

Werk

Titel: Welcoming speech

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Welcoming Speech

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Mr Minister, President of LIBER, ladies and gentlemen - I would like to express first my thanks to the National Library for its invitation to participate in the opening of this gathering. As a representative of an administrative body responsible for scientific research and universities, I want to tell you that your work interests us and is important to us. Without exaggerating, we could say that it is key to the growth of our system.

In Spain, as many of you know, we have for the first time a central body to oversee scientific research. It is the National Plan for Scientific Research and Technological Development, approved by the government two years ago. This Plan is being revised now for the first time. It includes, along with a program of basic research, a series of high-priority programs which indicate the large areas of research of importance to our country. Among the different priority areas there are three which are horizontal in nature and which in one way or another indicate areas where we are making a special effort. They are: the training of research personnel; scientific information and documentation; and the interlinking of information resources in the universities and the research centres. Obviously, the second two that I have mentioned have directly to do with the concerns of these sessions. I would give special attention to the fact that the program of information and documentation that begins this year includes a series of steps that I consider of great importance for our whole infrastructure in the field. Among the various steps regarding this program I would mention the promotion of research in systems aimed at dealing with specific problems of the treatment, recuperation and access to information. I would mention as well the preparation and putting into use of information systems in research centres, as well as the promotion of research in co-operative information centres. Here there is also the hope of generating an infrastructure, but in an intelligent manner so that the co-operative activities are facilitated and that compatibility is strengthened on all possible levels. Also foreseen and considered very important are steps to train research personnel in order to avoid a bottle-neck which would block the expansion of the system.

I would like to point out as well - along the same lines and parallel with this information and documentation program - a program for preparing university libraries. There have been important efforts in this area in recent years, via the creation of an infrastructure for an increase of bibliographical holdings in the Spanish university libraries.

As food for thought, so to speak, we have contracted an outside foundation to diagnose the situation of different Spanish university libraries and to offer suggestions on optimal operation in the immediate future. This, with an eye to a more effective use of our resources. Here, we understand our problems very well: it is not so much a question of holdings but of cataloguing and linking of the resources in question. In a not too distant future such a cataloguing and linking could become as well an effective system of interlibrary loan.

Exercising their autonomy, each university will doubtless have in the near future the libraries appropriate to the needs in question. The institutions which offer funds, personnel and research for these libraries will be able to respond to the vast challenges in teaching and research faced by higher education centres in our country.

What should be made clear, and I want to underscore this here, is that our administration is committed to offer sufficient means to create libraries and library services which are effective as quickly as possible. And, given the importance of this area, I am going to make a two-fold recommendation to those responsible for university and research centre libraries. I would ask that this should be taken into account before making technical decisions affecting the type of cataloguing to be used.

In the first place, it should be understood in every case who is going to use the holdings and for what purpose. This means, logically, the on-going assurance of the framework of compatibility which I mentioned earlier. It means as well avoiding solutions which are apparently uniform a priori and which obscure a possible diversity of objectives. In the second place, and very closely related to the above, we should never lose sight of the fact that there is a time factor and that cataloguing which cannot be carried out within a reasonable period of time is useless cataloguing.

I am certain that these sessions will be of use - according to the participation of study offered by colleagues from the different countries in question - to a better analysis of an reflection on all these problems.

I hope that these words have served as an initial stimulus. The future of the academic libraries in our country is very firmly based on co-operation and co-ordination between the two Ministries represented here: Culture, and Education and Science. And I am completely certain that these joint efforts will not result in the application of that popular adage which claims that trivial affairs are taken care of immediately and serious matters are never dealt with. I feel that with the joint efforts of all concerned this will not be our case.