

Hellenic Economic Library Network (H.E.LI.N.): A partnership against the economic crisis

Anthi Katsirikou

University of Piraeus Library, Piraeus, Greece.
anthi@unipi.gr

Ageliki Oikonomou

University of Piraeus Library, Piraeus, Greece.
angie@unipi.gr

Ifigenia Vardakosta

Library & Information Centre, Harokopio University, Kallithea, Greece
Ifigenia@hua.gr

Sotiria Salappa

Hellenic Statistical Authority, Piraeus, Greece
s.salappa@statistics.gr



Copyright © 2019 by Anthi Katsirikou, Ageliki Oikonomou, Ifigenia Vardakosta, Sotiria Salappa. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

Abstract:

The Hellenic Economic Library Network (H.E.LI.N.) was established in 2012 as a result of the cooperation among libraries providing resources and information services in the field of economics. Currently, the network includes ten libraries in the public and private sectors: three public universities, the Ministry of Economics and Development, the Bank of Greece, three private banks, and two public institutions. This is the challenge of the Network: the diversity of its organizations.

The idea on the networking was born in the context of the economic crisis and the efforts of libraries to enlarge knowledge resources while minimizing funding. The principal objective of its members was to establish a partnership for sharing knowledge, ideas, best practices and resources in order to continue offering value-added services to their users' communities despite the difficult economic conditions in Greece. The H.E.LI.N. Network operates under a horizontal administrative scheme with no financial contribution from its members while all the staff work on a voluntary base. Although the participating libraries come from diverse organizational structures, private and public institutions,

they manage to create a strong collaborative network which provides interlibrary loan facilities, organizes meetings, conferences, lectures, informative and educational materials, book presentations, etc., concerning the socioeconomic and financial sciences targeted to approach the users of economic libraries or the general public. H.E.LI.N. is a dialogue for change and action!

The purpose of this paper is to present the Network's current actions and to highlight the impact of its activity on both information professionals and library users. Moreover, as the network supports synergies, it is open to discuss further cooperation with other networks worldwide.

Keywords: H.E.LI.N., Economic Libraries, Libraries Network, Partnerships

1. Introduction

In a time of a rapidly expanding information environment, libraries' role as guardians of confirmed information has become even more important. At the same time the global economic crisis is affecting both strong and weak economies (Kostagiolas, et.al. 2013) around the world and changes the way libraries, of all kinds and types act in their communities. Especially in Greece, the financial crisis has affected the state funds, and governments were forced to reduce salaries and public organizational budgets as well (Giannakopoulos, Koulouris & Kokkinos, 2014). The economic crisis cut off the rising course of Greek academic libraries which had begun since the 1990s - mainly through research funding. Libraries of research institutes, organizations, etc. operate today having drastically reduced their activities, acquisitions, and subscriptions to print or electronic materials, thus making their operation more difficult.

The austerity policy of recent years has considerably influenced the international and national academic bibliography as well, since many researchers have studied the main effects of the economic crisis (Mouza & Tsaousanis, 2018; Faba-Perez & Cebrian-Solis, 2017; Vassilakaki, 2015; Giannakopoulos, Koulouris & Kokkinos, 2014; Kondylis, 2014; Kostagiolas, 2013). Many researchers suggest synergies and co-operations as a library survival mechanism (Kostagiolas et al., 2103).

The H.E.LI.N. network was established in 2012 as a result of the cooperation among libraries providing resources and information services in the field of economics. The idea for the network was born in the context of the economic crisis and the efforts of the libraries to enlarge knowledge resources while minimizing funding. The principal objective of its members was to establish a partnership for sharing knowledge, ideas, best practices and resources in order to continue offering value-added services to their user communities, despite the difficult economic conditions in Greece.

2. Economic Information and Library Partnerships

The business sector has given a great emphasis on the knowledge economy for at least 20 years confirming that knowledge generates added value and is a factor of economic growth. According to Paye (1996) «*Knowledge is a crucial factor in sustaining economic growth. High value produced goods and services improve economic performance and strengthen the position in international competition ... the increase in intangible investments that are difficult to measure has become a big issue for companies and governments*» while in the same fashion Stewart (1994) supports that “*spiritual capital is something you can not see,*

you can not touch and which in addition makes you rich". Indeed the literature, inter alia, states that "*the most productive professionals are those with more access and more use of information sources*"¹. Users can export value by using and applying the knowledge received from accumulated information and the review process it has undergone.

In general, libraries provide the majority of their services free of charge, except for specialized services (if their organization has made such a decision). Such services may be interlibrary loan, reproduction of a small number of pages in a photocopier and / or printer and rarely paying annual subscriptions to the library as a member. Libraries do not measure *price* as a factor of their actions. However, they measure the cost for providing services, sources, infrastructures and operating their physical and virtual space. The economic dimension of library operation focuses on the effort to maximize the use of information resources as well as the optimal exploitation of services.

The library offers public goods, which are incompatible with entrepreneurship, and therefore is the profitable pricing of these services; although from the user's point of view, there is also the cost of infrastructure when receiving services such as the hardware (e.g. computer, printer), software, or the building, which is certainly not collected. International bibliography records efforts have been made to cost services, using quantitative and qualitative financial methodologies which define the costs and values of individual services and products, infrastructure and human resources, in order to extract the return on investment². Return on investment is determined by comparing the total cost of production to its value for users. Value is determined by saving time and effort when using library services to get some results³ (see Fig.1).

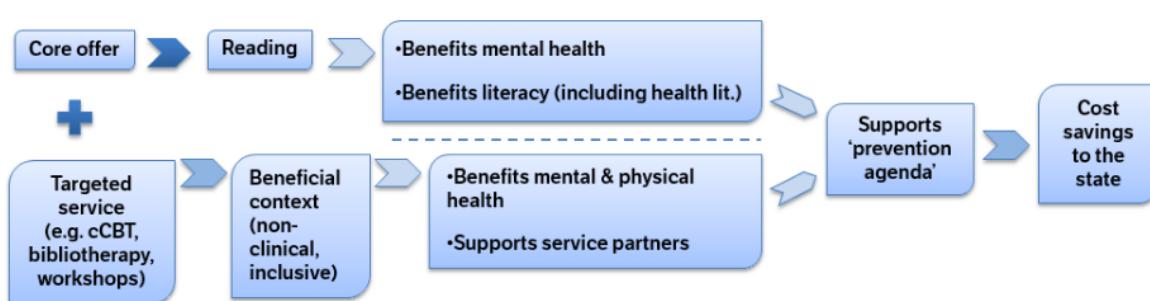


Fig.1: Economic contribution of libraries in health and well being. Reprinted from Evidence review of the economic contribution of libraries, 2014, p.31

¹ According Oakleaf (2010, p.85) benefits for these professionals and return-on-investment metrics that are significant to organizations can be identified by: 1) the time saved, multiplied by salary rate, 2) the industrial productivity 3) the reduced product life cycle 4) the reduced parts costs 5) the labor savings 6) the quality improvement 7) the increased sales 8) faster response to threats 9) performance of share 10) value of reading 11) money saved over alternative information sources 12) reduce the risk of irrelevant or inappropriate information.

² U.S. Department of Energy: Value of the Energy data base. King Research Inc, National technical information center, March 1, 1982. 81p. cited by Zachert and Williams (1992: 228-9). See also Kaufman (2008) and Kingma and McClure (2015).

³ The logic that this figure is based upon is as follows: By contributing to increased reading levels among the population, as well as through targeted activities such as therapeutic reading groups, health workshops etc, libraries contribute to the mental and physical health of the population and support health service partners in delivering their services. It is suggested that this in turn contributes to the 'prevention agenda' – i.e. improving and protecting the health and wellbeing of all through health protection, health improvement and the prevention of ill health (e.g. through promoting more physical activity, healthier diets, better knowledge of the causes of ill health etc)⁹⁷. This ultimately leads to cost savings to the state.

Time and effort savings stem from research conducted by the library and responded by users themselves (FESABID Study, 2014). According to Sykes (as cited in Oakleaf 2010, p.85), the “*contributions of information professionals may not be perceived to be of high value if results are not measured and presented in terms that resonate within the organization.*” (see Fig.2). The time of employees, as well as of researchers, is a measure of the profit that has been judged in practice by the use of the library⁴.

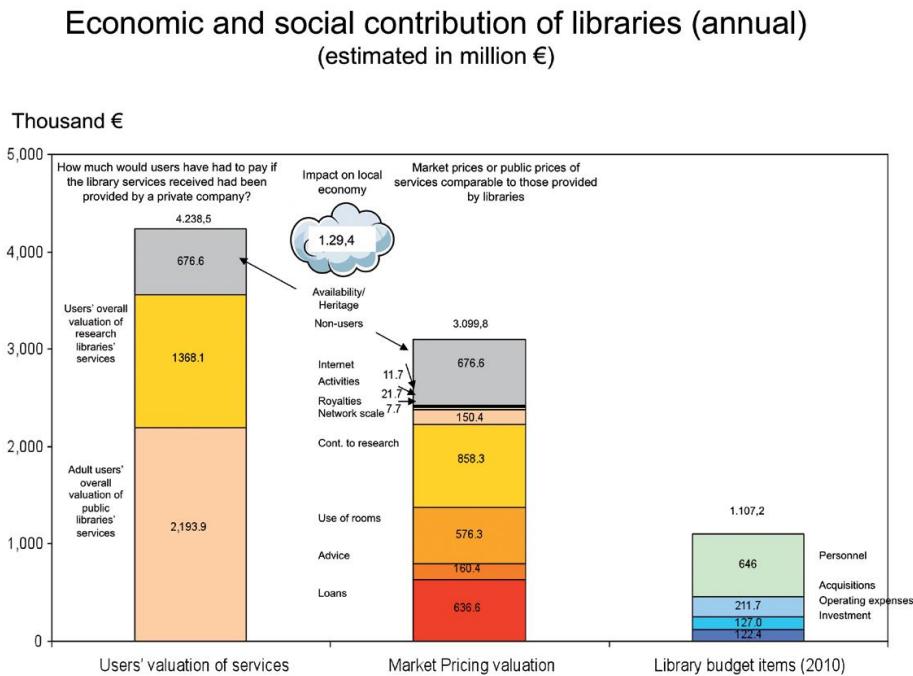


Fig.2: An example of 2014 economic and social contribution of libraries in Spain. Reprinted from FESABID Study: Economic and Social contribution of libraries, 2014

An Inter-organizational network is an environment for the interaction and activities such as joint projects, collaborations or alliances for a specific research and development item that may benefit the participants in various degrees. Continuous innovation is achieved by the linkage of external and internal knowledge. Once the organization settles its contributions to the group, the external network improves its capacity as well. Thus, the external network serves five purposes:

1. It is a cradle for fresh innovative ideas and concepts.
2. It is a continuous supply of innovative resources.
3. It is a testing site for new product development or services.
4. It is a training ground for potential talents.
5. It is a way to share the costs of staff training,⁵ and
6. Above all, it is the ground for benchmarking.

⁴ Manning, Helen (1983): Application of Data from a user survey. In Online Age: assessment and Decisions. Collected papers presented at the 12th ASIS Mid-Year Meeting. ASIS, 2-3 cited by Zachert and Williams (1992: 228-9).

⁵ Szeto, E. (2000): Innovation Capacity: working towards a mechanism for improving innovation within an inter-organizational network. The TQM, 12(2), pp. 149-57, cited by Katsirikou (2002).

Although the organization gets innovation resources from both organizational forms at different time frames, the flow of the resources and the accumulated knowledge base are inter-dependent and correlated with other subsidiaries and network members from outside. This is the cycle of innovation, adoption and diffusion.⁶

A model of a people network with five structural characteristics describes the nature and indicates the potential of such networks. Structural characteristics include:

1. The Network participants, though whole and autonomous individuals, are a part of the network, which is in turn, a whole but also a part of something larger.
2. Networks have a level of structure of exchange among participants.
3. Networks bring members together under a decentralized cooperative structure, but minimize participants' dependency on the network itself by balancing its forces of concentration and distribution.
4. Networks bring together the many perspectives of its members who are autonomous yet cooperate with the network because of common values and visions.
5. Networks have multiple beneficial leadership with all participants able to share leadership roles and responsibilities related to the network.

Given its flexibility, adaptive structure and process characteristics, personal networks can be seen as an encouraging communication at various depths that sense and adapt to environmental influences and needs. They are thus able to anticipate the future, transform themselves to meet new challenges, nurture individual participants, and provide a cooperative mechanism for exchange. They can bridge the growing distance between rapid technological advances and human values, keeping each in touch with the other. Terming the people network as the institution of our time, and valuing it for its openness and adaptability, networks are defined as essential systems, consisting of nodes and links and the process of communication.⁷

However, the library should be treated by the organization to which it belongs as investment capital, and not as a cost center. Organizations' support, as well as the library's value, increase the financial benefits that help to further develop and improve library services (Semertzaki, 2015). The library is the heart of learning. Learning, as international socio-economic matters evolve, is the heart of all operations and services of an organization. The libraries' environment as a learning organizations is not new. What is different today is the expanded emphasis on the importance of the library as a learning organization and the emergence of the teaching role in every kind of library (Katsirikou, 2015).

Collaborations between libraries are not a new phenomenon; on the contrary, libraries in their long journey over time have utilized it to achieve goals and challenges. Libraries of different types and sizes cooperate with each other inside and outside national boundaries. As reported by Murray (2015), most librarians have a culture of collaboration since they have been trained for their value, regardless of their work environment. Today, given the international economic situation, synergies extend beyond functional and strategic alliances, with joint risk taking, a commitment to sharing results (especially failure), while the list of partners has broadened to include academic departments, affiliated thematic professional organizations and bodies, publishers, providers of information and knowledge resources, etc.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷Conroy, B. (1983): People Networks: a System for Library Change. Journal of Library Administration, 4 (2), p. 75-86, cited by Katsirikou and Bokos (2003).

Collaborations are related to a wide range of library functions and may include hardware purchases/subscriptions, service development, technological infrastructure, institutional repositories etc. Additionally, cooperative schemes can be a part of a wider change in the academic publishing model (Maskell, 2008).

The Society of College National and University Libraries (SCONUL)⁸ in the United Kingdom, the Ontario Council of University Libraries in Canada (OCUL)⁹, the Orbis Cascade Alliance¹⁰ and the Oberlin Group¹¹ in the US, National and State Libraries in Australia (NSLA)¹², the China Academic Library & Information System (CALIS)¹³ and the China Academic and Social Sciences Library (CASHL)¹⁴ in China (Xu, 2010) are just a few examples of library collaborations around the world that provide quality services and enhance user satisfaction.

The Greek library community is aware of the benefits of creating consortia and networks; examples include the Hellenic Academic Libraries Association¹⁵ (Heal-Link), Organizing Committee for the Support of Libraries, (OEEB), the Greek Libraries with European Documentation Centers (EDCs), and the National Network of Science and Technology Libraries. Lately, except the above, the Greek library community has also developed library collaborations based on the thematic area of expertise and interest like the Maritime Libraries Network (MarliNet)¹⁶, the Music Libraries, and the Academic Geographical Libraries Group¹⁷. International experience has shown the dynamics and various benefits of collaborating libraries based on complementarity, specialization, and exploitation of the strengths of each partner organization. The ideal organization is the one that thoroughly and structurally analyzes structures and functions while it helps to improve organizational skills and knowledge. This to be feasible demands as a prerequisite the reconstruction of libraries in learning organizations so to meet the needs of both users and staff.

According to Tsimpoglou (2005) "*in the years to come, the perspective for each library is to be a subsystem that will belong at the same time to two reference super systems: 1) the system-foundation to which it belongs and which serves the individual library; and 2) collaborative scheme in which it participates or belongs*". Kostagiolas et al. (2013) in their research concluded that Greek academic libraries' directors believe that there is a need to seek an alternative management paradigm as the adoption of policies for the creation of synergies and alliances in order to promote growth. Additionally, Giannakopoulos et al. (2014) in their research on Greek and Cypriot academic, public and special libraries report on imposed cuts in expenditures and reveal the effort of libraries to find ways to respond to the crisis. They declared that the majority of librarians believe that the management model should change to include solutions for expanded cooperation in infrastructure and services, which are crucial for future viability.

⁸ <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/>

⁹ <http://www.ocul.on.ca/>

¹⁰ <https://www.orbiscascade.org/>

¹¹ <http://www.oberlingroup.org/>

¹² <http://www.nsla.org.au/>

¹³ <http://www.calis.edu.cn/>

¹⁴ <http://www.cashl.edu.cn/portal/>

¹⁵ <https://www.heal-link.gr/>

¹⁶ <http://marlinet.aegean.gr/>

¹⁷ Academic Geographic Libraries Group is in its infancy and has formed in order to the collaborating libraries improve the management of their geographic material (cartographic materials and geospatial information) and, furthermore to provide value added services to their users.

Through cooperative activities, libraries are attempting to create a "power" and a "voice" environment against the economic walls that publishers raise annually. But beyond that, partnership is a step for shaping and developing new services to the public.

3. H.E.LI.N. History

The last few years the current socioeconomic conditions have enhanced organizations, and many more libraries of both public and private sector, believe that nothing should be taken for granted (Kostagiolas et al., 2011). The idea for the H.E.LI.N.¹⁸ Network establishment came as a result of the obvious difficulties in Greek economy and society in 2011 and 2012. As it happens in such cases, the idea begun as an informal and exploratory conversation among librarians working in economic libraries, who wished to improve their services, and exchange ideas and sources so as to better respond to their communities' information demands (Semertzaki, 2015).

The appropriate time and condition for the institutions to unite their strengths and enhance their libraries' function appeared to be the year of 2012, after the huge decrease of human and financial sources, especially in academic institutions. At that time, 10 libraries, facing new challenges in reduced budgets, reconsidered their strategies and sought solutions through group participation, recognizing the value of cooperation and united strength. The main challenge for libraries to participate in such a schema was their diversity. Those specific libraries come from different kinds of institutions (universities, banking institutions, research centers and government bodies) of public and private sector, in the region of Attica, and maintained collections, resources and information services related to economic studies. Currently, there are 10 members in the Network: 1. Alpha Bank Library¹⁹, 2. Athens University of Economics and Business Library & Information Center²⁰, 3. Bank of Greece Library²¹, 4. Center of Planning and Economic Research Library²², 5. Harokopio University Library and Information Center²³, 6. Hellenic Statistical Authority Library²⁴, 7. Ministry of Economy, Development & Tourism Library²⁵, 8. National Bank of Greece Library²⁶, 9. Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation Library²⁷, 10. University of Piraeus Library²⁸. Multiple challenges occurred by the number and the variety of participant libraries in the schema such as the dissimilar mission and budget, the organizational structure, the variety in staff number, of material, users target groups etc., (see Fig.3).

¹⁸ <http://diovi.lib.unipi.gr>

¹⁹ <https://www.alphapolitismos.gr/en>

²⁰ <https://www.aueb.gr/en/library>

²¹ <https://www.bankofgreece.gr/Pages/en/Bank/Library/default.aspx>

²² <https://www.kepe.gr/index.php/en/library-contacts.html>

²³ <http://www.library.hua.gr/index.php/en/>

²⁴ <http://www.statistics.gr/en/library>

²⁵ <http://www.mindev.gov.gr/>

²⁶ <https://www.nbg.gr/en/the-group/corporate-social-responsibility/responsibility-society/library>

²⁷ <http://www.piop.gr/en/vivliotheiki.aspx>

²⁸ <https://www.lib.unipi.gr/en>



Fig.3: Main challenges in H.E.LI.N establishment

Although the differences seemed to be an inhibitor for cooperation, it finally proved to be a big advantage of the network. “*The particularity of this project is that the only common feature of the collaborating economic libraries is the subject they negotiate: economy*” (Tsimpoglou, 2015).

4. Basic principles

H.E.LI.N.’s **mission** is to promote cooperation among the member libraries, with the consent and support of their administrations, in order to exchange services and resources related to their collections and sources with economic content. The ultimate goal of the member libraries is to provide higher quality and more effective services to their user communities. The principal **objective** of collaboration is to continue providing value-added services to users within the framework of each institution’s capabilities, despite the difficult current economic conditions in Greece. H.E.LI.N.’s **vision**, in coordination with the needs that it covers, is for each member to benefit as described in Network’s **basic principles**:

- Information services provided from all the member libraries to the users of the whole Network.
- Interlibrary loan of printed material (books and journal articles) and usage of electronic sources according to contracts that each library has signed with its database providers.
- Common collection development policy.
- Addition of new members in the Network after discussions with them and taking into consideration the benefits for everyone.

The goals are achieved under a series of actions, some of which are underlined as follows:

- Use of a common logo and a common website
- Joint access to H.E.LI.N. members library services (e.g., flexibility in borrowing and interlibrary loan of books and articles).
- Comprehensive development of topics as well as extensive coverage of related Greek and international bibliographies regarding specific fields in Economics.

- Exchange of views and information among members about topics of common interest. These topics, which include intellectual property rights, terms and conditions for database usage, quality and content of sources, and evaluation of supplier services are of vital concern to all members.
- Development of communication tools for Network members, such as informational pamphlets, websites, mailing lists, and Wikis.
- Negotiations for the common purchase of electronic sources.
- Joint presence of H.E.LI.N. member libraries at relevant conferences and meetings in order to promote the work and vision of the Network and the institutions represented in the Network.

These goals are not static. They are revised and enriched when a need or an innovative idea comes up. The common goals and therefore the common vision provide members with enthusiasm for collaborative action and solutions. As cooperation is voluntary, the common vision is the link for a smooth Network operation.

5. Innovative structure

It has been mentioned above that the main challenge for network's operation is the diversity of its members. H.E.LI.N's member variation is one of the main reasons that the Network did not follow the usual consortia organizational structures which frequently are governed by a Board of Directors (Bostick, 2011) and adopted by other Greek consortia (e.g. HEAL-Link). In contrast, at least at this stage, the Network operation is based on four (4) main innovative - for a network structure- principles:

- Follows a horizontal administrative scheme where all members make jointly decisions and all are considered equal (equality)
- There is no financial contribution (volunteering). As the members recognized that in the midst of their reduced budgets for many of the participating institutions, imposing any financial costs would automatically mean not participating in the Network,
- Each member has the right to withdraw from the Network at no cost and any time (independence).
- Each member participates according to its capabilities and the means available (exploitation).

Also, in the case of H.E.LI.N, particular importance was attached to principles related to:

- recognition by all members of the need to participate in the Network,
- mutual communication and equality between members,
- the consistency in actions when undertaking an operation within the Network, and
- decision-making processes only after discussions and equal exchange of ideas (Vardakosta, 2015).

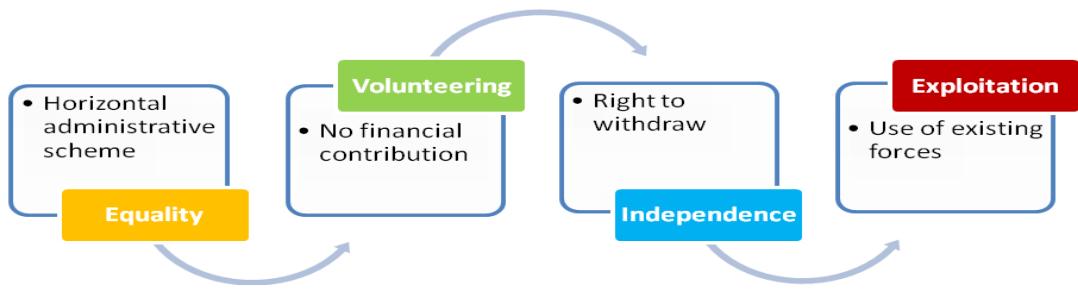


Fig.4: Innovative operating structure

6. Actions

H.E.LI.N. has established collaborative communication tools and uses current information technologies in order for Network members to exchange best practices of common interest, to offer interlibrary loan facilities, and to develop informative and/or educational activities and events on economics. H.E.LI.N. organizes lectures and book presentations relevant to member-libraries' collections and economics in general, as well as number of educational visits to member-libraries so their collections and services can be known more broadly. It is important to emphasize that book presentations concern the interests of network members.

Until **2018**, as can be seen in the image below (See Fig.5), the Network organized **35 events**: two (2) scientific conferences, three (3) book presentations, nine (9) visits to libraries, museums and places of culture and 21 lectures in economics linked to libraries, all of them relevant to economics. One thousand four hundred and seventy (1.470) people participated in our events. All of these Network activities are the results and accomplishments of about 55 member meetings.



Fig.5: H.E.LI.N. Events 2015-2018

In **2015**, H.E.LI.N. organized its 1st Scientific Conference, entitled "*The Contribution of Economic Libraries in Research and Development*", aiming to highlight the contribution of financial libraries to issues such as research, development and entrepreneurship. The distinguished speakers, who were invited, came from the academic, research and banking

sectors or other organizations and shared their experiences with libraries in order to make libraries aware of their needs and assist in programming and improving the services of the Network.

In **2016**, H.E.LI.N. organized the first cycle of lectures on financial content for libraries which consisted of thirteen (13) presentations. The aim of this training cycle was to familiarize participants with macroeconomic figures, public financial data, financial markets and banks, the monetary policy in the euro area, and the international economic environment. In parallel, H.E.LI.N. offered the audience the corresponding terminology and references relevant to economics science and the discussed topics.

In **2017**, H.E.LI.N. arranged the second cycle of lectures consisted of two speeches. The first lecture was about banks, corporate responsibility and libraries; the second one covered the educational role of libraries and the role of librarians in financial literacy. All lectures were announced on the H.E.LI.N. Website, Facebook and Twitter, and were reproduced through member-libraries' websites and through various communication channels available to each H.E.LI.N. member in the communities they serve. Everyone had the opportunity, through the website, to participate by filling out the form specially formulated for this purpose. All lectures were videotaped and, after written consent of the speakers, material was posted on the H.E.LI.N. website. Photographic material from each lecture was also posted on the website and on social networks (Delioglou et al., 2017). At the same period, H.E.LI.N. organized a series of educational visits to Network's libraries in an attempt to communicate member-libraries' services to the widest possible audience.

In **2018**, H.E.LI.N. organized the 2nd H.E.LI.N Scientific Conference entitled "*Economic Libraries: Reservoirs of Information and Training*". Its purpose was twofold: to highlight how libraries, using new technological resources and infrastructures, design, develop and deliver quality information services, focusing on the economic, banking, industrial and business disciplines; how they organize and offer information literacy and training programs in a modern learning environment; and how these can be linked to economics education and financial literacy programs. In parallel, H.E.LI.N. continued the educational visits to member-libraries as well as book presentations on economics. In 2019, the Network has already made two book presentations and also seminars have been scheduled in order to provide value added services to our user groups.

7. Evaluation

Evaluation is the tool that influences and determines the decision-making on the actions to be implemented and is considered as an integral part of Network's operation. Along with accompanying material (which differs in each action) participants receive a questionnaire with four (4) questions. The questionnaire was chosen to be such short in order to be easy to complete and no to be ignored. Those members that have the actions presentation responsibility make a particular announcement asking kindly the participants to complete and return the questionnaire to the organizing committee. The evaluation aims of gathering participants' opinion regarding:

- The effectiveness of the communication channels that H.E.LI.N. uses
- Participants' motivation to participate (what kind of need they want to cover by attending H.E.LI.N.'s actions?)

- their satisfaction of the events' organization (space, speakers, accompanying material)

Finally, the last question allows the participant to express generally his/her opinion and to raise an agenda and actions that can be implemented by the network in the future.

The questionnaires are collected, processed by a network member and the results are distributed to the members. Despite the fact that each action is evaluated separately, an annual, collective text is written for communication reasons (e.g. web site).

The participants' proposals are the subject of discussions on the members' meetings and also serve as a basis for next year's actions.

8. Communication

It is said that for many joint partnerships, communication is one of the most crucial factors for success because it can prevent any possible problem or misunderstanding among members (Giesecke, 2012). Principally, all the Network decisions, plans, actions, reports etc. are communicated to all libraries-members' supervising administrations, since the success of the Network depends, to a large extent, on their support. Monthly members' meetings are arranged on a rotational basis, where the host member library presides at the meeting and is responsible for publishing the meeting's proceedings. Meeting proceedings are sent by email to all members who can improve the text or to add any missing points. The final text is sent again for revision to all members. It is noted that all members have the right to raise questions for consultation and all the decisions are taken after discussion and agreement of all members.

In addition, all Network library staff are informed about Network news so that they can actively participate or get involved in the Network implementations. This kind of participation varies according to the culture of each library. The communication between the partners, which initially was almost daily, has now been reshaped and relies on a mixture of traditional communication (telephone), e-mail communication, written reports (agenda, meeting's proceedings), interpersonal communication (meetings) and social contacts.

But the most important communication channel of the Network is the formal announcement and the communication of the actions to the target audience as well as the development of formal and informal ways of informing the public about the benefits of the network. Posts on the H.E.LIN. website, on social networks and on the members' websites, informing users about the existence of the Network in the context of their research questions, as well as brochures, press releases, and informational messages to professional lists, are means of communicating for the Network. The common Network website is a very important collaborative tool for information about the Network and its members, about actions and events, as well as the communication of each interested person (Delioglou et al., 2017).



Fig.6: Internal & External Communication means

9. Conclusions - Future goals

Cooperation among libraries has been a constructive factor from the earliest beginnings of librarianship. Union catalogs of manuscripts in English and in Scottish monastery libraries existed in the first half of the thirteenth century while the Library of Congress initiated the National Union Catalog in 1901 (McClaren, 1981).

The development and adjustment of cooperation and synergist strategies can be a significant tool for libraries and information centres to react to existing environments and be able to design their common future. Strategies are supposed to renew organizational concepts due to continually changing environments and technologies. Evaluation, therefore, is the most important component of progress. A successful cooperation results from follow ups and the correct implementation of evaluations. The development of existing services can be envisaged as the basic strategy, whereas market developments of new affiliated members can be used for the adoption of new services, or new uses of existing services, which can provide a new dimension for cooperation.

Libraries should be functional and active, should react to new environments, and should renew their services, otherwise they risk being outdated. Even though cooperations and synergies appear like a complex and time consuming procedures, as a matter of fact they can save time, money and effort for librarians by allowing them to concentrate on more productive procedures, which will be more satisfactory for users. Creating networks, organizing services and products, and publishing and communicating the advantages of these services and products result in libraries becoming better known and competitive in the internal and external environments of an organization.

It has taken a long time, plenty of persistence and faith for the economic libraries cooperative vision in H.E.LI.N. in order to measure the first results of this attempt. H.E.LI.N. members share this burden according to their capabilities, resources, benefits and the odds of success or failure. There are specific roles distributed in each project, and there is equal participation and shared responsibility throughout - to work not as just one organization but as corporate linked organization. This cooperation has offered us the opportunity to familiarize colleagues coming from different working environments and cultures, different kinds of thinking and working, and at the same time has broadened our knowledge and resources to more

effectively respond in our daily routines. While there are still respected differences, a balance has been achieved between each organization and the network priorities.

Our future goals, in addition to the broadening of the Network, will involve:

- Accurate and reliable specialized information on economic topics in the form of training seminars, webinars, conferences, lectures, meetings and presentations of books about economics.
- Filling out the existing bibliography (e.g. wikipedia) with economic concepts and definitions.
- Approach of new concepts, such as financial literacy, statistical literacy, organizational behavior and fake news, by providing instructions and/or seminars.
- Developing an "Ask a librarian" service.
- Common collection development policies.
- Development of promotional, informative and educational material.
- Utilization of social media not only for H.E.LI.N.'s events, but for the diffusion of any economic news.
- The joint presence of H.E.LI.N. member libraries in all events they can participate in, which is important to promote the Network's and consequently its members' work and vision.

Finally, we would like to mention the last, but most important assets of this Network. That is the willingness, the temper and the attitude of its member libraries to cooperate.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks must be given to the Hellenic Academic Libraries Link for the financial support provided to one of the authors.

References

Arts Council England (2014). Evidence review of the economic contribution of libraries. Final Report. Retrieved from https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Evidence_review_economic_contribution_libraries_2014.pdf

Bostick, S. (2011). Academic Library Consortia in the United States: An Introduction. *Liber Quarterly*, 11 (1), pp. 6-13

Delioglou, C., Rigakou, V., Vardakosta, I., and Toulitsi, E. (2017). Hellenic Economic Library Network (H.E.LI.N.): cooperative activities and challenges for a disciplinary network of Greek libraries in *23th Panhellenic Academic Libraries Conference, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Library, 15-16 November, 2017* [in Greek] Retrieved from <https://www.docdroid.net/jZNql4v/diovi-23opalc.pdf>

Faba-Perez, C. and Cebrian-Solis, R. (2017). The social impact of libraries as reported in the Region of Extremadura's communications media during the economic crisis in Spain. *Journal of Librarianship & Information Science*, 49(2), pp. 211–221 Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000616637668>

FESABID Study (2014). *The Economic and Social Value of Information Services: Libraries*. Co-ordinated by Jose Antonio Gomez Yanez. Madrid: Estudio de Sociologia Consultores. Retrieved from

http://www.fesabid.org/documentos/economic_social_value_information_service_libraries.pdf

Giannakopoulos, G., Koulouris, A. and Kokkinos, D. (2014). Libraries in Crisis: A Glimpse over Greece and Cyprus. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 147, pp. 411-417
Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.121>.

Kondylis, D. (2014). Greek libraries' funding: a Greek tragedy with (out) euros and katharsis, *The Bottom Line*, 27 (2), pp. 74-84

Giesecke, J. (2012). The value of partnerships: Building new partnerships for success. *Journal of Library Administration*, 52 (1), pp. 36-52.

Katsirikou, A. (2015). The financial information and the added value of libraries. *Proceedings of the Scientific Conference on The contribution of economic libraries in research and development (in Greek)*, DIOVI, Bank of Greece, 6 March, 2015. Athens: KEPE. Retrieved from <https://www.kepe.gr/index.php/en/research/recent-publications/special-issues/item/2815-the-contribution-of-economic-libraries-in-research-and-development-in-greek.html> [in Greek]

Katsirikou, Anthi (2002), Consortia and knowledge management: the functional context and an organizational model. 2002 IATUL Proceedings. Retrieved from <https://docs.lib.psu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1578&context=iatul>

Katsirikou, Anthi and George Bokos (2003). Virtual Organization in Libraries: necessity or luxury of the future? IATUL Conference Proceedings. Retrieved from <https://docs.lib.psu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1635&context=iatul>

Kostagiolas, P. e.a. (2011). A library management response model against the economic crisis: The case of public libraries in Greece. *Library Review*, 60 (6), pp. 486- 500.

Kostagiolas, P., Papadaki, E., Kanlis, G., and Papavlasopoulos, S. (2013), Responding to Crises with Alliances: Evidence from an Academic Library Survey in Greece, in Anne Woodsworth, W. David Penniman (ed.) *Mergers and Alliances: The Wider View (Advances in Librarianship, Volume 36)* Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 247 - 280

Maskell, C.A. (2008). Consortia: anti-competitive or in the public good? *Library Hi Tech*, 26 (2), pp. 164 – 183

McClarren, R.R. (1981). Public Library Cooperation and Cooperatives. *Public Library Quarterly*, 2 (3-4), pp. 5-16, DOI: 10.1300/J118v02n03_03

Mouza, A.M. and Taousanis, A. (2018). The economic crisis and public libraries in Greece: Investigating the threats and challenges via job description, *Library Management*, 39 (3/4), pp. 216-232, Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1108/LM-08-2017-0077>

Oakleaf, M. (2010). *Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*. ALA: Chicago. Retrieved from

http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/issues/value/val_report.pdf

Semertzaki, E. (2015). Hellenic Economic Library Network: an initiative for joint actions and services. *Proceedings of the Scientific Conference on The contribution of economic libraries in research and development* (in Greek), DIOVI, Bank of Greece, 6 March, 2015. Athens: KEPE. Retrieved from <https://www.kepe.gr/index.php/en/research/recent-publications/special-issues/item/2815-the-contribution-of-economic-libraries-in-research-and-development-in-greek.html> [in Greek]

Stewart, T. (1996). Your company's most valuable asset: Intellectual capital. *Fortune*, October, pp. 28-33.

Tsimpoglou, F. (2005). Cooperation of scientific libraries in the digital environment: A systematic approach to the Hellenic reality. PhD thesis. Ionian University, Corfu, Greece. Retrieved from <http://thesis.ekt.gr/thesisBookReader/id/14110#page/1/mode/2up> [in Greek]

Tsimpoglou, F. (2015). Hellenic Economic Library Network: the peculiarity of the project. *Proceedings of the Scientific Conference on The contribution of economic libraries in research and development* (in Greek), DIOVI, Bank of Greece, 6 March, 2015. Athens: KEPE. Retrieved from <https://www.kepe.gr/index.php/en/research/recent-publications/special-issues/item/2815-the-contribution-of-economic-libraries-in-research-and-development-in-greek.html>

Vardakosta, I. (2015). H.E.LI.N.: The response of economic libraries to nowadays challenges. *Heal Journal*, 1 (2), pp.38-46 Retrieved from <http://healjournal.seab.gr/index.php/hli/article/view/73> [in Greek]

Vassilakaki, E. (2015). Greek public libraries in economic crisis: the past, the present and the future, *The Bottom Line*, 28 (1/2), pp. 77-79.