Metafizika biblioteka

Metaphysics of the Library

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1. Introduction

Librarianship and information science as developed activities and scientific fields, can be defined in different ways. Even before the institutionalization of the library as an institution with clearly defined tasks and purpose, the concept of the library implied many things. A library was any small or large collection of clay tablets, scrolls, codices, books or any physical “carriers” of information and knowledge, without necessarily a pre-arranged order. In
U arapskom svijetu su u 15. stoljeću tada postojeći katalogi nazivani bibliotekama, kao i enciklopedije prije nego što se u 18. stoljeću Denis Diderot ozbiljnije pozabavio radom na sastavljanju prve razine svekoliko znanja poznatog svijeta i definirao enciklopediju u onom obliku u kakvom je poznajemo danas (usp. Stipanov 2010; Stipčević 1985).

U suvremenom informacijskom dobu opet, nerijetko svjedočimo (potpuno pogrešno!) opisivanju interneta kao velike, univerzalne digitalne bibliotekе ili mjesta gdje je pohranjeno sve znanje svijeta i gdje se mogu više ili manje uspješno pronaći odgovori na sva pitanja koja moderni čovjek može za- 
islišiti (usp. Gere 2008, 232). Kakogod, neosporno je da biblioteka može podrazumijevati mnogo toga. To je ustanova koja ima zadatak da prikuplja, stručno obrađuje, čuva i korisnicima učini dostupnim svaku vrstu biblioteci- 
če grade; bibliotekom se također nazivaju edicije neke izdavačke kuće, ali i zbirke knjiga u redovnim se po- 
đenim sistemom. U isto vrijeme, taj pojam obuhvata i bibliotečko, stručno osoblje, koje opslužuje korisnika u cilju njegovog informiranja, naučnih istraživanja ili rekreacije.

Pa iako ih ima mnogo, niti jedna definicija nije, osim formalno, u stanju u sebi obuhvati cjelinu onoga što jedna biblioteka zaista jeste ili bi trebala biti. Ono o čemu danas imamo sve više izvora i o čemu se sve više promišlja (i to ne samo izvan na- 
ucnih krugova) jeste skrivena, metafizička, definici- 
ja biblioteke i način na koji se ona poima izvan svog “fizičkog okvira” Bibliotekе “bez zidова”, digitalne bibliotekе, virtualne, hibridne bibliotekе, Bibli- 
otheca Universalis, Projekat Gutenberg, Google Books... različiti su i mnogobrojni načini na koje se pokušava poimati biblioteka i ono kako bi ona u bu- 
dućnosti trebala izgledati. Međutim, ukoliko se do- 
ka postojiću koncept bibliotekе, u smislu da je to sinonim za više ili manje monumentalne građevine, “hramove znanja” sa jasno definiranim prostornim određenicama, ograničenjima i organizacijom, te se po- 
čne razmišljati o širem znamenju pojma – tada do- 
lagamo do ideja koje prelaze granice materijalnog i ra- 
cionalnog, a njeni opisi spadaju više u domen 

fikcije. Takva biblioteka, prvobitno i sama stvorena 
đer nazivaju edicije neke izdavačke kuće, ali i zbir- 
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Na tom tragu je i motiv za nastanak ovog teksta, koji za cilj ima zapitati se kakva bi to mogla biti Biblioteka budućnosti imaći u vidu sve izazove sa kojima se suočavamo u eri kompjuterske i informa- 
tičke revolucije? Jedan od načina da se približimo 
možuće odgovoru jest ukazati na nekoliko interesantnih i indikativnih primjera iz fikcije te zapo- 

a nekolicine naučnika koji su se detaljnije bavili 

nekim aspektima ove teme.

the Arab world in the 15th century, then existing catalogs were called libraries, as well as encyclope-
dias, before the 18th century, when Denis Diderot took more seriously the work of compiling the first 
treasury of all knowledge of the known world and 
defined the encyclopedia as we know it today (cf. 
Stipanov 2010; Stipčević 1985).

In the modern information age, again, we often wit- 
ness (completely wrong!) the description of the In-
ternet as a large, universal digital library or a place 
where all the knowledge of the world is stored and 
where answers to all questions that modern man can 
image can be found more or less successfully (cf. 
Gere 2008, 232). Either way, it is undeniable that 
a library can mean many things. It is an institution 
that has the task of collecting, professionally pro-
cessing, storing and making available to users every 
type of library material; the editions of a publishing 
house is also called a library, but as well, the collec-
tions of books arranged according to a certain sys-
tem. At the same time, the term includes library and 
professional staff, which serve the user for the pur-
pose of informing, scientific research or recreation.

Even though there are many of them, no definition, 
except formally, is able to encompass in itself the 
whole of what a library really is or should be. All 
the things about we today have more and more sour-
ces and what is being thought about more and more 
(and not only outside scientific community) is the 
hidden, metaphysical, definition of the library and 
the way it is understood outside its “physical frame”.
Libraries “without walls”, digital libraries, vir-
tual, hybrid libraries, Bibliotheca Universalis, 
Project Gutenberg, Google Books, etc. are different 
in many ways in which the library is tried to be un-
derstood and how it should look like in the future.

On the other hand, if the existing concept of the li-
library is abolished, in the sense that it is synonym 
for more or less monumental buildings, “temples 
of knowledge” with clearly defined spatial deter-
minants, limitation and organization, and begins to 
think about the broader meaning of the term – then 
we come to ideas that cross the boundaries of the 
material and the rational, and its descriptions fall 
more into the domain of fiction. Such library, origi-
nally created for the sake of book and in honor of 
the book, returns to the book, first through science 
fiction literature, and then through the development 
of digital technologies, it has begun to engage in 
a reflection about the possibility of materializing 
these visions.

The motive for the creation of this text is on that 
trail, and has the goal of asking is what the Library 
of the future could look like, having in mind all the 
challenges we are facing in the era of the computer 
and information revolution? One way to get closer 
to a possible answer is to point out a few interesting
2. Borgesov bibliotečki univerzum ili moderna Bibliotheca Univerzalis

Kako je već konstatovano u uvodu, pojavom revolucionarnog izuma interneta kao globalnog neselektivnog repozitorija znanja, on se sve češće izjednačava sa bibliotekom. Tako površna poredenja, srećom, nisu preobzibilno shvaćena, iako je bilo ozbiljnih pokušaja da se digitaliziranjem svetolikog znanja sadržanog u fondovima bibliotekama širom svijeta napravi Bibliotheca Univerzalis na moderni način. Takvo nešto je, čini se, prilično smjera i “revolucionarna” ideja. Međutim, mnogo je realnije i izazovnije prihvatiti viziju koju je još pedesetih godina prošlog vijeka, svjesno ili nesvjesno, stvorio veliki argentinski pisac i jedan od najpoznatijih bibliotekara upravo – Jorge Luis Borges.\(^1\)

O Borgesu nije ostalo mnogo toga da se kaže, a da već nije rečeno ili napisano. Pregršt je autobiografskih i drugih zapisa o tome kako i koliko je Borges cijenio i zavisio u svojoj strasti od biblioteke i čitanja, da bi se samo o tome mogla napisati cijela knjiga. Borges je još od najranijeg doba, zakoračivši u privatnu biblioteku svog oca, postao bezmjerno zaljubljen u knjige i čitanje, a biblioteka će za čitav život biti pravi svijet za Borgesa. Godine iz Almagra” (Esteban 2016, 14). Nakon što ju je na za mene bila i ta mala i gotovo skrivena biblioteka otera, koja obuhvata univerzum i sa njim se stapa, tu zaposlen i pomislio sam da je ta beskrajna biblioteka treba pustio, pruža mu se prilika kakvu zaslužuje. Godine 15. Borges, however, did not give in to attempts at obesha-theatrical and other records of how and how much Borges valued and depended in his passion for the library and reading that only a whole book could be written about it. From the earliest age, Borges, stepping into his father’s private library, became hopelessly in love with books and reading, and the library will be in his entire life, first and last refuge and a piece of paradise on this Earth. He began his library career as an assistant at the Miguel Cané Library in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. The job he dreamed of at first doesn’t seem very appealing and seems daunting. For Borges, the small branch library, at first glance, was just a gloomy place overcrowded with second-rate employees, to whom “the books represented just a pile of materials through which a monthly salary is earned” (Esteban 2016, 15). Borges, however, did not give in to attempts at discouragement and did not gave in to despondency, but was even more motivated to indulge his imagination and writing, and it is even believed that in some stories like Aleph, he perpetuated his impressions of the atmosphere and people he worked with in the mentioned library. Moving away from all the negative influences from the environment, he finds his peace and inspiration in solitude, among the shelves full of books. Then the Library Miguel Cané takes on a completely different dimension for him, and he says in a conversation with Osvaldo Ferra-

\(^1\) Ovdje se prvenstveno misli na tri poznate priče ovog autora, objavljene u periodu od 1941. do 1959. godine: “Aleph”, prvobitno objavljena u časopisu Ficciones u 1944.; potom “Funes de Hemera”, objavljena prvi put 1942., a kasnije u sastavu zbrika Narizne 1944.; posljednja je “Babilonska biblioteka”, prvi put objavljena na španskoj jeziku u Borgesovej zbriki prva iz 1941. godine. and indicative examples from fiction, and the observations of several scientists who have dealt in some detail with some aspects of this theme.

2. Borges’ Universe as a Library or Modern Bibliotheca Universalis

As already stated in the introduction, with the emergence of the revolutionary invention of the Internet as a global non-selective repository of knowledge, it is increasingly equated with the library. Such superficial comparisons, fortunately, are not taken too seriously, although there have been serious attempts to make the Bibliotheca Universalis in a modern way by digitizing all the knowledge contained in the holdings of libraries around the world. Such a thing seems to be a rather bold and “revolutionary” idea. However, it is much more realistic and challenging to accept a vision created in the 1950s, consciously or unconsciously, by the great Argentine writer and one of the most famous librarians of all time – Jorge Luis Borges.\(^1\)

There is not much left to say about Borges without it already being said or written. There are a handful of autobiographical and other records of how and how much Borges valued and depended in his passion for the library and reading that only a whole book could be written about it. From the earliest age, Borges, stepping into his father’s private library, became hopelessly in love with books and reading, and the library will be in his entire life, first and last refuge and a piece of paradise on this Earth. He began his library career as an assistant at the Miguel Cané Library in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. The job he dreamed of at first doesn’t seem very appealing and seems daunting. For Borges, the small branch library, at first glance, was just a gloomy place overcrowded with second-rate employees, to whom “the books represented just a pile of materials through which a monthly salary is earned” (Esteban 2016, 15). Borges, however, did not give in to attempts at discouragement and did not gave in to despondency, but was even more motivated to indulge his imagination and writing, and it is even believed that in some stories like Aleph, he perpetuated his impressions of the atmosphere and people he worked with in the mentioned library. Moving away from all the negative influences from the environment, he finds his peace and inspiration in solitude, among the shelves full of books. Then the Library Miguel Cané takes on a completely different dimension for him, and he says in a conversation with Osvaldo Ferra-

\(^1\) This primarily refers to three well-known stories by this author, published in the period from 1941 to 1959: “Aleph”, originally published in the journal Sur (South) in 1945, and later as part of the collection Aleph and other stories in 1949; then “Funes the Memori-
1955. Borges posjetio upravnik Nacionalne biblioteke Argentine. Njegov san se ostvaruje – našao se na izvoru obimnog i neprocjenjivog blaga koje mu je stavljeno na raspolaganj. Bilo je to za njega osamnaest godina potpune sreće i u toj privilegiji će uživati sve do pedeset i peta godine života kada je oslijepio. Međutim, ni to ga nije zaustavilo u čitanju i stvaranju.

Pa ipak, promišljujući o Borgesu, nameće se misao kako njegovo najveće dostignuće kada je u pitanju bibliotekarstvo možda i nije to što je i sam bio praktikant i dao doprinos kao uposlenik ili direktor najznačajnije biblioteke u Argentini. Nije ni to što je bio jedan od osnivača prve katedre za bibliotekarstvo u Buenos Airesu 1956. godine (Escuela Nacional de Bibliotecarios). Najveći doprinos je zapravo teorijski – proistekao iz njegovih fantastičnih priča, koje daju izvrstan šlagvort za promišljanja o metafizici biblioteka i njihovoj suštini. Mnoge nje gore književne kreacije su inspirisale i potakle teoretičare bibliotekarstva da promišljaju kompleksne teme koje su relevantne i imanentne informacijskoj i bibliotečkoj znanosti, a koje uključuju propitivanje granica i mogućnosti informacijskih sistema i ljudskog uma.

U paraboli o Golemu i kroz njegovu usporedbu sa književnošću i općenito pisanim baštinom čovječanstva, Borges pretvara biblioteku u mitsko mjesto koje je najbliže, a opet tako daleko od nastojanja da čovjeka približi Bogu. “Ljudima je dato da stvaraju stvari vrijedne divljenja, ali da njima nikada ne dosegnu savršenstvo Tvorca, te da prihvate da su granice ljudskih stvaralačkih moći beznađno udaljene od beskonačne stvaralačke moći Boga, ali svejedno teže da dosegnu te granice kako bi stvorili nešto što teži poretku, nesavršenom snu o poretku, bibliotecu” (Manguel 2019, 77). Tu se opet nutno nameće slika Babilonske biblioteke kao metafore ljudskog uma.

Nekoliko autora koji su se iz različitih uglova bavili ovom temom pronašlo je plodonosne metafore u pričama poput Alefa, Funesa pamtioca ili Babilonske biblioteke. Upravo za ovu posljednju priču sociolog Andrew Abbott, proučavajući sociološke aspekte bibliotekarstva, u jednom tekstu kaže da može biti iščitana kao ilustracija problema hiperprodukcije podataka (tzv. data overload) u modernom, zapadnjačkom društvu (Abbott 2013, 85). On primjećuje kako informacione tehnologije, kad je u pitanju po hranjivanje podataka, napreduju znatno brže nego što čovjek uspjeva poboljšati svoje sposobnosti da sažme, indeksira i pretražuje te informacije. Abbott za ovu priču kaže da je parabola modernog bibliote-ri: “When I wrote The Library of Babel, I was employed there and I thought that this endless library, which encompasses the universe and merges with it, for me was also that small and almost hidden library from Almagro.” (Esteban 2016, 14) After leaving that library, he is given the opportunity he deserves. In 1955, Borges became the director of the National Library of Argentina. His dream is coming true – he found himself at the source of the vast and priceless treasure that was made available to him. It was for him eighteen years of utter happiness, and he would enjoy that privilege until the age of fifty-five, when he went blind. However, even that did not stop him from reading and creating.

Even so, thinking about Borges, the thought arises that his greatest achievement when it comes to librarianship may not be that he himself was a practitioner and contributed as an employee or director of the most important library in Argentina. Also, it wasn’t because he was one of the founders of the first department of librarianship in Buenos Aires in 1956 (Escuela Nacional de Bibliotecarios). The greatest contribution is actually theoretical – derived from his fiction stories, which provide an excellent headword for reflections on the metaphysics of libraries and their essence. Many of his literary creations have inspired and encouraged theorists of librarianship to consider complex topics that are relevant and immanent to information and library science, and that include questioning the limits and possibilities of information systems and the human mind.

In the parable of the Golem and through its comparison with literature and in the general with written heritage of mankind, Borges turns the library into the mythical place closest to, and yet so far from, the effort to bring man closer to God. “People are given to create things worth admiring, but never to reach the perfection of the Creator, and to accept that the limits of human creative powers are hopelessly distant from the infinite creative power of God, but still strive to reach those limits to create something that strives for order, an imperfect dream of order, a library” (Manguel 2019, p. 77). Here again, the image of the Library of Babel necessarily imposes itself as a metaphor for the unattainable human aspiration for comprehensiveness. Borges does not deny that a universal library exists, nor does Manguel: “The encyclopedia of the world, the universal library, exists – and it is the world itself.” (Manguel 2008, 84)

Several authors who have addressed this topic from different angles have found fruitful metaphors in stories such as Aleph, Funes the Memorious, or The Library of Babel. For this last story, sociologist Andrew Abbott, studying the sociological aspects of librarianship, says in one text that it can be read
karstva, which illustrates the problem of data overload in modern, Western society (Abbott 2013, 85). He notes that information technology is advancing much faster when it comes to storing data than man is able to improve his ability to summarize, index, and search that information. Abbott for this story says that is a parable of modern librarianship, as it illustrates the tendency of libraries / librarians to try to organize or “structure” the hyperproduction and chaos of information produced on a daily basis through different systems and catalogue them with schemes that should be comprehensive. However, they do not succeed and perfect order or the possibility of regulated comprehensiveness remains a myth and an unattainable ideal. The contemporary librarians, despite all available technological tools, catalogues and sophisticated classification systems, are lost in the labyrinth of the Borgesian Library of Babel. Iva Seto believes that the architecture of the Borges library, consisting of an infinite series of hexagons, simulates the rhizomatic structure of the Internet (Asato 2008, 10). “The Universe (which individuals call the Library) consists of an unknown and perhaps even infinite number of hexagonal galleries (...) From each hexagon, the lower and upper floors could be seen, in perpetuity (...)” (Borges 2018, 72). In these libraries “two identical books do not exist (...) The library is complete and all possible combinations of twenty or more orthographic symbols are recorded on its shelves, that is everything that can be expressed, in all languages. Absolutely everything (...) When it was announced that the Library contained all the books, at first everyone was foolishly happy. They believed they were the owners of a secret, untouched treasure.” (Borges 2018, 77) After useless attempts to master universal knowledge and information, they became desponded, and then they slowly began to get used to the fact that “(...) the library is so vast that any compression inflicted by human hand without distinction becomes infinitesimal.” (Borges 2018, 79) Finally, describing the hopes, aspirations, and futile attempts of human librarians to master this Universe, Borges concludes: “I may be deceived by age and concerns, but I fear that the human race – the only one – is well on its way to extinction and that the Library will outlive it. (...)” (Borges 2018, 81)

However, Borges is not alone in such fantasies. Many fiction writers, especially science fiction writers, have followed similar path. For example, Adrienne LaFrance notes that information technology is advancing much faster when it comes to storing data than man is able to improve his ability to summarize, index, and search that information. Abbott for this story says that is a parable of modern librarianship, as it illustrates the tendency of libraries / librarians to try to organize or “structure” the hyperproduction and chaos of information produced on a daily basis through different systems and catalogue them with schemes that should be comprehensive. However, they do not succeed and perfect order or the possibility of regulated comprehensiveness remains a myth and an unattainable ideal. The contemporary librarians, despite all available technological tools, catalogues and sophisticated classification systems, are lost in the labyrinth of the Borgesian Library of Babel. Iva Seto believes that the architecture of the Borges library, consisting of an infinite series of hexagons, simulates the rhizomatic structure of the Internet (Asato 2008, 10). “The Universe (which individuals call the Library) consists of an unknown and perhaps even infinite number of hexagonal galleries (...) From each hexagon, the lower and upper floors could be seen, in perpetuity (...)” (Borges 2018, 72). In these libraries “two identical books do not exist (...) The library is complete and all possible combinations of twenty or more orthographic symbols are recorded on its shelves, that is everything that can be expressed, in all languages. Absolutely everything (...) When it was announced that the Library contained all the books, at first everyone was foolishly happy. They believed they were the owners of a secret, untouched treasure.” (Borges 2018, 77) After useless attempts to master universal knowledge and information, they became desponded, and then they slowly began to get used to the fact that “(...) the library is so vast that any compression inflicted by human hand without distinction becomes infinitesimal.” (Borges 2018, 79) Finally, describing the hopes, aspirations, and futile attempts of human librarians to master this Universe, Borges concludes: “I may be deceived by age and concerns, but I fear that the human race – the only one – is well on its way to extinction and that the Library will outlive it. (...)” (Borges 2018, 81)
pristup svom saćuvanom ljudskom znanju. U svim tim slučajevima potrebno je platiti određenu cijenu radi pristupa značajnim količinama informacija. Mnogi zaboravljaju da je Supernova Tvrđava sama može takođe i biblioteka. To je mjesto na kome se Kal-El skriva, a istovremeno predstavlja i skladište cjelokupnog znanja Kriptona” (LaFrance 2016).

Kada danas govorimo ili čitamo o bibliotekarima, knjigama i bibliotecama u savremenoj književnosti bilo kojeg žanra, trebamo i sami biti spreman odstupiti od njihovog stereotipnog i klasičnog podimanja. Svi oni mogu biti u izmijenjenom obliku, a sve češće i jesu, shodno tehnološkim i futurističkim stremljenjima svijeta, pa “nosilac” informacije i znanje više nije knjiga u prepoznatljivom fizičkom obliku već može biti kristal, čestica, neidentifikovan objekt. Biblioteka više nije biblioteka, nego kosmički prostor, fantastični informacioni sistem i nadzemaljska infrastruktura znanja, a bibliotekari postaju poput Tanka iz Matrixa okruženi monitorima – baratajući kojekakvom softverom ili anropomorfna i vanzemaljska bića poput onih iz Lovecraftovih (2018, 159) priča, sve do robotiziranih verzija savršeno ugođenih mašina za usluživanje korisnika. Upravo na tom tragu, teoretičari u ovakvim pričama nalaze ogledalo današnjice – kulturu i svijet pokoren Internetom, opsjednut digitalnim i virtualnim.

3. Umjesto zaključka

U svijetu World Wide Weba čovjek se lako izgubi, pa bio on i informacijski stručnjak. On biva zaveden i skrjut sa kursa, te prisiljen pronalaziti način i načine da se iz njega nazvati teoretičarom informacionih sistemov. Mnogi zaboravljaju da je Supermenova Tvrđava sačuvan mjesta znanja, a biblioteka postaje poput Tanka iz Matrixa, ali u kvarču i bez obzira kojim programom housed iz planet sized library, thanks to which she gains access to her preserved human knowledge. In all these cases, it is necessary to pay a certain price in order to access significant amounts of information. Many forget that Superman’s Fortress of Solitude is also a library. It is the place where Kal-El is hiding, and at the same time it is a repository of all the knowledge of Krypton” (LaFrance 2016).

When we today talk or read about librarians, books and libraries in contemporary literature of any genre, we should be ready to deviate from the stereotypical and classical understanding of the same. All of them can be in a changed form, and more frequently they are in accordance with the technological and futuristic aspirations of the world, so the “carrier” of information and knowledge is no longer a book in a recognizable physical form but can be a crystal, particle, unidentified object. The library is no longer a library but a cosmic space, a fantastic information system and an extraterrestrial knowledge infrastructure, and librarians become like the Tank from the Matrix surrounded by monitors – handling some software or anthropomorphic and extraterrestrial beings like those from Lovecraft’s stories (Lovecraft 2018, 159) all the way to robotic versions of perfectly tuned customer service machines. Exactly on the very same path, theorists in such stories are finding the mirror of today – a culture and world conquered by the Internet, obsessed with digital and virtual.

3. Instead of a conclusion

In the world of the World Wide Web, one is easily lost, even when she / he is also an information expert. She / he is seduced and removed from the course, and forced to find ways and instruments to overcome obstacles and “rein chaos” which seems to be the only known and sustainable – ideal order. The semantic network distracts / distances the organization of information from a hierarchical classification to a more holistic type of structuring, and Borges’ universal library exactly presupposes the possibilities of such hyperspace.

As can be seen from this short text, the library has come a long way from a passive place of storage and preservation of knowledge, to a complex and active communication system for storing and manipulating information. With the phenomenon of
cijskih znanosti da preispitaju važeće koncepte i dominantne paradigme struke i u njihovom tumačenju možda pronađu potencijalne odgovore na aktualne probleme i načine borbe sa hiperprodukcijom znanja i njegovim upravljanjem.

hyper-production of knowledge, user requirements have become more complex, and the role of the library is changing faster and more drastically. It seems like from everything it has been so far, in fact, only the emphasis on the system will remain, which will necessarily, sooner or later, assume some brand-new futuristic form, which will outgrow all available tools and classification schemes. How this will happen and when, remains to be seen. It is up to librarians and information professionals to find a way and overcome the imposed obstacles. At the same time, magical spheres and the endless structured chaos of Borges’s fiction, pretentious or not, prophetic or not, can serve modern theorists of librarianship and information sciences to reconsider valid concepts and dominant paradigms of the profession and in their interpretation may find potential answers to current problems and methods of dealing with knowledge overproduction and its management.

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