

Werk

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Teaching Libraries - Changing Libraries

Opening Remarks of the President¹

ESKO HÄKLI

Last year LIBER convened on Malta, for the first time in its history. Switzerland, the venue of our Conference this year, is by no means virgin soil as was Malta. Already twice has LIBER arranged an Annual General Conference in Switzerland, 1983 in Lausanne and 1987 in Zürich.

Switzerland has also been a kind of home country for LIBER. One of its founding fathers was M. Jean-Pierre Clavel, the Director of the Bibliothèque Cantonale et Universitaire de Lausanne. Consequently, LIBER was established in accordance with the Swiss Civil Code. On the practical level, Swiss libraries and librarians have always belonged to the main supporters of LIBER. Therefore, we have the feeling, that LIBER has come home. It is a great pleasure for us to convene here in Bern. We are grateful to you, Professor Robert Barth, for your kind invitation as well as for your assuming the responsibility for the practical arrangements of this Conference.

It is delightful and encouraging to see how much support this Conference has received. The OCLC has again made a major contribution, which has given us the opportunity to invite speakers

¹ Paper presented at LIBER Annual General Conference 1997, Bern.

from the United States, among them our keynote speaker tonight, Professor David Stam. This deserves our most sincere thanks. But we also gratefully acknowledge the support of all other companies, mentioned on the list of the sponsors in the printed programme.

Sehr geehrte Frau Regierungspräsidentin Zölch, es ist eine große Ehre für uns, daß Sie uns heute im Namen der Regierung des Kantons Bern begrüßen wollen. Wir danken Ihnen auch dafür, daß der Kanton Bern unsere Konferenz finanziell unterstützt hat. Unsere Dankbarkeit gilt ferner dem Verband der Bibliotheken, Bibliothekarinnen und Bibliothekare der Schweiz, der Stadt Bern und der Universität Bern, die uns ebenfalls unterstützt haben. Ganz besonders möchte ich Ihnen, Magnifizenz, Rektor Schäublin, sehr herzlich danken. Ihnen, Herrn Direktor Jetzler, danken wir dafür, daß die Eröffnung unserer Konferenz heute abend in dieser schönen Umgebung stattfinden kann. Die Burgergemeinde Bern hat uns zu einem Empfang im Anschluß an dieser Eröffnung eingeladen, wofür ich Ihnen, Herr Burgerratspräsident Rudolf von Fischer, schon an dieser Stelle für Ihre Gastfreundschaft danken möchte.

This year we have been able to invite three colleagues from the former socialist countries to attend our Conference. Their travel and participation costs are covered by a grant from the EFLC Fund, administered by LIBER. We are grateful to the European Foundation for Library Cooperation (EFLC), which, after concluding its activities, granted a major amount of money to LIBER to enable participation of East-European colleagues in particular in the Annual General Conferences of LIBER. The EFLC Fund helps us to continue this good practice which earlier was financed by the Council of Europe. I wish the receivers of this year's EFLC grant welcome to our Conference here in Bern.

For the first time in the history of LIBER we have had the opportunity to cooperate with a professional exhibition organizer in arranging the exhibition of the Conference. The company

Exhibition Factor has helped us with remarkable results as many of you already have been able to see. I want to thank Mr. David Buckle in particular for his strong engagement for LIBER as well as for his belief in the importance of a high quality exhibition for our Conference. I hope that we will give him right by visiting the exhibition.

Earlier this afternoon a Pre-Conference on copyright issues already took place here in Bern. I want to thank our Division for Library Management and Administration for organizing the Pre-Conference as well as the speakers, who all are top authorities in this important field. The Pre-Conference was very well attended and it obviously helped us in clarifying the present status of the copyright development both on the national and European level.

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The general theme of our Annual General Conference this year is "The Teaching Library". We want to penetrate the question, what is and what should be the role of the academic libraries in the teaching at their universities. This issue has been discussed in a number of European countries, but we have the feeling that much has to be done to transform libraries into active teaching instruments. Therefore, we are happy to have with us also American experts who not only will inform us about the trends in the United States but as I hope, also provoke us to new ways of thinking. The general theme helps us also to discuss the basic question about the future role of our libraries in general.

In the present situation libraries are facing a number of challenges which call for new revolutionary thinking, to put it in the shortest way. Libraries have to become user-driven organizations. My own experience suggests that there is a greater gap between a user-driven and process-oriented organization than we usually think. A change is, however, unavoidable, if we want to make sure that libraries will keep pace with the development of the surrounding community.

When looking at the goals and aims of our libraries from this angle, we may discover that our working methods need a revision, that our priorities in allocating resources have to be revised, and that our staff structure and skills need a revision. I am convinced that libraries with a strong scholarly power will develop into centres of excellence in the library world. Mastering the new technology will not give the same impetus, because everybody has to have good command of it. In other words: research libraries have to become research libraries.

LIBER has already for some time looked upon the new electronic development of the library work. So are we doing also this year. We should, however, not forget the fact that electronic means are only means to achieve something, not an end in itself. Libraries should not become purely technocratic institutions but remain places where the human mind can grow and blossom. Libraries, with their carefully built collections and knowledgeable staff, should remain arsenals of the civilization. Only in such a way will libraries become teaching institutions in the true sense of the word.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Colleagues! It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to wish you all welcome to the Annual General Conference of LIBER 1997 and to declare the Conference opened.