

Introductory Remarks of the President

by ELMAR MITTLER

Chief executive, president of the Association of Research libraries, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

first of all, I would like to thank you, Lynne, for hosting the 30th LIBER conference here in the British Library. You have taken a personal interest in this long planned and yet often postponed conference. It was the former LIBER president Mike Smethurst who hoped to realise it while he worked here. Brian Lang kindly invited us, - and it is a special pleasure to see him here in the audience. Thank you for coming. You, Lynne, have encouraged your colleagues as they organised this conference. I would like to mention Ann Wade, a member of the Executive Board of LIBER and all the hard working local organising committee.

With you, Lynne, we can celebrate not only the opening of the conference. You have just completed your first year as Chief Executive of the British Library, a year of innovative developments and a successful one as well inaugurating a new era here.

But yesterday you started a new year of your personal life as well. You kindly invited Executive Board of LIBER to a dinner last night, but no one knew that it was your birthday party. So I would like to congratulate you, wishing all success for you and the British Library and many happy returns of yesterday.

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

on behalf of LIBER and the Executive Board, I would like to give all of you a warm welcome to the 30th LIBER conference at the British Library in London. LIBER conferences are always the meeting point for the leading librarians in Europe, discussing in a concentrated way main topics of library development in Europe. The London conference with the theme „New alliances - new services” has attracted over 200 delegates, more participants than any LIBER conference before. They have come from all over Europe, South Africa and the United States. I would like to give our guests from over-

seas a special welcome and mention as their representative Shirley Baker, President of the Association of Research Libraries. Through the longstanding and friendly alliance of LIBER and the OCLC we were able to start this afternoon with the preconference on „Transatlantic cooperation”. We are grateful to OCLC, specially Janet Mitchell Lees, as a main sponsor of LIBER and the OCLC Institute, specially Eric Jule, as organiser of the seminar.

We have had the opportunity to discuss fundamental topics such as

- how to reach harmonisation in the field of descriptive cataloguing - so that we can exchange and reuse data without complicated mapping programs and loss of information: a LIBER expert group will be set up to discuss this with our transatlantic colleagues;
- will we have research and development programs between the USA and Europe like the NSF-JISC or the NSF-DFG-programs. Maybe our newly created alliance with the European Science Foundation - I would like to welcome its Secretary Tony May - will help us to succeed in this respect;
- will we be able to organise on the European level a SPARC group, to strengthen competitiveness in the market for scholarly information, creating new journals and publication schemes as well as strengthening the position of smaller, cheaper traditional publishers.

Recent developments in the publishing field show how necessary global solidarity between libraries is: „Nature”, the well known scientific journal, only recently tried to start to deny access to the peer reviewed final version of papers, only draft versions being accessible via libraries. The unanimous resistance of the entire library community made the publishers change their mind, but there is an additional problem as „Nature” tried to introduce a large price increase for its services. Just recently they started to propose some more modest prices. There are more and more examples of excessive prices for electronic information products, as publishers in a monopolistic situation are able to dictate unacceptable price increases. PsycInfo may be mentioned in this respect.

It may appear a little out-of-place, dear colleagues, to be talking about our everyday financial problems at an opening ceremony. But the development I just mentioned is part of a fundamental structural change in the information world, that is supported by the recent developments in copyright in Europe. The final version of the directive on copyright in the information society considerably strengthens the position of rightsowners. Library exemptions are reduced to a minimum and they are not mandatory. This means that we will have to work hard to promote library and customer oriented legal regulations

at the national level during the next 18 months when the European directive has to be adapted in the member states.

Licenses will become the normal, not to say, the only way to get access to electronic material. There are some positive developments in this field as well. If you check publishers' licences against our LIBER principles you will find that a large part of the proposed provisions have been adopted as regular elements in most contracts: „The memorandum of understanding” by the TECUP group shows in addition, that free access to legitimate users for viewing and printing on site and from everywhere in the world are the norm, interlibrary document supply in printed format is also allowed. This European project TECUP has brought together authors, publishers, collecting societies and libraries in a consensus building process. Now, after the end of the project, the „Frankfurt group” will continue the dialogue between all players in the publication chain. As your representative of LIBER I have the honour to chair this group.

It is a real aim of LIBER to work together with publishers, improving access. But to realise some of the promising chances offered in the networked world librarians have to do more than bargaining with publishers for fair contracts and reasonable prices. This is especially true in the field of research communication. The internet provides a very real opportunity for self publishing by authors. Libraries can provide the platform for scientific communication providing servers for special research communities. This is partly done with preprint servers for special research communities. But why don't university libraries provide local servers for their patrons, storing research papers by faculty members or dissertations by students? Dublin Core should be used for metadata and the rules of the Open Archive Initiative guarantee interoperability between servers. If the scientific community were able to combine these activities with a reviewing system for quality control as discussed in the LIBER OAI conference at CERN in Geneva this system could play an additional role as an alternative publishing facility without the overhead costs of some mainly shareholder-oriented publishers. Libraries are the only organisations capable of taking such an initiative, building systems in close cooperation with the scholarly community and learned societies. LIBER will play a leading role in promoting OAI-standards and introducing cooperative activities in providing seamless and permanent access to this type of research material.

This would be a way of guarantying that libraries could deliver a maximum of information and material from all kind of resources - free publications as well as commercial and official publications.

Just like other people all over the world, dear colleagues, librarians are now really beginning to experience and understand the consequences of the new virtual world. People on the opposite sides of the globe have become close neighbours now - they may be friends and they may be competitors; collections in different countries and institutions (such as libraries, museums and archives) can be brought together virtually; new distributed services can be developed. It is the mission of LIBER to strengthen the cooperation between different parts in Europe and the rest of the world.

In this virtual age libraries are faced with many challenges. The LIBER-conference offers an exceptional opportunity to meet leading people in new fields, to exchange experiences in different parts of Europe to widen our horizons and aims for new transatlantic partnership. The message of this 30th LIBER conference in London is that Europe is becoming a reality: not only the Europe of economics, but the Europe of culture and education as well. The Europe of diversity, free exchange of the right persons for challenging positions in London as well as in Oxford or Berlin; the Europe of seamless access to information and, last but not least, the Europe of transatlantic and global partnership.

Let me finally thank again the British library and its staff, especially its chief Executive, Lynne Brindley. Thanks are also due to the OCLC and to all other partners, speakers, contributors and participants who are contributing to the success of the conference. Last but not least, our keynote speaker Sir Brian Follett.

I wish all participants a pleasant stay in London - looking for new alliances and planning forward - looking for new services for our users - and enjoying the unheard of nice weather in London.