

Opening Speech – 29th Annual General Conference of LIBER

by ELMAR MITTLER

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to the 29th Annual General Meeting of LIBER in the Royal Library of Copenhagen. As a group of about 160 delegates from Dublin and Lisbon to Moscow and Istanbul, from Bergen to Malta we represent Europe in its unity as well as in its diversity.

We are very fortunate to meet today in this outstanding library which combines all the best elements of a great future oriented library:

- a collection of high value
- modern management methods
- and new information technology
- as well as an extraordinary library building.

The thousands of people who pass through these doors every day are a testament to the vitality of this library and to librarianship as a whole.

Sometimes we may be in doubt about the future role of libraries. Many people believe that everything of interest can be found free and without help in the web. Libraries with their mission to provide well-chosen information resources for permanent access may seem old-fashioned for people of this kind. This is one of the challenges we have to compete with and we have to develop a new marketing strategy for library services.

The challenges we are competing with are the reduced market power of libraries on the one hand, the overwhelming productivity of academic and scientific communication in the world wide web on the other one.

As Ken Frazier said at the pre-conference today, scholarly communication is ripe for a change. Electronic publishing will have a leading role in this new

development. One of the most exciting developments in the field is the e-print-server. We are accustomed to preprint servers like the Los Alamos Server for physics.

But as an additional activity we have now the Santa Fe Convention which has produced proposals for minimum standards for this area of work. Let us test them thoroughly, let us take into account the improvements proposed at the recent conference in San Antonio. Perhaps Clifford Lynch, who chaired the conference, can bring us up to date with the newest developments in the Open Archive Initiative when he speaks to us tomorrow. If we can accept the standards, let us promote them wholeheartedly.

Standards in all areas are a necessity, if we want to realize the real motto of the Web world: Work local, think global.

May be, that libraries cannot develop these standards, but they can adopt them and make them work consistently across the whole world. Let's take the lead. If we want to succeed we need new alliances. But for the first time we have a real chance to promote the combination of metadata with publications through the tags „description“ and „keyword“ in HTML. Everybody can combine subject oriented metadata with his paper. And everybody who uses it at least gains some basic subject cataloguing skills. Dublin Core, popular at least amongst German Learned Societies, is a step towards the academic community learning to catalogue for itself. So isn't it right that Nancy Gorman recently wrote: „Now that cataloguing is cool“, the promotion of use and the enhancement of digital data sources will indeed be one of the main challenges facing libraries in the future. And the more shared activities we can implement, the stronger our role as libraries will be in the unfolding information society.

There is another field of new strength in libraries. Similar to the situation after the invention of printing, libraries are workshops where material in old and new format is stored. But like the Vatican Library, which in the late 16th century had a printing office on the first and the reading room on the second floor, libraries now are centres of digitizing printed material.

Digitizing journals is one of the main fields of library activities in this respect. We discussed it at a successful conference held here in Copenhagen in March 2000. It was organised by the Danish Library Centre, Nordinfo, DIEPER, JSTOR and LIBER. This conference demonstrated again how necessary it is to have standardized rules and tools within Europe and in the globalized world. I thank Jens Thorhauge from the Danish National Library Authority very much for publishing the proceedings of this conference and for providing a

free copy for each participant of our LIBER conference. LIBER has taken the responsibility for further progress of work in Europe in this field and Werner Schwartz will inform you about the first results of the LIBER task group in the field of journal digitisation during this conference. I personally have another impressive example of digitisation of a treasure of our culture, the Gutenberg Bible. You will find the result at <<http://www.gutenbergdigital.de>> in the Internet, but the publisher Saur took the risk to produce a CD-ROM-edition as well. It contains two CD's, one with the full text and another interactive CD which combines illuminations and the model book of the workshop that produced the illumination and selected biblical quotations in different languages.

Let me finally mention another, perhaps revolutionary model for the scholarly communication and publishing of the future. As you will be aware, our Dutch colleagues are currently discussing new models for internet publishing, which links local university servers for the following three purposes:

1. electronic service for students (disc space for their own works for example);
2. preprint tools for researchers at the universities which can be used in addition;
3. as a content service for publishers, who can buy selected material from the authors as a basis for their peer reviewed journals.

If this is done using common standards, the proposal makes a real new fundament of academic communication and publishing in an inspired way of bringing together the interest of all players in the field, authors, publishers and libraries. You may hear more about it in the session tomorrow afternoon. May be that the realization of plans of this kind will bring more than the re-designing of research libraries. New historical combinations of computer centres, research libraries and on-demand-publishing facilities may be the result. But the mission of librarianship will be the core of the development: to provide efficient access points for research, education and information. And to provide added value information through metadata, long term archiving and the provision of permanent access. The more cooperation we can achieve in this new field, the more powerful libraries will be. The library as the gateway of gateways, as Ken Frazier formulated, will be the portal in the internet, you can trust.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Janet Michell Lees, director of OCLC Europe, Near East and Africa, for supporting the successful pre-conference and the speaker today. I would like to thank especially the chairman Erik Jul and the speakers Matthew Ehrens and Ken Frazier. With Ken, the

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President of the Association of Research Libraries, who will stay with us during this conference, it was in addition a starting point for closer cooperation of LIBER with the American Association of Research Libraries. I would like to thank Professor Bergendorff. I am quite sure that this conference will provide us with many additional new ideas and insights. The exhibition will be a valuable contribution to the program. Thanks to David Buckle and the Exhibition Factor for the marvellous program and the record of 48 exhibitors. This will make us more capable of dealing with the challenges ahead. Here in Denmark, one of the leading centres in media librarianship and in the successful Royal Library of Copenhagen we are in the right place to develop new plans to make libraries the leaders in the information world. I am sure, you will all join with me thanking our Danish colleagues, particularly those from the Royal Library for being our host today and during the whole conference. Special thanks for the concert. Thank you Erland Kolding Nielsen to you and your team.

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