

Official Opening and Welcome to the Netherlands “The Netherlands, Land Of Serials”

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I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you all to this First European Serials Conference in Noordwijkerhout, a quiet location for the conference, but so near to the beautiful coast of The Netherlands, as well as in the middle of very interesting Dutch cities such as The Hague, Leiden and, of course, Amsterdam.

I am very honoured that I was invited to open this conference on serials management and I would like to welcome you specially on behalf of the Dutch Library Association. Having been a librarian of a faculty of medicine and being at present the University Librarian of one of the technological universities in the Netherlands, I am very much aware of the great importance of the serials as a tool in information transfer. I am also aware of the special problems and complications that can occur in the field of serials management.

There are more reasons, apart from this special role in information transfer, why periodicals are of great importance for the librarian. Periodicals form an important part in the acquisition budgets of Higher Education and University Libraries. This is very well illustrated by a study of the commission of the European Community, the results of which are published in a report, called “Information Management, a study of library economics in the European Communities”. The report was published in 1988 and gives us some interesting figures:

Estimated distribution of Revenue Expenditure on acquisitions (1981 : 85) - Millions of ECU p.a.

EC Libraries by sector:

Materials Acquired	Public	National	Higher Education
Books	326.5 (86%)	16.2 (66%)	74.8 (47%)
Periodicals	20.8 (5%)	5.0 (20%)	79.2 (49%)
Other	32.6 (9%)	3.4 (14%)	5.8 (4%)
	379.9 (100%)	24.6 (100%)	159.8 (100%)

These of course are overall figures and, as you all know for the science and technology libraries the percentages are far more dramatic. For instance in my own library, with a budget for collection development of yearly more than Dfl 2.000.000,

70% is spent on serials! It is obvious that for financial reasons serials are of great importance, because of the fact that the subscriptions are mostly financial commitments for many years with binding costs on top of it.

Another interesting result in the study was the comparison of the number of current periodicals in the different countries of the European Community with a total of over 7.5 million titles.

Current Periodical Titles (all sectors):

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Belgium	321,072	321,072	321,072	321,072	321,072
Denmark	120,638	114,553	130,665	126,595	131,398
Eire	59,093	59,402	59,220	59,586	59,252
France	828,643	828,996	835,289	839,302	844,839
Germany	899,955	877,522	879,155	920,714	922,341
Greece	174,191	174,191	174,191	174,191	174,191
Italy	1,064,603	1,064,603	1,064,603	1,064,603	1,064,603
Luxem'g	9,127	9,227	9,277	9,327	9,427
Nether'd	2,534,692	2,556,992	2,543,592	2,549,908	2,546,296
Portugal	32,147	32,147	32,147	32,147	32,147
Spain	488,451	525,277	510,887	508,205	508,205
U. K.	955,897	958,388	961,985	971,700	960,590
EEC	7,488,509	7,522,370	7,522,083	7,577,351	7,574,451

From these figures it is very clear that my country is astonishingly rich with respect to current titles. More than one third of all the current periodical titles in the European Community can be found in the Netherlands! This could be a result of the (former?) good education in foreign languages at Dutch schools. However, I have my doubts about the reality of these numbers. I am afraid that the “estimates” that were made in the study are not as accurate as they should be. Nevertheless I was very pleased to read the results and this, in combination with the existence of some big publishers and subscription agents in my country, inspired me to give my opening speech the title as mentioned “The Netherlands, land of serials”. However, I don't think that this is the reason why this conference is held in the Netherlands, but if one has to give some reason this might be an acceptable one.

So far I have talked about serials and periodicals, between which, I must admit, I do not know the exact difference. Maybe there is no difference in the meaning of those two words; maybe it is the difference between American and English but if there is a real difference, I would be most grateful if you would inform me about that later on during the conference. I also would like to give some attention to the organisation: "The United Kingdom Serials Group", or as you say, "The UK Serials Group".

Having analysed the most recent membership list of July 1st 1990 I wonder whether its name is correct or whether as we say in The Netherlands, the flag covers the cargo. My analysis resulted in following figures:

Members	Total	Institutional		Personal	
		95%	5%		
Total	476	452	24	(15;9)	
1. UK	325 (68.0%)	318	7	(5;2)	29%
2. USA	31 (7.0%)	19	12	(8;4)	50%
3. Netherlands	12 (2.5%)	12	0		
4. Sweden	11 (2.5%)	11	0		
5. Australia	11 (2.5%)	11	0		
6. W. Germany	8	7	1	(1)	
7. 21 others	78 (16.0%)	54	4	(2;2)	

Having analysed these statistics I think the best way to describe your organisation is:

"An international serials association for private companies and libraries however with a personal, mostly American flavour and, as a whole, a female friendly organisation". Now this is of course all nonsense, but there is a serious background for me in performing this analysis.

Already some years ago Mr. Adrian Swets suggested to the Board of the Dutch Library Association the possibility of establishing a serials group as a special division within the association. It was considered to be a good suggestion and the Board agreed that the necessary steps should be taken and asked me to do so. I feel rather embarrassed that I have to confess to you that I have not done very much on this topic since that time. Today, however, I think it is a proper opportunity to improve my performance and I am happy that I can now announce the fact that

I succeeded to get collaboration of some colleagues, both vendors and librarians, to participate in a preparatory committee. The committee consists of the following persons:

Mr. Vittali, Swets
 Mr. Van Ewuk, Faxon
 Mr. Van Lotringen, Elsevier
 Mr. Van Ginneken, Librarian, Wageningen
 Mrs. Dolk, Librarian, Hoogovens - Umuiden

I myself, as president of the Dutch Library Association, will chair the committee.

There is another reason why this moment might be very appropriate. Some months ago the Dutch Foundation for Scientific and Technical Information collapsed. The foundation was meant to be a panel for all parties involved in the information-chain; from author up to reader and all the steps in between. It appeared to be too ambitious, too heterogenous, with too many conflicting interests. So this unique foundation, which it was in a way, disappeared from the Dutch scene and a special part of it might come back in the new "Dutch Serials Group".

In this respect the Editorial in your journal, "Serials", volume 3 of July this year is interesting as well. In this editorial, John Cowley, applauds the initiative in organising this First European Serial Conference and expresses his expectation that it would be amazing if the conference would not result in, I quote, "some kind of European Serials Group and a sequence of conferences located around Europe". He later on even states that "it is not difficult to envisage the creation of a European Serials Group with over a thousand members, perhaps with national sub-committees, each acting in turn as host to an annual conference..." It is also interesting to see that attempts are under way to establish a "European Library Association" with special reference to Europe 1992 and the EC plan of action for libraries.

It might well be that this association would host different interest groups and that the European Serials Interest Group would be a division within the European Library Association. There is however, also some concern about the growing number of all kinds of library associations and conferences. We must be very much aware of the danger in creating too much of a good thing resulting in a completely fragmented field with lots of duplication of effort on the one hand and too heavy a burden on the "active colleagues", the organisers, and the participants as well on the other. However I assume this problem will be dealt with in the workshops which are planned for tomorrow.

Finally back to this conference. As you probably have noticed there are some very interesting papers and the social events are more than attractive. I hope you will have a fruitful conference with stimulating discussions, the establishment of new personal contacts or renewals of them and that you will enjoy the social programme and my country very much.

I have pleasure in declaring this conference open. □