

Editorial

The present issue of LIBER Quarterly deals with the consortium. Far from being new, consortia are one of the most important developments for research libraries during the last decade.

Sharon Bostick outlines the long tradition of library cooperation in the United States and gives an overview of academic library consortia with special emphasis on modern developments. Her excellent introduction to the whole concept of collaborative activities among libraries is followed by a number of reports about library consortia in different European countries.

From reading the reports it becomes obvious that „consortium“ is a term with many meanings. In the beginning the libraries worked together in the field of collection development and resource sharing in the widest sense of the word. Later on cooperative cataloguing systems were organised as consortia. As purchasing association in the networked environment the term „consortium“ is now widely used.

Over the last decades European research libraries have seen many projects around automated systems and information technology. Networking is, of course, one of the reasons why libraries have become more and more cooperative. Technological progress, particularly the enormous success of Internet and World-Wide Web, has also fostered the idea of library cooperation. With the development of electronic libraries the wish to acquire electronic contents such as databases and electronic journals at a reasonable price made libraries form „buying clubs“.

Describing the state of the art concerning library consortia in Europe the articles also show how in each country solutions have been found for organising consortia. In some cases new legal bodies have been established with professional staff who negotiate with the information providers. Funding varies considerably. While some countries provide central funding, other consortia solely rely on the financial resources of its members. The country reports give an overview of the technological, fiscal, organizational, political, and other dynamics well suited for what may be considered a resurgence of library consortia.

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