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Autor: Humphreys, K. W.

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Kontakt/Contact

[Digizeitschriften e.V.](#)
SUB Göttingen
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 1
37073 Göttingen

✉ info@digizeitschriften.de

IFLA - 44TH CONGRESS 1978

by *Kenneth W. Humphreys*

I attended the Congress at Strbské Pleso in August. The following brief resumé is necessarily a personalised one. Obviously I could not attend all meetings but I attempted to be present at those which I thought might be more relevant to the work of LIBER.

Official Opening

The meeting opened officially on Monday 28th August in the presence of the Czech Organizing Committee and other Czech officials. There was a folk-loristic party which sang local songs of welcome. The Congress was addressed by the Vice-President of the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic M. Lúčan, the Chairman of the Organizing Committee Ms. H. Kolárová, the President of IFLA Mr. P. Kirkegaard, and the representative of UNESCO Mr. A. Wysocki. The last-named said that in the programme for the coming biennium 1979-80 " important amounts of money are earmarked for Bibliographic Control and Universal Availability of Publications, for the improvement of libraries in less-developed countries and for training and education of librarians ".

Division of Collections and Services

Dr. Urquhart spoke on " UAP – what can we do about it? ". This was a typical contribution from Dr. Urquhart giving some background to the UAP programme with his own individual comments. These included a stressing of the need for universal education. His particular theme was that no librarian should assume that we already had UAP in many countries and that therefore there was no need for further action. He warned against the dangers of complacency. He returned to his favourite topic of testing the efficiency of services to readers which generated some

discussion as did his statement that " whilst co-operation (between libraries) may produce some results a study of its history shows that voluntary co-operation between autonomous institutions cannot as a rule produce the most cost-effective arrangements ".

Division of General Research Libraries

There were four papers on the theme " Provisional of periodical literature in a national information system ", by Ms. K. Kaladzieva (Bulgaria) read by Mr. Popov, by Mr. Häkli (Finland), by Mr. Aje (Nigeria) and by Mr. Welsh (USA). Three of the authors (i. e. excluding Mr. Welsh) outlined the very different problems faced in each of their countries and the methods which had been devised to provide maximum access to periodical literature.

Mr. Welsh's paper whilst on the same theme traced the development of the plan for a National Periodicals Center in the US for which the Library of Congress had accepted responsibility. The aim will be to acquire current subscriptions to 36,000 titles and concentrate on back runs for 2,000-3,000 of those most frequently used. It is estimated that this will satisfy some 85-95% of requests. Access to the collection will be phased in during the first year starting with reference and state libraries, followed by members of the Association of Research Libraries, major public libraries and so on.

One slightly disconcerting note was the reference to the fact that " a mutually acceptable relationship between the National Periodicals Center and copyright holders will be reached ". This implies an acceptance of payment to publishers/copyright holders for photocopying. This point was mentioned in the discussion which otherwise centred on the number of periodicals required to satisfy 85% of requests as figures quoted were lower (e. g. 8,000-9,000) and the experience of the British Library Lending Division.

National Libraries

The meeting was devoted to a discussion of a draft model law for legal deposit prepared by Ms. J. Lunn (Canada). It was intended that this model law should be submitted to UNESCO for its approval after it had been discussed by IFLA. UNESCO would normally obtain further expert advice before it was adopted and perhaps published.

Some members present expressed doubts about the report and more particularly about certain recommendations. It was felt that the existing laws of too few countries had been taken into account.

It was agreed that those present should send their comments before the end of October to M. Guy Sylvestre. The Section would request

UNESCO for an extension of the receipt of the draft to 31 December 1978. When the text is transmitted to UNESCO it would be sent by IFLA as a study but would not endorse any specific recommendations. UNESCO would be requested to refer the study back for further examination and not to publish at present.

I sent some observations on the draft in a personal capacity but with the problems of some LIBER members in mind. A copy is attached.

Inter-lending

Within the general theme of UAP Mr. Line (UK) spoke on " National inter-lending system: existing systems and possible models ". I shall not attempt to summarise his paper as the main points are contained in his contribution to the Florence Seminar and will be published in LIBER Bulletin No. 12. He emphasised the importance of inter-lending and its certain growth in the future particularly following the improvements in bibliographical control as a result of IFLA's UBC programme. With regard to the basic provision in periodical literature for satisfying a nation's loan requests he pointed out that for the United Kingdom the figure was as low as 9,000 journals for 90% and 5,500 for 80% satisfaction rate.

The high rate of usage (internal and inter-library loans) of a comparatively small number of journals also figured prominently in the paper by Mr. R. M. Dougherty (US). In his paper " The new Copyright Law and American Libraries " he pointed out that publishers/copyright holders expecting large additional income from photocopying fees would be disappointed as only " core " journal publishers would receive appreciable amounts of money. At the same time copying fees will increase the cost of photocopies in lieu of loans.

University Libraries

The Section continued its programme on the theme of management with a paper by Mr. R. M. Dougherty (US) on " Management for what? Selecting objectives for academic libraries ". After presenting this subject. Mr. Dougherty then spoke about the dilemma of academic librarians in weighing the needs of inter-library lending against the demands of the members of the institutions they serve. With 40,000 requests at Berkeley, for example, at a cost of \$ 10.00 per loan one can understand the scale of the problem. Unfortunately, in my view, this led to a confusion in the minds of the audience and inhibited what I personally hoped would be a valuable discussion of the problems of assessing the efficiency of research library services. I think I was not alone in my disappointment at the level of the questions and contributions to the meeting. I would

hope that more attention could be paid to this subject – if not by IFLA then by our newly constituted Working Party on Management.

Unfortunately the meetings on Social Science Libraries coincided with the University Libraries session and the Standing Committee of the section on University Libraries. However I obtained the papers and would refer to one particularly.

Social Science Libraries

Ms. V. D. Hewitt and Ms. M. Reagan (both US) introduced the subject “New initiations for the Section?”. In a short but wideranging paper they proposed an extension of the Section’s interests both so far as subjects and professional areas are concerned. It seems to me that with new subject sections being introduced into IFLA there is a danger of overlap and duplication of effort as between subject libraries sections and the professional areas sections.

Library Theory and Research

Professor P. Kaegbein (FRG) presented a paper on the contemporary situation of library science in the Federal Republic of Germany. He traced the development of library science as an academic discipline in Germany, from the end of the 19th century until the present day, concentrating on the period since the Second World War when discussion centred on the place of library science within information science. Library science as a specialised information science clearly influences also library education.

Mr. O. Harbo (Denmark) gave an account of the First (and Second) International Research Forum in Information Science held in London in 1975 (and in Copenhagen in 1977). The Third will be held in Oslo in 1979.

The Section approved the establishment of a Working Group on Library History with Dr. K. W. Humphreys as Chairman and Ms. Pouillias as Secretary.

Rare and Precious Books

As this coincided with Library Theory and Research I was not present at this Section. I understand that, as at an earlier meeting on GKW, it was particularly lively. The results are to be found in the Resolution. The Standing Committee agreed that its interests would be directed to Early Printed books and not to “Documents” whilst LIBER’s Group would have emphasis on manuscripts. Minutes would be exchanged informally between the two bodies.

Mechanization

I could only attend one of the meetings, unfortunately, but it was a very important one. Mr. S. M. Malinconico (US) spoke on "Mass Storage Technology and File Organization". The problems relating to the size of data bases, up-dating entries and the time delays in accessibility were particularly interesting. Some of the discussion related to the question of scale and the need to consider smaller data bases and their utilisation – particularly with relevance to developing or even in developed countries beginning on a more modest scale than those possible in the US.

Council

The second Council meeting received an invitation to visit Manila in 1980 (the next meeting will be at Copenhagen 27th August – 1st September 1979).

A number of resolutions and statements were received. Perhaps the most interesting to LIBER members will be the following:

Steering Committee for UAP requests the Executive Board to invite UNESCO to prepare an Inter-governmental Conference on UAP in 1981; re-iterated by Division of Collections and Services.

Interlending. The Section on Interlending welcomes the proposal that an Intergovernmental Conference on UAP should be held in 1981-82.

Working Group on Library History. The IFLA Working Group on Library History gathered at its first meeting on Wednesday 30th August 1978 in Strbské Pleso recommends that library history should be an important component in library education.

Section of Serial Publications. The Open Session of the Section of Serial Publications at the 1978 Congress takes the view that there is strong need for the establishment of guidelines for Union lists of serials and suggests to the Professional Board that this is a Project very much within the spirit of UAP and that ways and means of providing funds for this Project should be explored.

Section of Rare Books and Manuscripts. The Section recommends the setting up of an international advisory committee of experts to supervise the furtherance of the Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke (GKW) and which will examine requests from the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, who is responsible for the GKW, to UNESCO and advise UNESCO. The Committee will be nominated by the Section and will each year report to the Section.