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75 ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF THE AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY – PLOVDIV

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Abstract

The article presents the history and the development of the University Library of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv for a period of 75 years from its establishment until the present day. It is one of the oldest specialized agricultural libraries in Bulgaria. The University Library was opened in 1945, together with the opening of the University of Plovdiv. The Library of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv is the first university library in Bulgaria that has begun introducing ICT in its activities. Since 1978 the Library has used an Automatic information system for Bibliographical references. In 1986 the automation of the library processes began.

In 2020 the Agricultural University – Plovdiv celebrated its 75th anniversary and its Library gradually established itself as one of the richest specialized agricultural libraries in Bulgaria.

Keywords: *academic libraries, university library, Agricultural University, Plovdiv, history of libraries, anniversary*

INTRODUCTION

In 1945, based on the Regent's Council Decree No 180 of August 4th the first State University "Paisii Hilendarski" was founded in Plovdiv with two Faculties: of Medicine and of Agronomy and Forestry. Later Faculty of Agronomy and Forestry set the foundations of the present Agricultural University.

In 1950 the University was divided into two independent educational institutions – the Higher Institute of Medicine "Iv. P. Pavlov" and the Higher Agricultural Institute "Vasil Kolarov" with three faculties: Viticulture and Horticulture, Agronomy and Agriculture and Technology and with a teaching staff of 41 people, incl. 7 professors, 9 associate professors and 25 assistants, of which - 5 held a PhD degree (Staykov, 1971).

Even today the Agricultural University – Plovdiv is the only specialized state university in Bulgaria in the area of agricultural sciences with a national and international high

reputation.

The University Library was established as an auxiliary service sector to the Higher Agricultural Institute "Vasil Kolarov". Gradually, it established itself as one of the richest specialized agricultural libraries in Bulgaria.

THE BEGINNING (1945-1970)

Among the first keepers of the Library (1945-1967) were Atanas Milchev, an Associate Professor at Sofia University, Stoyan Indzhev and Rusin Filipov.

In 1945-1947 **Atanas Milchev** organized a library at the "Paisii Hilendarski" State University in Plovdiv. He was appointed the first librarian and set up a fund of books and periodicals in the two main profiles (medical and agronomic).

The Plovdiv University Library was built similarly to the University Library in Sofia and used its rules. It occupied the teachers' room



of the former Trade High School, where the entire University was situated.

Stoyan Indzhev and **Rusin Filipov** were erudite library specialists, Directors of the Plovdiv Regional Library, who laid the foundations of the library work in Southern Bulgaria.

In 1946-1959 **Rusin Filipov** worked at the Higher Agricultural Institute, and in 1947 he was appointed as a curator of the Library. Thanks to him, in just three years, the Library had become a significant unit serving teachers and students with the most necessary materials for teaching and research. He was Director of the Library from 1947 to 1964. Then the librarians were only four.

In the beginning, the Library worked on an area of 130 square meters, with two staff members, 40 reading seats and 1535 volumes of books (Picture 1). The priority of the library workers was the formation of the library funds through donations and purchases. In 1960 the Library took the first steps to organize book exchanges with foreign universities and research institutes (Table 1).



Picture 1. The first Reading room

In the 1950s the library fund increased significantly, and it reached 28,449 volumes. The absence of a separate building created difficulties. In 1953 the Higher Agricultural Institute was divided into two independent institutes - the Institute of Food Industry and the

Higher Agricultural Institute with two faculties: agronomy and viticulture and horticulture, located in the building of the former French college "St. Augustine". This also required that the books be constantly moved from the building of the former Trade school in the former French college to its particular place in the Higher Agricultural Institute in the 1960s.

An interesting fact from the history of the Agricultural University and its Library is that the famous Bulgarian writer **Dimitar Dimov** was a Professor of anatomy and physiology of domestic animals. He was a lecturer at the Agricultural University. His famous novel "*Tyutyun*" (*Tobacco*) was written at the University in 1951.

In 1954 the university newspaper *Kolarovets* began publishing, named after the then patron of the Higher Agricultural Institute, Vasil Kolarov. Many students became newspaper correspondents. Their notes in the newspaper about the use of the reading rooms, the working hours, the organization of the library fund are interesting. The last issue of *Kolarovets* newspaper was published in 1997 under the name *Niva*.

The new specialists of the Institute were trained mainly in the reading room of the Library. Despite the insufficient number of reading seats, the library fund of textbooks exceeded 700 volumes. Then the Library started work from 7.30 am to 8.00 pm, and at the request of students, during a session it stayed open until 10.00 pm. This students' request was published in the university newspaper *Kolarovets* in 1963 (issue 4).

The Library of the Agricultural University was developing very fast with a tendency to grow into a scientific one. In 1960 it was reorganized into two departments and one central Library. The latter was divided into four sectors: bibliographic and information sector; library acquisition and book exchanges sector; the technical services division of physical processing of library materials, classification



and cataloguing, and book distribution sector.

In 1967 a qualitative change in the work of the Library occurred. Then it was transferred to the newly built educational complex and occupied the specially constructed and furnished book depositories. The material and technical base were quite good: a reading room for students, a separate, independent reading room for teachers, enough rooms for the staff. For its library and information activities, the Library at the Higher Agricultural Institute was then repeatedly chosen as the country's leader among the university libraries.

In the period 1965-1976, the director of the Library was **Hristina Bogdanova**, and the library had five employees (Table 1).

For the first 25 years since the establishment of the Library, there has been an increase in the book fund, as the number of books has increased 80 times, and the number of received journals has increased more than 27 times (Table 1). The number of foreign journals has risen significantly. While in 1950, 162 volumes were obtained from 8 countries, but in 1970, 509 issues were received from 33 countries (Staykov, 1971).

Table 1. Library development in numbers (1945-1970)

Indicators	1945	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970
Library fund	1535	28 449	50 684	50 094	63 428	80 002
Books	-	-	44050	42315	49092	59756
Periodicals	-	247	6634	7779	14336	20296
Readers	-	-	-	-	-	-
Library area space (sq.m.)	130	-	-	-	294	387
Reading rooms	1	-	-	-	2	3
Reading seats	6	-	-	-	80	80
Library staff	2	-	-	-	5	7

Methods and forms of service (1945-1970)

With each passing year, the forms of service for students and teachers were improving:

- Conducting courses to use textbooks;
- Publishing reference books for books purchased in the Library;
- Preparation of a bibliographic reference list of literature;
- Preparation of a thematic card-index;
- Publishing of information sheets;
- Reading room service;
- Assistance to graduates and doctoral

students;

- Organizing book exhibitions in connection with the celebration of anniversaries.

LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT (1975-1995)

A special boom characterizes the second period of the Library's development. During the period 1970-1989 the Library, the printing base and the photo laboratory were united in a single center with the main task to be entirely in the service of the educational process and research work.



After Hristina Bogdanova, **Hristo Naidenov** (1977-1986) was appointed as Director of the Library. He successfully coordinated the units in the information center, namely the Library, the printing base and the photo laboratory. Among other things,

Naidenov turned out to be an up-and-coming leader and in his time the Library became a leader among the university libraries in Bulgaria.

In 1990 the library staff increased to include 17 specialists (Table 2).

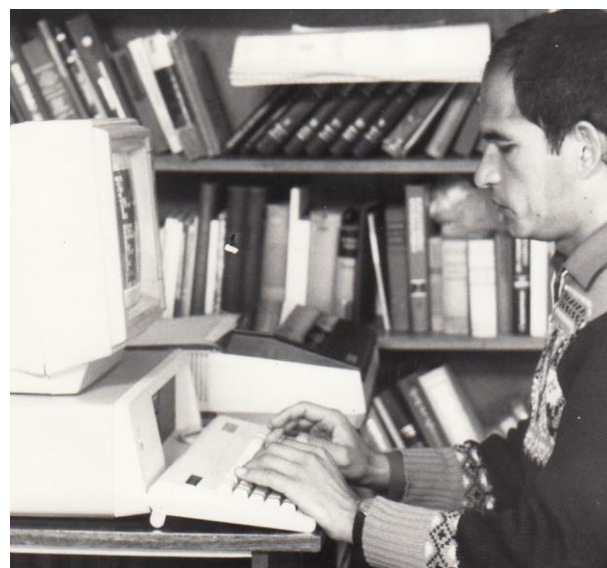
Table 2. Library development in numbers (1975-1995)

Indicators	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Library fund	102648	139792	187955	221968	220606
Books	73663	100860	132930	160994	157897
Periodicals	28985	37016	50813	56966	58591
Readers	-	3200	3700	4040	-
Library area space (sq.m.)	880	1006	1006	1006	1006
Reading rooms	3	3	3	3	3
Reading seats	94	94	94	94	94
Library staff	9	11	12	17	17

For a short time, in the period 1987-1990, the Director of the Library was **Lalka Toseva**, and from 1990 to 1996 the management was taken over by **Georgi Tsenkin**.

In 1971 the bibliographic reference and information department was established.

The selective dissemination of information (SDI) is emerging as the most effective form of the information needs of researchers. This service covers individual users who are informed weekly about the scientific publications they are interested in. In 1977 more than 1000 signals were sent, and in 1978 their number increased to 2500. The same year the beginning of introducing an automatic information system for information services to library users was considered (Picture 2).



Picture 2. Automated information system, 1978

By 1979, the book exchange with foreign and related institutions accounted for 15% of the total amount of literature acquired (750 volumes of library materials per year, including 135 titles of periodicals, 56 titles of



journals and 200 monographs). It covered 311 academies, research institutes, agricultural higher education institutions and other organizations from 32 countries: Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, Japan, USA, Canada, Morocco, Algeria, Mozambique and others (Gorbanova, 1979).

Due to this reason, the Library possesses valuable editions such as: "*Workshop on Morphology and Systematic Botany*" in German from 1904, "*Handbook of Botany*" from 1819, the American journal "*Phytopathology*" from 1911 and others.

Since 1983 the Library of the Higher Agricultural Institute is a permanent member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the International Association of Agricultural Information Specialists (IAALD) (Staykov, 1995).

In 1986, the automation of the library processes began.

Since 1992 the Library has used the specialized library software "Automated Library" of PC-TM Company. The number of computer workplaces was seven.

Methods and forms of service (1975-1995)

After 1971 the University Library already has three specialized reading rooms: a student reading room with 70 seats, a periodical reading room with 24 seats and a bibliographic cabinet – 18 seats (Picture 3).

The methods and forms of service were significantly facilitated and improved after introducing the automation of library processings:

- Databases of newly acquired literature;
- A monthly bulletin of new literature is published;

- Preparation of bibliographic references with a microcomputer;
- Translation services;
- Expanding a book exchange in Bulgaria and abroad;
- More than 800 cultural events were held;
- Training sessions for using library resources;
- Publications in the daily and periodical press and others.

At that time, the traditional catalogues¹ were functional and helpful.



Picture 3. Student reading room, 1981

LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT (2000-2020)

In November 2000 the Higher Institute of Agriculture was transformed into the Agricultural University - Plovdiv by a Decision of the 38th National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, published in SG no. 35 of April 10th, 2001. There are four faculties - Agronomy, Viticulture, Plant protection and Agroecology, Economics.

The growth of the Institute into a University and the increase in its prestige among the Bulgarian higher education institutions turned out to be favorable for the Library as well.

In the period 1997-2006 the Director of the University library was **Ekaterina**

¹ Today, they include editions until 1986 only.



Anastasova. At that time, the university library was involved in a large-scale project under the World Bank education loan. Higher schools from Plovdiv were participating in the project. The project's main goals were related to the renewal of the equipment and information systems of the university libraries and their integration into a unified information service system. This simplifies the work in the Library and allows more computer workstations to be

opened for free access. Library information is integrated into the general Internet environment of the University in the form of online catalogues and search engines.

In 1996 an analytical description of articles from scientific journals began. In the same year, the library database *Biobibliography* of the academic staff of the Agricultural University is introduced.

Table 3. Library development in numbers (2000-2020)

Indicators	2000	2005	2010	2015	01.01.2020
Library fund	223099	220762	210775	199127	190914
Books	162826	159270	149007	-	-
Periodicals	58156	61188	61413	-	-
Readers	2735	2915	2223	1640	771
Library area space (sq.m.)	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200
Reading rooms	3	3	2	2	2
Reading seats	75	75	45	45	75
Library staff	17	8	4	4	4

In 2007, when the library director was **Svetla Kukleva**, the University Library participated in the Ministry of Education and Science project, *Building an effective system for modern scientific and information services of agricultural sciences - National Agricultural Scientific and Information Complex (NASIC)*. The project included the expansion and modernization of information services, shared subscriptions to foreign online databases, building a network for information exchange and a standard Internet portal.

The number of librarians employed by the University Library was gradually decreasing over the years. In 2008 there were eight persons, and in 2011 only four librarians worked (Table 3).

The trend continued in the coming years. Since 2017 the Library has been managed by

Dr. Petya Georgieva and by 2020 the entire staff included only four librarians (Table 3).

The reduction of the library staff creates difficulties in performing some library activities such as completing the inventory of the library fund and managing loan services. Nevertheless, the library services and the material and technical base are constantly modernized (Picture 4).

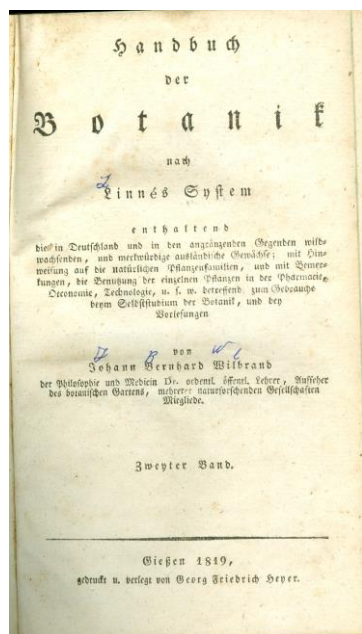
The Library collections are developed according to the academic profile. In 2020 the library fund included 190 914 volumes of scientific publications in the field of agricultural sciences (agronomy, viticulture and horticulture, plant protection, agricultural economics and agricultural tourism worldwide). The library collection includes: books (monographs, conference papers, guides, handbooks, textbooks and workbooks),



reference books, bachelor and master theses and dissertations, periodicals, CD, personal collections of works of famous researchers, rare and valuable editions - includes library items from 1878-1944, books in specific languages in the field of agricultural sciences (Picture 5). The collection is characterized by a linguistic diversity, with documents written in Bulgarian, English, French, German, Russian and others (Table 3).



Picture 4. Loan office, 2020



Picture 5. Handbuch der Botanik, 1819

Methods and forms of service (2000-2020)

The methods and forms of service are expanded and upgraded every year.

Since 2000, the bibliographic and information services in the Library covers the following activities:

1. Loan Service - borrowing library items for home.

1.1. Since 2017 *My library* function is introduced – borrowing, renewing and requesting library items 24/7 online.

1.2. Interlibrary Loan for borrowing library items.

1.3. Since 2018 *New books* newscast is introduced.

2. Bibliographic references on the topic - contain books, articles from periodical publications from the Library Catalogue, and Catalogues from other libraries.

3. Librarian Assisted to use library resources.

3.1. Librarian Assisted Access to Databases.

3.2. Scientometric analysis from Web of Science and SCOPUS databases.

3.3. Since 2020 the citation analyse from the Citation bibliographic system of the Library catalogue are introduced.

4. Trainings - The Library organizes training sessions for building students information literacy skills. The sessions are open to students, lecturers and PhDs of the Agricultural University Plovdiv.

5. Technical services - usage of specialized software products, free internet access, scanning.

6. Access to online databases:

6.1. AGRIS - FAO International Information System (1975-2001).

6.2. Environmental Management (1984-1999).

6.3. Springer Link Journals - full-text databases.

6.4. VINITI - online reference database of the Russian Institute of Scientific and Technical Information.



6.5. EBSCO (since 2003) – Academic search ultimate.

6.6. CAB ABSTRACTS (since 1990) - contains information from all CAB reference journals in the fields of agriculture, forestry, aspects of human health, human nutrition, animal health, as well as the management and conservation of natural resources.

6.7. CABI - full-text databases of articles and books on agriculture and the environment.

6.8. Subscription to the online scientific journals in the field of agricultural sciences.

7. Grammarly system (since 2017) – verification of contextual spelling, grammar, style, the punctuation of scientific texts in English, and plagiarism check.

8. Since 2018 *the Digital Library* database is created – it contains rare and valuable Bulgarian editions from 1878 to 1944.

9. In 2021 *the Scholar Electronic Repository* of the Agricultural University Plovdiv was created. It is an institutional digital repository for the dissemination and storage of the scientific publications and research outputs of the AU academic staff.

The University library is a legal member of the Bulgarian Information Consortium (BIC), a collective member of the Bulgarian Library and Information Association (BLIA) and a member of the Foundation National Academic Library and Information System (NALIS). Since 2017, it is a member of the International Standard Identifier for Libraries (ISIL).

CONCLUSION

The Library of the Agricultural University Plovdiv is now 75 years old – having its beginning in one millennium, development and present in another, and meanwhile successfully passing the transition from the book catalogue to the electronic one. It follows all modern trends in the library profession throughout its history and adequately meets its

users' needs. Thirty years after the establishment of the University, the Library introduced information and communication technologies. And today, even in the conditions of a global pandemic of COVID-19, when the whole world lives in uncertainty and lack of motivation, the University Library declares itself with the introduction of necessary and essential services for its academic community.

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