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RELIGION IN THE GLOBAL CRISIS OF THE LATE MODERN PERIOD
An Outlook from Serbian Academic Librarianship

***Abstract**: This paper is focused on religion in the e-environment of Serbian academic librarianship. The author of this article had in mind the global crisis in the late modern period. In the world crisis caused by the problems of different nature, religion has its unavoidable place in each society. As far as the influence of religion in society is concerned, human connection to church, confession and customs, it would be realistic to expect that a reader will look for materials which refer to religion in period whose main characteristics are global difficulties and fear. The theoretical framework of this paper is library-information one. The method used is a synthesis combined with the empirical method. It is a fact that COBISS.SR exists as a Cooperative On-line Bibliographic System and Services of Serbia. This fact had impact on the selection of synthesis as the method used in this article. Technical improvements and skills make the retrievals of the cumulative e-catalogue COBISS+ possible. A high number of Serbian academic libraries from all scientific domains are included into COBISS.SR.*

***Keywords:** religion, global crisis, academic librarianship, e-catalogues, Serbia*

РЕЛИГИЈА У ГЛОБАЛНОЈ КРИЗИ КАСНЕ МОДЕРНЕ
Поглед из српског академског библиотекарства

Сажетак*: *Овај рад је фокусиран на религију у е-окружењу српског академског библиотекарства. Аутор овог чланка имао је на уму глобалну кризу касне модерне. У светској кризи изазваној проблемима различите природе, религија има своје неизбежно место у сваком друштву. Што се тиче утицаја религије у друштву, људске везе са црквом, вером и обичајима, било би реалистично очекивати да ће читалац потражити грађу која се односи на религију у периоду чије главне карактеристике јесу глобалне тешкоће и страх. Теоријски оквир овог рада јесте библиотечко-информациони. Коришћени метод је синтеза у комбинацији са емпиријским методом. Чињеница је да COBISS.SR постоји као Кооперативни онлајн библиографски систем и сервиси Србије. Та чињеница имала је утицај на избор синтезе као метода коришћеног у овом чланку. Техничка побољшања и вештине чине претраживања кумулативног е-каталога COBISS+ могућим. Висок број српских академских библиотека из свих научних домена је укључен у COBISS.SR.

***Кључне речи:** religija, globalna kriza, akademsko bibliotekarstvo, e-katalozi, Srbija.*

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Introduction

Human mind has never achieved to find a solution for all problems. Despite human wisdom, the problem of inequality in capitalism as well as in socialism stayed unsolved. The problems of a class society which were existing during the history of mankind are still existing nowadays. They existed in the age of slavery, in feudalism, in capitalism, in socialism also until today. The crisis of moral appears in each society.

It is under the pressure of poverty that man was travelling to another continent looking for better living conditions. Caravans were moving down the Silk Road, horses were galopping, camils were transfering burden. Numerous crusades were going on. Swords were being used in battles. Despite all of that a sacred silence rained in church. The scent of candles was being felt, prays were being pronounced silently or loudly, in a mass or separately in that deep, sacred silence, in a temple and in a sanctuary, in a convent and in a monastery. A man was getting hidden into that silence from unjustice in order to remove burden from his own sole, to look for a friend maybe in the personnality of a priest who would have listened to his confessional and said words.

After all positive that had been written about it, the term of the catholic Church gets connected also to the term of the sexual humiliation of children that was being mentioned many times in the contemporary age (BBC, 2021). Besides all, even the heighest achievements of the Byzantine Empire, the term of the Orthodox Church is also connected to all those negative phenomena pronounced about it in mass media including the stealing of money by priests from the „Saint Sava“ Temple in Belgrade (Kurir, 2015). Except everything positive that is written about Islam, it is being connected in a way to the phenomenon of extremism in those parts of the world where the thought on the Black Califate was formed with very ambitious intentions to subordinate numerous European countries where Christian inhabitants are numerically dominant (Kurir, 2015).

Near the end of the 14th century and at the beginning of the 15th century Church was earning money by selling a paper entitled *forgiver*. A person who had commited a sin would have paid certain amount and the sin was forgiven. A fee was particularly high for a sin commited in sexual relations. Dirtiness of such a type was being forgiven due to the material situation of individuals and their readyness to pay the amount which was required for that (De Crescenzo, 2009: 81).

There is no church which didn’t face financial troubles. Financial and other means of charity certainly contribute to the improvement of the situation. Marketing in church exists as a scientific discipline having in mind the development of marketing as a science. However its’ implementation in the domain of church is not very developed. Church is neither an enterprise, nor a production company.

However during the last twenty years the implementation of marketing in the domain of non for profit activities got much more developed. Librarianship is one of such activities (Župan, 2001). Marketing in the libraries is only an example for such a statement.

Religion and the contemporary crisis

The author of this paper realized a retrieval of the cumulative e-catalogue of the academic librarianship of Serbia, COBISS+ on 21 August 2024. The inquiry was Patrijarh srpski Pavle (Serbian Patriarch Pavle). The score was 2.281 bibliographic descriptions out of which 854 were for books: 801 printed books and 53 e-books. Having in mind the result of even 2.281 bibliographic descriptions, the majority of them refered to the articles in printed form. The references are being composed *de visu*. So, material has to be seen in order to be catalogued. It means that bibliographic descriptions are authentic.

The inquiry for the retrieval of the cumulative e-catalogue could have been different. It is not just a name a user may choose. It can be an event or a phenomenon also. Persons go in for the advantages and the disadvantages of religion. The crisis of religion in the contemporary society was deepened not just by war destructions, but also through the appearence of desease such as AIDS, for example. An infected individual wishes also to pronouce his prayer as well as to kiss an icon like a civil who is healthy but lives under the burden of another problem. A person infected by a virus SARS (Severe acute respiratory syndrom) may also enter a church and increase therefore a probability that other persons sicken of this virus.

The modern and the late modern period

If we have in mind the dates and explanations by Lućano de Krešenco in his book The History of Modern Philosophy from Decart to Kant, the development of philosophy was going on in the following phases:

Greek from the year 700. B.C. to the year 400;

the Middle Aged philosophy belongs to the period: 400. - 1400,

the modern period: from the year 1400 – 1800, and

the contemporary period: from the year 1800 until today (De Krešenco, 2002: 5).

Let’s say that the late modern period is nowadays when the disease COVID-19 has still certain influence on the life of every individual. However tension is not so strong any longer. Serbian citizens have passed three vaccinations.

The development of human resources in the late modern period

Every man needs to maintain his faith and tradition. He needs to stay active in professional and scientific work. The digitization of contents is a contemporary process which has its' technical, cultural, economic as well as a linguistic point of view.

Besides, the nature of The National Library of Serbia which belongs to the group of public libraries, imposes an obligation to this institution to complete its' own collections through compulsory copy. Serbia is one of the first European states which introduced the system of compulsory copy into its' National Library due to Stojan Novaković. The history of book, letter and libraries - as an academic discipline - explains the development of Serbian letter and libraries from very early period until today. Serbian prince Rastko Nemanjić and his father Stefan Nemanja had a key role in making Serbian literacy stronger in the Monastery Chilandar where they had established the library of cyrillic manuscripts. Having always this fact in mind I would like to mention just that the destiny of The „St Sava" Temple is very much connected with the destiny of Serbian people. The National Library, the academic libraries in Serbia and those libraries on Serbian ground whose collections tell us more about the written heritage of Serbian people have been also connected to the destiny of this people in different periods during which state had quite different attitudes towards Church than nowadays.

The fact that everything that could have been done was being done at home from 2020 on, because of COVID-19 was a reason to catalogue successfully theses and books in all scientific domains. This refers to the cataloguing of monographies and theses on CD-ROMs. So, are there materials about religion? There are and the same standards for the cataloguing of library materials are being implemented for such materials as well as for all other materials.

Spanish fever, AIDS, Ebola, COVID-19, bird flu, are only some diseases which caused many victims in the last and current century. A warm and sincere prayer is what a man needs but it may be fulfilled in reality at least partly if that individual undertakes measures in accordance with medical advice. The behaviour and the destiny of the members of a church will describe its' relation towards key social problems which are health problems in this case. The period of plague and church inquisition past long time ago. We live in the age when man meditates about the organization of life on another planet. Scientific progress and civilization discover new solutions in order to improve human living standard and prolong his life.

Human origin is from *Australopithecus*. Nowadays he is a *Homo sapiens* under the supposition that he respects and applies the measures that a government in his country introduced in order to protect the population from the negative

influence of the deathly virus. African tribes used to make the masks of wood and it is possible that they still can do that in order to use them in a traditional dance. In this contemporary period masks are usually washable ones, used for medical prevention. Some of them are with a filter, some other without it. Man is electronically connected in such a way that he became an active member of the Information Society, known also as *Homo Interneticus*.

How many *Homos Interneticus* will there be among Orthodox priests of different ranks, among the Catholic ones and among Islamic credibles, it depends on how much new technologies are close to them. There are no particular reasons that the catalogues of libraries whose collections contain religious literature stay in a paper form although we know that the e-form is more practical. The development of human resources in libraries of religious nature is to follow the development of human resources in libraranship and information activity which recognizes necessary hardwares and softwares. The libraries of monasteries belong to the cultural treasure of every people. It is the reason why society should pay more attention to them through the implementation of new technologies. Wide information networks are to be considered as well as the opportunities of digitalization.

It is until May 2021 that the number of persons in whose cases COVID-19 was confirmed was 48.000.000 in the world. Until then more than 3.000.000 people died because of this virus. In the first year of that pandemic, even 17.000 health workers died on this planet. Almost 90% of pupils in the world were not in the position to attend school which means that young generations were very much exposed to the risk (O čemu i zašto brinemo, 2021:8).

Brexit, migration crisis, the lack of energy resources, the problems in employing the citizens, the pollution of human environment, global warming, climate changements but seismic changements also, the war between Russia and Ukraine, all of that made influence on the changement of the world social-economic and political panorama. All of that caused global crisis. Although the Information Society is a progressive one, many obstacles disturb it. They cannot be overbridged easily.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development known as the OECD celebrated its' jubilee: six decades of existance and work in 2021 (Župan, 2021). As an organization which gathers developed countries, it was investing and it still invests means into scientific research whose results will be oriented towards market. This Organization has a key word in the domain of new technologies. Countries - members of the European Union are also the members of the OECD which was focused on the development of the European economies as well as non-European economies after the Second World War. The OECD has 37 member-countries. The OECD was investing into new research which refer to the extinguishing of the virus SARS (OECD, 2022). The religious structure of the population in the states of the OECD is heterogenious.

The European solidarity was getting weaker within the European Union during the war against COVID-19. Some states limited the exports of medical equipment a lot after the cities got locked because of that virus. The idea of Christianity has never been to neglect people who were in trouble. Migration crisis was getting more and more expressed. The citizens who were arriving from Syria to Europe were in a very difficult position. Typhus and hunger were thretening them. That segment of the population which entered the phase of poverty caused by war destructions went to Europe partly by bus, partly on foot in order to find basic protection for family and employment as well. Having in mind such a situation – stressfull for many people and children, it can be claimed that the European societies have nowadays another religious mozaik which is more expressed and vivid than earlier. The inflow of migrants from Syria was high. The position of women among the migrants is particularly difficult as well as among those who are not in that situation no matter which religion they belong to.

Passing from one century to another, our famous author Vladeta Jerotić noticed that the interest in Sofia as St Wisdom is more and more expressed. It is at the same time an interest in woman as a physical creature and in her psychological life. That form of enlightment arrived from Russia. This sign of revitalization of Christianity on the West appeared due to an Orthodox belief, due to the liturgy which goes on in Russia. Vladeta Jerotić writes about all of this in his work Staro i novo u hrišćanstvu (Jerotić, 2000: 162).

All of that was going on under the conditions of crisis for Russian material culture in Soviet period where Orhodoxy, liturgy, and crystally clean early Christian teaching are preserved as well as sophyological teaching which has deep roots and tradition in Russia. Except that, the world from that period is characterized as the world of weakened spirituality and moral, the world of weakened manhood (Jerotić, 2000: 162). If we add deep social differences which exist in capitalism to all of this, it is clear that such a world was not able to solve some important, even essential problems which refer to social development such as: the problem of health insurance, employment, social inequality, free traffic of goods and capital, free flux of people, although they are the most important intellectual potential.

Man and libraries in the social tranformation

French satirical newspapers Charlie Hebdo estimated that terrorist attacks were less and less numerous since the moment when this serial publication had become the target of the attacks by Islamic terrorists seven years ago. However there existed a desire to establish a new society which would be based on religious observations derived from Quran. Ideologists of the terrorist attack mentioned here didn't give up of their intentions. Understanding that it is through the agression that they turn the public against themselves they changed the way they work in.

They tend to widen their ideology making influence on other people in the sphere of work, university education, culture and arts. It can be derived from the writings of the serial Charlie Hebdo that such an offense is to be blocked (Riss: 2022).

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) contributes a lot to a free access to information and freedom of expression. It is because of such a reason that a section IFLA FAIFE (Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression) exists. (www.ifla.org) The authors of contributions in the serial Charlie Hebdo like the freedom of critics and tend to conduce by their work to the freedom of creativity. They criticize stupidity, mediocrity, cowerdice, while somebody's satisfaction is being derived just from *accusations* and *interdictions* (Riss: 2022).

It is so indispensable that libraries in the age of strong social changements recognize a real way for performing their tasks and to keep confirming that regularly by their own work which is oriented towards users. Mission and vision of libraries have to be clear to their own personnel even when there is no crisis at all but particularly during it. Man who is isolated because of the situation in the country and in his macro-environment comes into a library because he is a social being who would like to be usefull as the member of social community. Serbian population had to transform itself into a stronger Information Society almost over night. That Information Society is on a much higher degree of the implemention of new technologies particularly in households.

Student, researcher, university lecturer is also an individual who would like to participate in social events. All libraries are not in the same position. All of them do not posess sufficiently big space for workshops and discussions. Some of them do have enough space but it is not equiped well enough. Some libraries don't have technical support which is strong enough. Problems that libraries have to face are diverse and they appear in everyday work even when there is no dangerous virus at all. The problems were expressed particularly in a situation during which individuals were physically far from one another and had to communicate in a written way using e-mails to contact a friend, colleague or a group. Interactivity got more difficult, slowlier. It is not amazing that library users under these conditions neglect a little religious customs because they had to carry out certain tasks on-line. Nowadays they have to take care very often of technical servicing alone. *Digital diocese* doesn't exist in Serbia yet. Maybe it will exist one day. It is not easy to predict.

Church in the light of communications

It is by the locking of cities that a physical distance was introduced among citizens. Physical distance was necessary unlike the social one. Citizens succeded in overcoming their everyday isolation using social networks that enterprises,

sport clubs, churches, different institutions use also. The advantages of an interconnected society are obvious. Personal computer became a dominant mean of work long time ago. The informatization and the digitalization became more intensified in society. The organizations closely connected to church aquire necessary hardware and software and keep following the development of contemporary tendencies in society. It is unavoidable that their personnel realizes tasks of the information nature on PC-s. Communication keeps going on by email more and more often. This refers to the priests also. When such a communication is not close to somebody, he will feel bad consequences. His horizons will stay limited as well as the intellectual freedom in a real environment.

If a *strategy* is a certain way of work oriented towards *market* in the contemporary world, which means at the same time towards buyers, clients, visitors, even religious organizations would have to accept this unavoidable fact in their everyday work. So, the work in an information system imposes the need of training the employed who need certain technical skills. This implies that persons whose obligation is to work with the believers in the frame of a religious organization or a church should be enabled to use technical equipment in a convenient way. This would make a cohesion inside the religous organization stronger.

I would remind our readers that Serbia is the country of monasteries and spas with big cultural heritage. The Digital Society, particularly Serbian academic librarianship, contributes to the maintenance of Serbian cultural treasure. The interest of the academic librarians in news concerning the work of colleagues in a wider e.g. world environment isn't so small. Nowadays programme *Transkribus* is actual in the "Svetozar Marković" University Library in Belgrade. This very programme will make the reading of manually written books more successful. Such reading requires in a way the interpreting of each letter. Serbian academic librarians who work with old and rare books will need technical skills in order to implement this programme in their professional practice. This is of great importance for the domain of religion especially because library materials in manuscripts are protected by law. Serbian academic librarians will have the opportunity to prepare those materials which are not readable using the programme *Transkribus* for those users who study the manuscripts from previous centuries.

This would be just the first phase in the transformation of manuscripts into a more readable form due to the improved technical base of work as well as to the skills of library professionals who would stay in regular contact with old books and adequate equipment. Theological literature in earlier centuries was being written more, much more often than other books. The Monastery Resava, for example, is one of famous Serbian monasteries where books were being manually copied and some new ones were being written through history.

Internet centres allow access to World Wide Web and due to this fact readers may relax using the channel YouTube. This way they may partly get acquainted

with new achievements from the world of religion and culture, science and technics. It is comprehensive that documentary films are materials useful in many different domains. These materials concentrate on interesting professional and scientific contents. Materials which do not exist in the academic libraries of Serbia can be compensated for through an interlibrary loan service with abroad. This doesn't refer only to the literature in biomedicine and technics but also to the materials in the humanities and social sciences.

Stanislaus Irudayaselvam studied the possibilities of integrating information communication technologies into the programme of theology studies and the mission work. Face-to-face (F2F) work with students has its advantages as well as online work. So, combined measures mean a combined way of working with students which is more flexible and, according to this author, "provides more control to the learners". As far as group activities are concerned, students participated actively in online and F2F teaching. It is through the use of online communication that the cohesion in the group got stronger. Students stayed in contact after the lectures in order to exchange their thoughts in the domain of communication theology. Therefore, it could have been noticed undoubtedly that they were satisfied (Irudayaselvam, 2022: 71).

Conclusion

Having in mind religion in global crisis, a conclusion is being imposed that there exists certain literature in Serbian academic librarianship as well as in its' environment. The lack of materials in this domain can be overcome by one of these ways:

relying on some of numerous sources in free access which offer books and articles and
using an interlibrary loan service with abroad.

An interlibrary loan service with foreign libraries is being performed in a relation between two institutions. It is indispensable for the user to be a member of a library that gives the services of an interlibrary loan and to inform a librarian which languages he reads materials in. An optimum result in acquiring materials for the needs of users may be achieved only through combined measures for the purposes of their studies in religion concerning the late modern period in this case.

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