. It is necessary to perceive them as a space for entrepreneurial education, a space for an alternative reality, where knowledge does not have to have a monetary value, and where learning is not motivated by profit (Mattern, 2014).

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, as an international body representing the interests of people who rely on libraries and information professionals (IFLA), issued the "Alexandria Declaration on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning", which clearly declares and highlights the importance of libraries. He considers libraries to be a gateway to knowledge, thinking and culture, which contribute to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom and help protect democratic values and general human rights. (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2010)

Lee Rainie said that many people struggle to find the most reliable information and express a clear hope that librarians in libraries can help them. His recent research also confirms that people are becoming "lifelong learners" and that library services can help them find ways to enrich their lives. It was based on Pew Research Center studies of the information and media sources people use and how they decide what to trust (Raine, 2017).

Three strategies for their development were developed to deal with the problems of Slovak librarianship. The last one related to the period 2015-2020, in which it is stated that "libraries provide irreplaceable services in the field of ensuring the cognitive, educational and cultural needs not only of individuals but also of society as a whole. Therefore, their all-round development is an important public interest". When evaluating the development of the number of libraries, it is stated that the trend of reducing the number of functioning public libraries is not unique to the Slovak Republic but that it is a development that has been recorded by most of the developed countries of the world, not only as a result of the economic crisis that has affected the world in previous years but also as a consequence of the changing environment, which is characterised by the rapid onset of modern information and communication technologies that are increasingly accessible to broad segments of the population and the onset of new types of library and information services based precisely on the use of modern technologies. It is, therefore, natural that libraries must respond to these developments and adapt to new conditions and requirements in order to survive in the competition of the ubiquitous online environment

and digital content. (Gonodová, 2015). Public libraries are a rare cross-section of the public sphere and third place, satiating community-based and political needs (Wood, 2021). In relation to communications, libraries can use branding to transform their patron admirers into the most enthusiastic information sharers or informal brand advocates. In addition, libraries can carefully build and maintain mutually beneficial community connections through effective brand advocacy using the STEPPS framework – Social currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical Value, and Stories. Each principle in this framework can help an organisation effectively communicate important messages and brands (Fraser-Arnott, 2022).

The strategic document "Strategy of the Culture of the Creative Industry of the Slovak Republic 2030" is designed as a framework strategic material for the entire field of culture and creative industry, while the division of culture and creative industry is the result of the cultural-historical development of the given country. In addition to areas traditionally belonging to culture (cultural core and cultural industry), it also includes areas that are part of the creative ecosystem, for example, design, architecture, advertising or support activities (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, 2022).

Table 1. Overview of the cultural and creative industries (Source: processed according to the Strategy of the Culture of the Creative Industry of the Slovak Republic 2030")

Sector	Industry	NACE name
Cultural core	Cultural heritage, archives and libraries	Activities of libraries and archives
		Activities of museums
		Operation of historical monuments and buildings and similar tourist attractions
	Visual art	Artistic creation
		Photographic activities
	Performing arts	Performing arts
		Supporting activities related to performing arts
		Operation of cultural facilities
	Craft production	Craft production
	Art education	Art education
Cultural industry		
Creative industry		

The main goal of cultural policy in the Slovak Republic is the creation, presentation, research and preservation of art, creative industry and cultural heritage, the result of which is a high-quality and accessible artistic and cultural offer and the positive socio-economic effects of culture. Individual sub-goals contribute to the fulfilment of the main goal of cultural policy. Among them is the goal: Developing a quality culture. We can measure the quality of cultural infrastructure by evaluating the quality of services of cultural institutions, for which it is necessary to establish objective standards for individual types of cultural institutions. In Slovakia, only public libraries currently have objective standards set, while the evaluation of the Slovak National Library from 2020 showed that the reading literacy of children decreases with age and does not improve over time. The assessment of the reading skills of 10-year-old children shows that Slovakia achieves better results than the average of OECD countries, but the remaining V4 countries achieved much better results. Scores in the measurement of 15-year-old children also indicate low reading skills. Out of 77 monitored countries, Slovakia ranked 41st, which represents the weakest results among the V4 countries. In the case of both measures of children's reading skills, Slovakia's results have stagnated over time. Slovakia has inherited a broad

cultural infrastructure and people's interest in culture and art but, at the same time, a reluctance to share culture. During the thirty years of independence, Slovak culture has failed to contribute to building a self-confident society that trusts itself and is not afraid to open itself to the world. An important part of Slovakia's cultural infrastructure is the library network, as each district has an average of 94 libraries. The cultural heritage of the Slovak Republic is the irreplaceable wealth of the state and its citizens; it is evidence of the development of society, philosophy, religion, science, technology, and art; how this wealth is used is the subject of research in this paper (Ministerstvo kultúry Slovenskej republiky, 2019).

Research Methodology

The aim of the contribution is to find out the use and sustainability of libraries in the Slovak Republic on the basis of the data database of culture, which is implemented by the institutions under the establishment authority of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic. The scientific research activity was focused on finding answers to the research questions:

- What is the temporal development of libraries and their branches in the Slovak Republic over a 5-year horizon?
- What is the interest in public library services in the selected research area?
- Is there a statistical dependence between the number of libraries and selected measurable indicators representing interest in public services?
- Which measurable indicators influence the use and development of movable cultural heritage in the context of public libraries in the region with the highest and lowest attendance?

For the purposes of this article, it is necessary to point out the territorial division of the Slovak Republic, which consists of 8 regions, namely: Prešovský (PO), Košický (KE), Banskobystrický (BB), Žilinský (ZA), Trenčiansky (TN), Trnavský (TT), Nitriansky (NR), Bratislavský kraj (BA).

To understand and mathematically describe the statistical dependence between quantitative statistical features, we used the method of regression and correlation analysis. Suppose that between the dependent variable Y and the explanatory (independently) variables X_i $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$ the dependence is described by the equation:

$$Y = f(X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k, \beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_k) + \varepsilon$$

- which we estimate: $y_j' = f(x_{1j}, x_{2j}, \dots, x_{kj}, b_0, b_1, \dots, b_k)$
- while the conditions of the classical linear model and the coefficients B_0, B_1, \dots, B_k are estimates of unknown parameters $\beta_0, \beta_1, \dots, \beta_k$.

We calculated multiple dependencies using Data Analysis in Excel. In the ANOVA section, we test the null hypothesis, which claims that the model we have chosen to explain the dependence (in our case, a multidimensional linear model) is not suitable. The alternative hypothesis claims the opposite. The F test is used to evaluate this claim. The value of Signification $F < 0.05$, i.e. We reject H_0 , which means that the model was chosen correctly. The library count regression function is $-165.55 + 0.000177x_1 - 0.00005x_2 + 0.000184x_3$.

The null hypotheses tested in this section relate to the significance of the locating constant (Intercept) and regression coefficients (b_1, b_2, b_3, b_4), with the null hypothesis claiming the irrelevance of the coefficient in question and the alternative hypothesis' significance. P-value will be used to evaluate these claims. If P-value is > 0.05 , the coefficient is statistically insignificant, and if P-value is < 0.05 , the coefficient is statistically significant (Matejková et al., 2015).

Results and Discussion

In the Slovak Republic, the establishment of libraries, the rights and obligations of libraries, their founders and their tasks are regulated by law. The library system in this space consists of libraries whose focus, scope and tasks are determined by the composition and specialization of the library collection and the scope of library and information services provided, in more detail in Table 2.

Table 2. Structure of the book system in Slovakia (Source: processed according to Act no. 126/2015 Coll.)

Breakdown criterion	Types of libraries	Founder
<i>In terms of focus and specialisation</i>	National Library	ministry
	Scientific Library	central body of state administration or legal entity under a special regulation
	Academic library	college and faculties
	Public library	municipality, self-governing region
	School library	organisational unit of a primary school, gymnasium, secondary vocational school, conservatory or school for pupils with special educational needs
	Special library	organisational unit of a legal entity, e.g. Slovak Library for the Blind of Matej Hrebenda in Levoča in Slovakia
<i>In terms of scope</i>	Nationwide	
	regional with regional jurisdiction	
	Regional	
	municipal or municipal	
	institutionally	

The development of the number of libraries in Slovakia over five years is provided in the following figure.

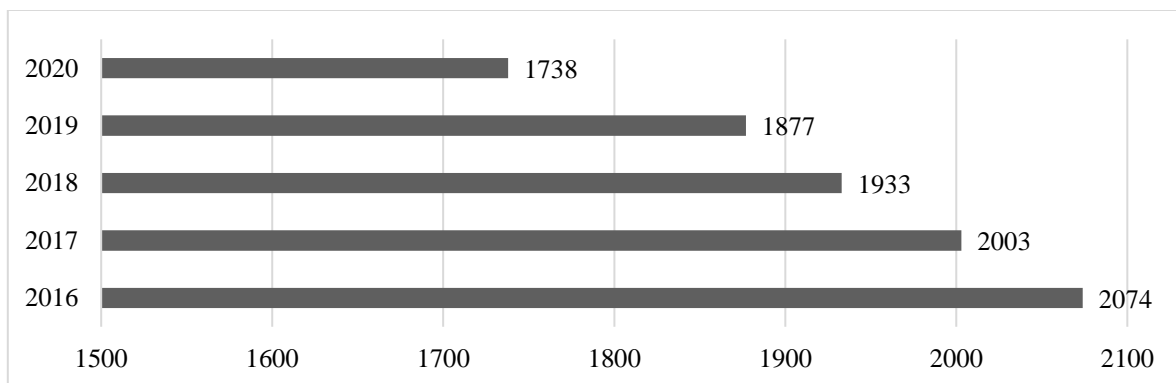


Fig. 1. Number of libraries and branches (Source: custom processing)

The number of libraries and branches has dropped 17% since 2016 from 2074 to 1738 in 2020. To find the answer to the second research question, we analysed the development of three indicators, namely the number of visitors, the number of book units and the number of borrowings. Figure 2 provides developments of the reported indicators over five years.

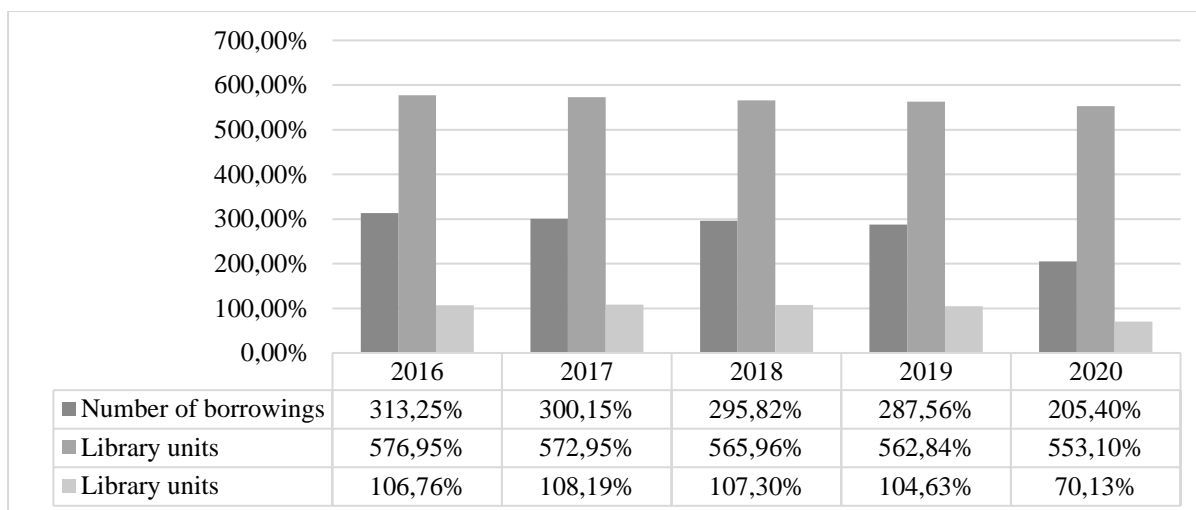


Fig. 2. Analysis of selected indicators in a time series (Source: custom processing)

The number of visitors declined from 5,933,437 in 2016 to 3,897,497 people in 2020, a decrease of 34%. The number of library units also decreased by 4% in the period under review, from 3,206,5952 in 2016 to 3,074,0562 in 2020. We also recorded a decrease in the number of borrowings by 34% in the period under review, from 1,7410,288 in 2016 to 1,1415,968 in 2020. These results prompted us to investigate the statistical dependence between the number of libraries and the indicators studied. The following table shows the results.

Table 3. Statistical dependence between selected indicators (Source: custom processing)

Regression Statistics						
Multiple R	0,788762					
R Square	0,622145					
Adjusted R Square	0,338754					
Standard Error	45,03221					
Observations	8					
ANOVA						
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F	
Regression	3	13355,9	4451,967	2,195358	0,0231142	
Residual	4	8111,6	2027,9			
Total	7	21467,5				
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	-165,552	131,7925	-1,25615	0,277423	-531,466	200,3632
Number of book units	0,000177	7,81E-05	2,260852	0,00866	-4E-05	0,000394
Number of borrowings	-5E-05	7,59E-05	-0,65721	0,005469	-0,00026	0,000161
Visitors	0,000184	0,000184	1,003939	0,037221	-0,00033	0,000694

There is a strong statistical dependence between the number of libraries and the selected indicators (number of book units, number of loans, number of visitors) (0.78). The variability of the variables explained is 62.21%. The model as a whole is statistically significant, which implies that we have chosen the multiple linear function correctly (Significance F $0.02 < 0.05$). If we increase the number of book units by 10,000, then the number of libraries increases by 1. If we increase the number of loans by 100,000, the number of libraries will decrease by 5, and if the number of visitors increases by 10,000, the number of libraries will increase by 1.

Based on the results, we expanded the spatial research. We found out in which region the library is most visited by the percentage of the number of visitors to the population of the region. Figure 3 in detail.

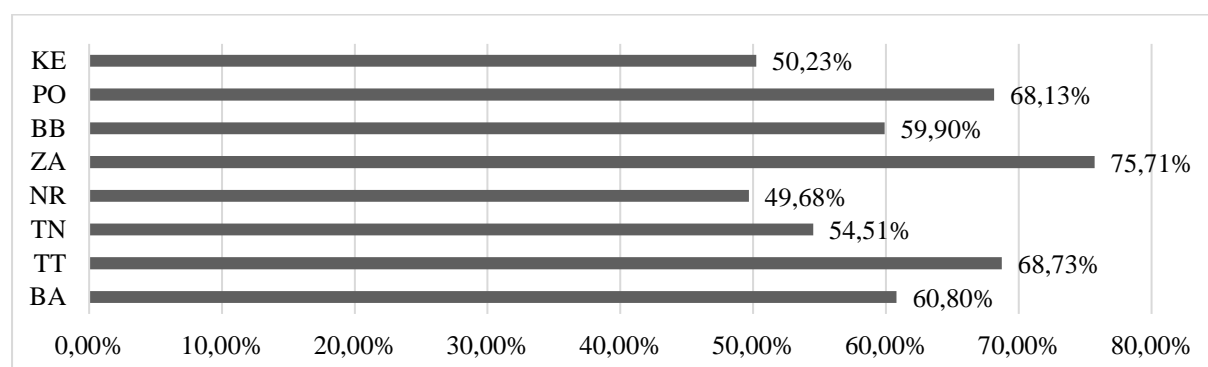


Fig. 3. Percentage of visitors to the population in 2020 (Source: custom processing)

The maximum value of the percentage of visitors to the number of inhabitants in 2020 is reached in the Žilina region at 75.71%. The minimum value reached in the Nitra region is 49.68%. Results can affect several indicators. The following table provides us with a conversion of the above indicators to the population of a particular region.

Table 4. Percentages of individual indicators per population in 2020 (Source: custom processing)

Country	Number of libraries	Number of book units	Number of borrowings	Visitors
Nitra region	0,03%	323,37%	172,11%	49,68%
Žilina region	0,03%	293,11%	264,28%	75,71%

In search of an answer to the research question: Which measurable indicators influence the use and development of movable cultural heritage in the context of public libraries in the region of the Slovak Republic with the highest and lowest attendance? We have used and processed data from a publicly available database.

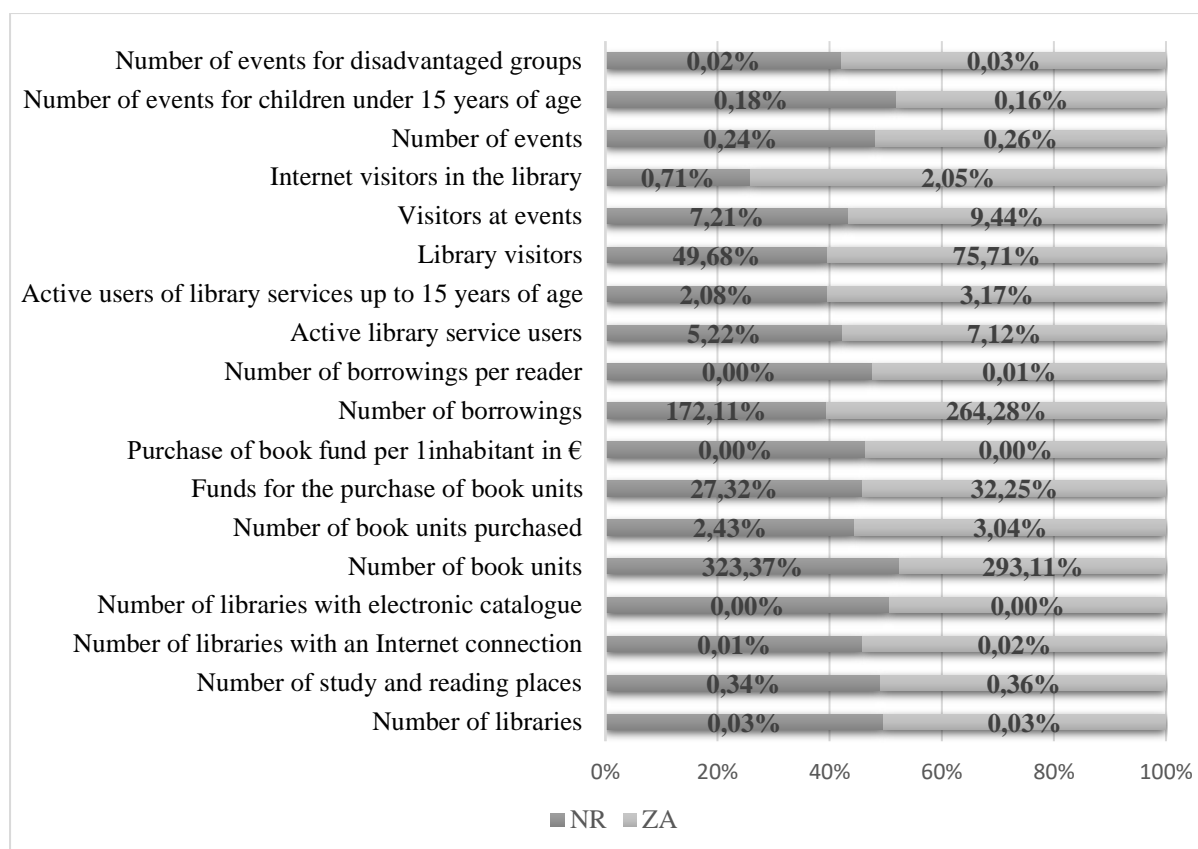


Fig. 4. Percentage of selected indicators declaring the use of movable cultural heritage in the selected area for 2020 (Source: custom processing)

We concluded that the highest values of indicators in the Žilina region are as follows: number of borrowings (1,827,526), number of purchased book units (21,014), number of visitors using the internet in the library (14,159), and number of libraries with an internet connection (122). In the Nitra region, the highest values of indicators are the number of book units (2,180,531) and the number of events for children under 15 years of age (1190). Statistical analysis of the variables we selected has not yet been the subject of research in Slovakia or abroad. However, it partially answers imaginary questions: "Do we want or need public libraries?"

Despite some hasty predictions about the threat and inevitability of replacing physical libraries with virtual libraries, new library buildings continue to be built worldwide, with an increasing number of printed book collections. Instead of information technology replacing libraries, information technology went beyond libraries. Each type and size of the library comes with its own interests and requirements, expecting to be appealed to by its technology products.

While library service platforms may be suited to a growing set of libraries, any data that demonstrates the types of libraries that use a given product can be useful as libraries consider their options (Chov, 2015).

Results and Discussion

The outlined research provides answers to the research questions asked, namely: Analysis of the development of the number of libraries in the comparative period showed a decrease of 17%. Between 2016 and 2020, library units decreased by 4%, and the number of borrowings fell by 34%. From the territorial point of view within the regions of the Slovak Republic, the least interest in the provided library services was in the Nitra region, and the highest interest in these services was in the Žilina region. In the Žilina region, the library is the most visited, 75.71% and the lowest is in the Nitra region,

49.68%. From the results of the statistical dependence of the number of libraries on the number of book units, the number of borrowings and the number of visitors, one can also declare an opinion regarding the future period. We found that the number of libraries depends on the number of visitors, which is 0.000184, and the number of book units is 0.000177. If the number of visitors increased by 10,000, we could add 1 library per year. One library can be considered if 10,000 units are added to the library. Despite published predictions about the threat and inevitability of replacing physical libraries with virtual libraries, new library buildings continue to be built worldwide, with an increasing number of printed book collections. Instead of information technology replacing libraries, information technology has moved to libraries. This view is complemented by Chov, who argues that each type of library comes with its own interests and considers technology products within its capabilities but expects to be approached by its technology products (Chov, 2015).

In 2014, the results of several years of research on the role of libraries in the lives of Americans and their communities were published, with a particular focus on millennials, a key stakeholder group that influences the future of communities, libraries, book publishers, and media creators of all kinds (Zickuhr & Rainie, 2014). The results of the research were remarkable. Three different "generations" of younger Americans with different book-reading habits, library use patterns, and attitudes toward libraries were identified. One 'generation' is made up of secondary school students (aged 16–17); another is of college age (18-24), although many do not attend college. Moreover, the third generation is 25-29. While millennials' lives are full of technology, approximately 98% of those under 30 use the internet, and 90% of these internet users say they use social networking sites. More than three-quarters (77%) of younger Americans have a smartphone, and many also have a tablet (38%) or e-reader (24%). About 43% said they read a book — in any format — daily. Most younger Americans know where their local library is, but many say they are not familiar with all its services. This research, which focused on younger Americans' library usage habits, was complemented by examining attitudes toward public libraries and the extent to which they value libraries' roles in public communities. The results of such research showed that teenagers (ages 16-17) are more likely to read printed books, use the library for books and research, prefer to borrow books rather than buy them, and assume they will receive recommendations for reading books. Persons aged 18-24 use the services of public libraries less and are more likely to purchase the books they read. Persons aged 25-29 years read books the least.

This post has its limits. In order to respect the scope of the contribution, it was focused on the quantitative development of the number of libraries, book units, etc., not looking for further context and consequences of this state. The causes of this condition need to be further investigated, as well as consumer behaviour and the use of these services in the context of different generational types, e.g. from the baby boomers generation to the alpha generation.

The future of libraries as a physical "place" has been the subject of much scholarly reflection and debate. The information or knowledge society, also known as the electronic age, brings with it radical changes in library buildings and their focus. We are witnessing changing library buildings with dominant library collections and library shelving into hybrid libraries that will combine physical and digital library information services. Their role will continue to fulfil their mission towards the public and to provide quality services promoting knowledge, education and culture to the widest possible range of users in an innovative form that builds on their traditional functions but adapted to the changed conditions of the 21st century.

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