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PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1972—3

1. The Executive Committee of LIBER has held two meetings during the year, one at Budapest during the IFLA Council and the other here in Brussels. In addition many contacts have been made between members of the Executive.

We received with regret the resignation of Mr. Mario Carrara, director of the Civic Library of Verona. His state of health as well as the age of retirement decided him to leave our Council. We have always appreciated the kindness and the generous ideas of Mr. Carrara, who was the first advocate of LIBER in Italy. We earnestly hope that Mr. Carrara may recover his health and enjoy his retirement for a long time. In accordance with the Statutes, the Executive Committee will seek a replacement for Mr. Carrara and the election will take place at the General Assembly next year for the period of three years 1974–7.

2. The principal problems which the Council has had to examine are the same as those of the preceding year.

The publicity for the recruitment of new members must be based above all on personal contacts and on the publications of LIBER. Unfortunately the publications have taken longer to appear than we would have wished, so that no widespread impact was possible. The number of members of LIBER had risen to 120 by the time of our first General Assembly; we now have 158 (to which may be added some twenty subscriptions to the Bulletin). Our objective is 250, corresponding to the number of universities which are members of the Conference of European Rectors. We shall issue a list of members by country so that each of you may 'recruit' in his circle of acquaintances.

With regard to publications, after a number of financial difficulties which have caused restraints upon our projects, we can welcome the issue of *Bulletin* No. 1, as well as Supplement

No. 1 containing *Proceedings of the Lausanne Colloquium on University Library Buildings*. The next three numbers of the *Bulletin* should appear this year; perhaps also Supplement No. 2 containing the *Proceedings of the Meeting of Experts at the Council of Europe on Shared Cataloguing*. We have decided not to publish the Proceedings of the Bordeaux Colloquium, to which I shall return later. We hope especially that effort in dissemination of information can be made in the field of publications to provide a strong echo to our works and to the studies and articles which have been entrusted to us.

The Council has also discussed the possibility of issuing shorter communications in the form of a monthly or bimonthly page sent to all members. We shall study the practicalities of such a project during the coming year.

3. The programme for 1973–4 has also claimed our attention, since suggestions for presentation to the Council of Europe needed to be submitted at the beginning of last autumn. The propositions approved by our last General Assembly and which did not correspond to the works of the Council of Europe have now been finally accepted by the latter and as a result we have been assured of a subvention of 10,000 Fr. fr. for the organisation of the Brighton Colloquium next September. At the same time the Council of Europe has undertaken to be responsible for the preparatory meetings of an eventual meeting of experts on the problems of international loan. But this subject has been postponed for the present in order to await the result of the Seminar organised in March by the British Council at Banbury, under the Chairmanship of Kenneth Humphreys. Mr. de Groot participated as the representative of LIBER, since he is responsible for this study. We had a meeting in January at the Council of Europe, Mr. de Groot, Dr. Humphreys and myself, and we shall have another meeting next Friday, 29th June.

For the year 1974, we have asked for a subvention for the organisation of a Colloquium on the problems of theses, in order to attempt to define a common attitude as university librarians in this domain. We shall have more to say about this matter this afternoon as well as the propositions which the Executive Committee will be making to you for the 1973 programme.

4. The fourth subject which has preoccupied the Committee touches the relationship of LIBER with IFLA. You all know that LIBER issued from IFLA, despite the objections of the Eastern European countries. At Budapest I tried, dispassionately, to explain our objectives and the reasons for our existence, as well as the relations we hoped for with the Council of Europe, the principal stumbling block to our acceptance by the East; we have been strongly attacked by a representative of Bulgaria, who spoke on her own behalf, but who seemed to have put forward an official point of view. Despite this opposition, which a long discussion with Mr. Serov, Director of the Libraries Division in the USSR did not alleviate, we have presented our request for membership of IFLA, explaining that our intention is to support IFLA action on the European plane and to make progress also in the studies and aims in the field of research libraries. We have been accepted as a member of IFLA since the meeting of the Board of December 1972. Your President will represent LIBER at Grenoble in August and the Executive Committee will hold a meeting there.

5. The first object of this report should be the Colloquium at Bordeaux, and notably the consequences which we need to pay attention to of this first experience.

Let us recapitulate the facts: from the time of the foundation congress of LIBER at Strasbourg in 1971 it was decided to choose a subject within the sphere of interest of International Book Year. The preliminary discussions had been entered into, prior to the existence of LIBER, between Herman Liebaers and R. Escarpit, who were together members of the Committee for the launching of International Book Year by UNESCO. Only one preparatory meeting could be held in Paris between Professor Escarpit and Mlle. Robine of ILTAM, with Mlle. Bossuat, Mr. de Groot and myself from LIBER. We discussed the questionnaire to be addressed to libraries and questions of finance. This latter problem was escalated in the preparation of the Colloquium, because of the increased expenses which resulted from the use of the computer. Finally, Professor Escarpit was able to obtain a subvention from the Ministry of National Education which allowed the accounts to close without a deficit. As it was taking place at Bordeaux,

the Colloquium was organised entirely by ILTAM, the members of LIBER Committee being too far away to give any kind of assistance. We had hoped that a local committee could be set up and that the librarians at Bordeaux could offer their co-operation. But it seems that this formula was not able to be realised. We have regretted this circumstance since the Colloquium completely slipped away from our view of it. The subject selected was especially interesting because at this particular time the problem of the relations between the user and the library indicates a rapid evolution in the manner and method in the type of services which one has the right to expect from the library. It was valuable to make a point on this subject and to establish a kind of diagnostic of the tension between the librarian and the user.

The percentage of replies provided by libraries is relatively high: 231 replies to 340 questionnaires addressed to European libraries, or 68%. One cannot say the same of users (170 replies to 1,000 questionnaires, or 17%). One could consider the spread of the replies of librarians as valid and the results of the enquiry merited being discussed. The report prepared by Mlle. Robine and which she presented to the Colloquium is a document of the highest value, even if the replies showed fundamental differences between libraries. We hope to publish the text in the LIBER Bulletin.

The criticisms of the Colloquium are concerned with the composition of those attending, the production of the work and, as a subsidiary matter, the gastronomic aspect. We take the first two of these points: we were of the opinion that the Colloquium should be open, in the democratic spirit, to all representatives of member libraries desirous to participate in it, leaving to ILTAM the task of finding users sufficient to provide an equilibrium between the two camps in debate. Unfortunately only two or three users—but what is a user?—took part in the discussions. This disproportion has certainly denied the debates one important function. Many French librarians took part in the transactions, profiting from the occasion, rare it seems, of taking part in an international colloquium. In contrast colleagues from other countries than France were few. As a consequence the discussions were limited to the problems relevant to French libraries and

universities. The wide-ranging exchange of views which should have been possible in bringing together the experiences and usages of the whole of Europe did not take place.

The conclusion which must be drawn from these facts is clear—and it has already been drawn for the Brighton Colloquium—in that participation in the meeting must be by the invitation of the organisers who can choose the experts and ensure, for good will, the representation of various parts of Europe. At Bordeaux the participants met in the hope of learning something; and we do not know that they learned what they expected; at Brighton the participants will wish to make a contribution; we hope that they will equally profit from it. There is a danger in this new formula; those persons interested in the subject, but not invited, will be annoyed and demand why they should pay their subscriptions if they cannot take part in the work of Colloquia organised by LIBER. We think nonetheless that this danger is less grave than that which results from a meeting of random participants, and to see a colloquium arranged which leaves both organisers and participants discontented.

We can now define the two kinds of LIBER meetings in the future:

The annual General Assembly, at which each member library may delegate one or several persons, and of which the object of the discussions will be central to the policy of the Ligue.

The Colloquium on a subject, in which a variable number may take part, but limited to librarians, to the invitation of the organisers.

Further, in association with the Council of Europe, LIBER may be associated with a meeting of a limited number of experts, at the expense of the Council of Europe, from the various member countries of the Council for European Cultural Co-operation.

I am convinced that those who have the chance to participate in the Brighton Colloquium will enjoy this second experience which should open richer perspectives in professional results than the first.

6. We have adopted a practical suggestion in a very different domain: to avoid printed communications being lost in the

morass of paper in libraries, it has been proposed that the name of the director of the Library should figure on all LIBER mail. It would seem that the invitations to these days at Brussels have not been delivered to their destinations. We shall therefore put the name of the director of the library on our address labels in the hope that our circulars will reach their objective.

7. I am now at the end of this report of activities. I should not like to close without mentioning future problems which confront us and on which we shall touch in tomorrow's meeting. I can assure you that the Council of Europe is very anxious to help us to prepare the future with the maximum means which can be put at our disposal, in so far as it may prove our dynamism and demonstrate our ambitions. It is possible that a delegation of our Executive Committee will be received by the Council for Cultural Co-operation to brief the heads of this organisation, on which the Division of Teaching and Research depends in part financially. It should be possible to formalise the efforts of LIBER more actively and more widely. We should not ignore the role which the Council of Europe would like us to play, in the absence of a research libraries division of its own, even if in the years to come this role imposes tasks upon us which are supplementary to the daily duties of the director of an institution. We should certainly find the necessary forces to fill a programme which is more ambitious than actual. It is necessary that we have the certainty than these efforts correspond to the wishes of a majority of European research libraries.

Permit me to end by offering my sincere thanks to my colleagues on the Executive Committee, which has worked throughout the year to assure the spirit of LIBER.

J.-P. CLAVEL