

OCLC PICA: a European Library Membership Organisation

by JANET MITCHELL LEES

As always it is a great pleasure to attend a LIBER conference and be once again at the University of Graz. I am sure this past year has been a busy one for you – it certainly has for me in terms of the creation of the new OCLC PICA organisation.

My purpose today is to provide you with an update on these events, to outline OCLC's strategic priorities and OCLC PICA's involvement in them. Before I do so I would like to say how much OCLC PICA welcomes the opportunity to become a LIBER Main Sponsor. Both OCLC Europe and Pica have been active within LIBER for many years and this new more formalised relationship has the opportunity to strengthen that link.

The vision of OCLC is to become a global library cooperative serving libraries and their users worldwide through the creation of a more extended and distributed structure that will provide for more regional autonomy and development of products and services that are locally prioritised and supported yet globally linked. This vision is underpinned by new regional nodes forming an extended WorldCat; new definitions of membership and contribution aimed at increasing the attractiveness of OCLC membership, particularly outside the US.

The foundation of the new vision was begun in 1999 when the OCLC Board of Trustees appointed an Advisory Council on Strategic Directions and Governance. This group reported in December 2000 and the full report, including a global environmental scan, discussion of organisational models that OCLC could adopt and actions that OCLC might take, is available on the OCLC web site¹ The report confirmed OCLC's not for profit status and a basic governance structure of Council and Board but renamed the Council as Members Council. The Council was increased in size from 60 to 66 delegates to include 6 new country delegates representing library communities in France, Netherlands, South Africa, Mexico, China and Japan.

The report also set up an Ad hoc Committee on Membership that would seek to expand the opportunities of membership particularly for libraries outside the US and the recommendations to increase the tiers of membership to three was ratified at the May 2002 Members Council.

The change in membership is reflected in the change to the definition of contribution which is now more broadly defined as the „sharing of intellectual resources for the benefit of others” – this new definition goes beyond the sharing of cataloguing to include cooperative reference and resource sharing, cooperative preservation and access to digital resources and also to extend membership beyond libraries to include archives and museums.

Current European representation in OCLC's governance structure includes Chris Bailey, University of Glasgow as one of two delegates representing the EMEA region and country delegates Wim van Drimmelen (Netherlands) and Francoise Lemelle (France). At Board level Christine Deschamps six year term expires in November 2002 when Ian Mowat will begin his term. Whilst talking of the Board it is interesting to note that last month the OCLC Board met for the first time outside the US – in France and that several Board members spent time visiting libraries in the UK, Netherlands and France.

The new OCLC PICA organisation launched in January 2002 creates the first regional node in OCLC's extended global cooperative. It provides a European based technical and development presence with the intent that this will provide a catalyst for further European library cooperation and a strong European involvement in global resource sharing. It is also the intent that OCLC PICA working with library consortia and groups such as LIBER should provide educational support and leadership to the European library community including our colleagues in the enlarged Europe.

OCLC PICA is the merger of the former OCLC Europe, the Middle East and Africa branch office in Birmingham UK and the Pica office in Leiden, in the Netherlands. The new organisation OCLC PICA bv is headquartered and registered in the Netherlands with two shareholders – OCLC Inc and Stichting Pica.

The new organisation begins operation with three regional offices. The Birmingham office will serve libraries in the UK, Ireland, Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Southern Africa. The Leiden office will serve libraries in the Benelux countries, Germany, Austria and Switzerland and the new Paris office will serve libraries in France and the Mediterranean - from Portugal through Italy, Slovenia, Turkey and including Israel.

The OCLC PICA Information Technology Centre will continue to operate from the Leiden headquarters together with the Directorate led by the new Managing Director Rein van Charldorp appointed in April 2002.

Now to focus on three strategic directions for the new organisation:

Firstly the creation of the European node of the extended WorldCat – a union catalogue of union catalogues with the working name of EUCAT. This will be a physical database with a meta-index that can be best described as Google – like with bibliographic records that are linked not merged so that the original bibliographic standards are preserved.

We envisage three levels of partnerships to EUCAT with libraries and union catalogue owners who might supply both bibliographic and holdings data, only bibliographic data or Z39.50 access to their files. All partners will be supported by authorisation and authentication services and ISO-ILL gateways.

For users EUCAT will provide a single resource to bibliographic and holdings information of European libraries. For librarians this will provide the basis for improved interlending and document delivery services together with a link to US WorldCat and other regional nodes as they are developed. For regional union catalogue hosts it will provide the opportunity to outsource end user access services and access to 3rd party content to OCLC PICA.

The second strategic direction is in the area of digital preservation. Whilst preservation is far from new to libraries the challenge of digital preservation is great. OCLC's programme is based on providing toolsets, preservation resources centers and the creation of a digital archive to support the entire life cycle of collections including both analogue and digital objects.

The first digital preservation toolset is a partnership with Olive software, the creators of ActivePaper Archive that was tested last year in a pilot project between OCLC, the British Library, the Centre for Refugee Studies at the University of Oxford and Olive Software to create an XML repository and fully searchable web interface to such difficult to access materials as historic newspapers and pamphlet collections. A second partnership is with ContentDM developed with the University of Washington which provides a suite of programmes to digitise, index and access to text, visual, audio and other collections through the web.

The digital preservation centres provide outsourcing services to libraries around the world. The initial centre in Bethlehem Pennsylvania has been joined recently by new centres in Lacey Washington in the Eastern US and through a joint venture with the Royal Library in the Hague to create the first centre in Europe under the new Strata Preservation name. Services provided

by these centres include preservation microfilming, digital scanning, Olive distillation, metadata creation, preservation archiving, advice and consultancy.

OCLC has been investigating electronic archiving for nearly a decade. Building on previous standards work and collaboration, notably with RLG, OCLC has this year created a prototype ingest process and archive based on the OAIS reference model and Oracles 9i content management products that has been beta tested by the web archiving community including the University of Edinburgh who have been exploring the digital preservation of their University Calendar. With the completion of the pilot the project is now a production service aimed at the web archiving community whilst OCLC moves on to explore other object types such as historic newspapers and e-journals.

The third and final strategic direction is e-content and its associated opportunities for new value and supply chains for scholarly publications. The first example is OCLC's partnership with BioOne, a collection of some 40 plus e-journals and one e-book in the biological, ecological and environmental sciences that is offered through OCLC's FirstSearch and Electronic Collections Online services. BioOne was developed in cooperation with the academic research library community as a SPARC initiative.

The second example is netLibrary, the e-book provider OCLC acquired in January 2002. Rich Rosy who now leads netLibrary will be presenting a paper tomorrow so I will not steal his thunder today.

OCLC's acquisition of netLibrary underlines its commitment and the commitment of libraries to an e-future and the need to build the collection size and depth, including international scope of the catalogue, and use the strength of the global library cooperative to develop and share best practices both between libraries and between libraries and publishers to develop acceptable licensing and best practices.

In conclusion OCLC PICA marks a new chapter in the evolution of the OCLC library cooperative and a new, and hopefully exciting journey that you will want to help mould and share with us.

REFERENCES

- 1 <<http://www.oclc.org>>.