

The European Library Scene

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Europe and North America : Two Markets or One?

I am very honoured to participate in this international meeting organised by the Publisher Association and the Association of learned and professional society publishers.

I intend to address shortly in my personal capacity several issues of common interest to librarians and publishers. Despite the fact that librarians are buying and using foreign books and journals every day, such meetings of publishers, subscription agents and librarians are very rare at international level and they should receive more attention in continental Europe.

As you know, information is becoming more and more important for the future of Europe, for two reasons. At first because our continent is lacking in raw materials and will survive thanks to its know-how, but also because our industrial society is becoming an information society : information is vital not only for scientists, but also for industries and companies, big or small. This is why information services, including libraries, have an increasing importance.

Figures About Libraries

According to a CEC evaluation (1) dating from 1986:

- there are 75,000 libraries in the 12 countries of the E.C.
- they contain more than 1,000 million books
- they buy or receive 9,5 million journals
- they employ 250,000 people
- they lend 4,000 million books per year to 80 million library users - they spend 4,300 million ECUs per year.

Out of those 4,300 million ECUs:

- 48% are spent on the staff (2,100 million ECUs)
- 19% are spent on their acquisitions (810 million ECUs)

Out of those 810 million ECUs are spent on acquisitions

- 635 million ECUs (78%) are spent on books
- 140 million ECUs (17%) on periodicals

- 35 million ECUs (5 %) on other materials.

Those expenses vary according to the sectors:

- Public libraries spend 45% on staff and 13% on acquisitions (mainly on books)
- Higher education libraries spend 52% on staff and 27% on acquisitions (50% on books, 50% on serials).

Regional Discrepancies

Moreover, there are very huge discrepancies among the 12 EC countries. For example : out of 4,300 million ECUs spent by libraries;

more than:

- 28% - 1,253 million ECUs - are spent in UK libraries
- 12% - 530 million ECUs - in French libraries
- 7% - 277 million ECUs - in Danish libraries
- 2% - 76 million ECUs - in Spanish libraries

Discrepancies are even higher in National libraries : out of 218 million ECUs spent by National libraries in the 12 EC countries;

- 101 million ECUs (50%) are spent by the British Library
- 16 million ECUs (8%) by la Bibliotheque Nationale (Paris)
- 16 million ECUs (8%) by the Danish Royal Library
- 4 million ECUs (2%) by the Spanish National Library.

In fact, those discrepancies are not an accident at all. They result from the views of the general public about libraries in each country. In Great Britain and Scandinavia, libraries are seen as an information service necessary not only to students and scientists, but also to companies and any citizen. In Latin countries, libraries are seen as the place where old books are kept or where poor people can borrow books rather than buy them. Fortunately, the booming economy of Southern countries and the need of information for technological advancement will promote library use and library budgets throughout Europe.

CEC Action Plan

Thus, it is obvious that library services and library cooperation have to be promoted throughout the EC. This is the aim of the CEC Action Plan for libraries. After the 1984 resolution of the European Parliament for a European Bibliographic Database and the 1985 resolution of the European Council of Ministers for promoting library services and interconnecting library catalogues, the CEC started to be active in the field of libraries. Several CEC studies have been carried out:

1. the "LIB-2" studies on the state of the art in library automation in 12 EC countries (2)
2. the "LIB-ECON" where the above figures come from (1)
3. the "LIB-CON" about the state of the art in the field of preservation and conservation of library materials in Europe (3).

In July 1988, the CEC released its draft action plan for libraries. After receiving comments from different bodies related to libraries in the 12 countries, the CEC released a new version of its plan which has now to be adopted by the European Parliament and the European Council of Ministers.

This plan is addressing five large issues:

1. Machine readable national bibliographies and national union catalogues including retrospective conversion,
2. International linking of library systems (OSI protocol),
3. Innovative library services,
4. Commercially viable products and services for libraries,
5. Exchange of experiences and dissemination of knowledge between those responsible for libraries in EC.

The proposed budget of this plan of action is 95 million ECUs for five years. Selected projects could be funded from 20% to 100% by the CEC.

Librarianship

The number of qualified librarians is very different from country to country.

And we also see that, for example:

- * out of 56,000 trained librarians working in the 12 EC countries
 - 13,000 are working in UK,
 - but - 3,000 in Spain and 3,000 in Denmark.

- * out of 2,100 working in National libraries
 - 700 are working at the British Library
 - 350 are working at French Bibliotheque Nationale
 - 350 are working at Greek National Library
 - 120 are working at Danish National Library
 - 120 are working at Spanish National Library.

In most cases, their training is organised according to out of date programmes. Very often, librarians have learned Latin but do not understand English. I do not know any library school organising library visits abroad, even in very small countries like Belgium!

In many European countries the status of librarians is not attractive at all. In several Southern countries they are paid as much as secretaries. In Universities, chief librarians are professors working part time at the library without any training in librarianship. Another issue is that librarians are usually civil servants and may not be appointed abroad.

For those reasons, Library Associations in Europe are mainly national associations. The oldest, largest and most active is the UK Library Association with 25,000 members, by far the largest and oldest in Europe. The largest library associations in Latin Countries have only a few thousand members.

The idea of a European Library Association is still very unfamiliar among librarians but there are already two European library associations.

1. The first one is LIBER, founded 15 years ago, with about 150 members, mainly from North European Universities. Its meeting usually attracts about 50 librarians. LIBER is promoting a European register of microfilm masters and cooperative retrospective cataloguing in Europe.
2. The second one is the European Library Association for Health Information and Libraries, set up in 1987, after the First European Conference of Medical Libraries of 1986 in Brussels. EAHIL has reached 500 members from 20 European countries and attracted 600 participants in its Second European Conference of Medical Libraries in 1988 in Bologna.
3. Moreover, there are several other European groups of librarians: the group of Direction of National Libraries, the European Library Automation Group, etc.

The Rising Cost Of The Journals

How are European librarians reacting to the rising cost of many journals?

Their only reaction is to cancel the subscriptions of the less requested journals. Due to efficient document supply centres like the one of the British Library, the CNRS in Paris, the TIB in Hanover and due to on-line union catalogues and teleordering services (in France and Netherlands), document delivery services becoming so efficient in Europe that journal cancellations are not harmful in the case of rarely requested journals AND of articles which can be reproduced cheaply. In fact, librarians are ready to cancel journal subscriptions when the subscription cost is close to the total cost of article reproductions when cancellation takes place. But librarians have also to produce article reproductions for other libraries and they need money for this additional work. Thus a few librarians could agree to raise the prices of article reproductions not only for paying temporary or additional staff but also because more expensive article reproductions will be an argument for maintaining more journals subscriptions. And they would not mind if this higher price of article reproductions would include royalties for the copyright, as it is already the case with the ADONIS CD-ROM.

In fact higher prices for article reproductions will benefits to the whole book sector, library publishers and subscription agents. This is my personal feeling, and I am convinced that several European librarians could accept such idea.

If we do not see yet any collective reaction of librarians in Europe about the rising cost of the journals (even in UK) it is quite different in USA and I am very interested in the common work of Association Research Library and American Sciences Society. However, even if I agree that uncontrolled subscription costs are a real threat for scientific communication, I personally feel that controlling the production costs of journals is beyond librarians competence.

On the other hand, librarians could claim that they already pay "institutional subscriptions" which are often twice as much as individual subscriptions; so they have an excellent argument for refusing to pay any royalties on the copyright in such cases.

Copyright

The question of copyright in libraries has been addressed in several European countries and in a few cases practical solutions have been found at national level. For example, French libraries are

regularly paying royalties to publishers - but only to French publishers - for reproduction of French but not French publications! Obviously, such issues should be handled at international level.

Electronic Publishing

About electronic publishing one can say that despite many efforts since 10 Years full text data bases have not yet taken off in Europe. In fact, authors stick to the paper edition, and authors are also readers and subscribers! There are other reasons : the costs of telecommunications and the national barriers in Europe. However, the two years ADONIS experiment is very interesting : as it is already the case with the abstract journals *Excerpta Medica*, libraries could buy the paper edition and the ADONIS CD-ROM of 218 European Medical journals. Both editions could be complementary : CD-ROM could save the binding of volumes and the space needed for old sets. Moreover, they could facilitate article reproduction, save library staff time and bring royalties to publishers as is already the case in 12 document supply centres using the Adonis CD-ROM (4).

But at this stage the main progress of new information technologies is related to the transfer of bibliographic data. The electronic transfer of bibliographic data started with on line data bases 20 years ago, but users have to afford telecommunications costs and computer costs. Now, thanks to microcomputers and CD-ROM, bibliographic data is widely available at a very reasonable cost and can be used on any PC by librarian and end users. However, I personally query why publishers do not provide libraries with the bibliographic data of their journals. Most of them are still refusing to print the bar code of their ISSN, which could accelerate the "check-in" procedure in many libraries! In fact, libraries buy at a very high cost bibliographic data in machine readable form which is already available in printed form in their journals. Thus they pay twice for the same information : once to publishers, once to data base producers. Improved cooperation between librarians and publishers should lead to the distribution of printed journals with their bibliographic data in machine readable form. This data will be used in many on-line catalogues and promote the use of the journals in all computerised libraries.

I hope this swift overview of a few issues of common interest to librarians and publishers has been of interest and that we shall have opportunities to exchange our views at this and later meetings in UK and other countries.

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