Editorial

by TRIX BAKKER

The articles in this issue are a mix of contributions. The first two articles are still from the LIBER 34th Annual General Conference in Groningen. Leo Waaijers, one of the two keynote speakers at the conference started to question whether libraries and publishers will be able to meet the future needs of their users and financiers. This question raises a problem for publishers: users want open access for their learning and research processes while financiers want exclusive and highly prized products. The outlook for libraries is exciting because libraries are transforming themselves into partners with their university in setting up virtual learning environments and taking part in organising virtual research environments or collaboratories. Libraries are set to metamorphose into 'libratories' with their combined functions of library, repository and collaboratory. The big search engines and institutional repositories are gaining a firm footing.

Ulrich Niederer started his presentation with a description of IDS (Informationsverbund Deutschschweiz), the information network of German speaking Switzerland, a network of 7 university libraries and their local networks since 1996. These libraries use ExLibris' Aleph 500 as their library management system (LMS). The IDS projects of cooperation concentrated on two areas: a common and unified set or rules for cataloguing based on the US-MARC format (including searching the catalogues) and user services, the 'Shared User File' (SUF) - one-time registration for all 7 libraries. The SUF, operational since April 2004, has been quite a success within the IDS libraries and for their users, and it turned out to be an ideal basis for the IDS-wide pick-up service.

A related but slightly different project in Switzerland is BibliOpass about which Alexis Rivier and Jean-Marc Rod wrote an article. BibliOpass is a multi-institutional library card, initiated by RERO (Réseau des Bibliothèques de Suisse Occidentale) in 2000. CBU (Conférence des bibliothèques universitaires suisses), the Conference of Swiss University Libraries, adopted it for the whole of Switzerland in 2003. More than 600 libraries throughout Switzerland are at present involved in the BibliOpass network. A patron registered as a 'normal user' in his or her main library may borrow items in any other library without needing to obtain a new user card or paying extra fees, but he has to be registered separately in each library.

John Hall wrote a short exposé of a similar project SCONUL Research Extra, a cooperative access and borrowing scheme for staff and research students in UK and Irish higher education institutions, serving almost the entire membership of SCONUL, the Society of College, National and University Libraries. SCONUL Research Extra (SRX) was launched in June 2003. Only academic and research staff or postgraduate students pursuing higher degrees exclusively by research are eligible. The SRX card has a validity of 3 years. SCONUL Research Extra has been a great success since its inception and it operates seamlessly and very effectively. In 2005 libraries have reported 95.000 items borrowed under SRX. The organising committee is considering how to extend operations beyond the UK and Ireland and interact with other similar services in Australia (CAUL) and Canada (CARL) e.g.

On 10 February 2006 a meeting of a group of LIBER members (a.o. Ulrich Niederer and John Hall), organised by Paul Ayris, took place at the University College London (UCL) about a LIBER Passport. The motive of this meeting was that a recent review of LIBER activity had made recommendations for the future [1] and, among other things, had suggested initiating a 'passport' card for access to research collections in European libraries for European researchers. It was agreed that the SCONUL SRX scheme was a model, which might be scaled up across Europe for LIBER members. It was also agreed to check whether the host of BiblOpass - RERO - has statistics on the use and success of that scheme. LIBER should badge the scheme, which has the consequence that funding should be required through LIBER to cover set-up costs and annual running costs. The potential of the scheme is such that it provides an incentive for new members to join LIBER because it has many benefits, such as: it is an added-value service that libraries can advertise to members, researchers would enjoy easier access to Europe's research collections, and it would increase the efficiency of researchers. It was also agreed to discuss the scheme at the Annual General Meeting at the LIBER Conference in Uppsala in July 2006.

Peter Fox wrote an overview of LIBER's past, present and future. The LIBER organisation was founded in 1971 and evolved from a small number of library directors to a real organisation of over 350 members. In 2001 a review of LIBER's role was undertake by a Task Force to prepare a *Vision for LIBER's strategy 2003-2006*, which was approved at the Annual General Assembly in Rome in June 2003. The Executive Board from then on started to consider how the vision should be turned into an action plan. In order to identify a role of a more service-orientated body which provides direct support to its members and ads value to their work by facilitating the development of new services, the Board employed the London firm, MacDougall Consulting Ltd in late 2003 to review the current landscape of library organisations in Europe and to consider the activities of similar bodies in North America and Australia. The resulting

[report](#) led to two meetings with representatives of US and European organisations, in January 2005 and in July 2005. The outcome of this last meeting was a workplan with a list of new activities to be carried out in 2005 and 2006. Results will be presented to the Annual General Assembly in Uppsala in July 2006.

Raf Dekeyser's article gives a chronological overview of the LIBER workshops on the [Open Archives Initiative](#) (OAI) at CERN, Geneva, organised by the [LIBER Access Division](#). The Open Archives Initiative - which started in October 1999 - was seen by the LIBER Executive Board as of great importance with its possible impact on the processes of scholarly communication, and therefore indirectly also on research libraries. The first workshop was held 22 till 24 March 2001. Every one and a half year there was another workshop. Raf concludes his article that the series of OAI workshops "has created a real forum on the European level, where all people involved in the creation and implementation of e-print archives can meet, exchange ideas and experiences and obtain first-hand support from the specialists in the field. The number of participants has increased from 68 (OAI1) to 150 (OAI2) and 190 (OAI3), whereas the number of represented countries was respectively 14, 18 and 31."

Almuth Gastinger wrote a very informative and compact summary of the 8th International Bielefeld Conference, from 7-9 February at the Bielefeld University Library in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. The subject this year was [Academic Library and Information Services: New Paradigms for the Digital Age](#). The conference focused on 'Information Services'. The World Wide Web has become the central platform for all types of information services. What does this mean for libraries and librarians? What roles will they play and what needs to be changed? The main topics were: Joint Strategies and Transnational Networks for Academic Libraries and Information Services; Re-thinking Information Services - Challenges for Library Managers and Innovative Services for Libraries; and Searching Scholarly Information in the Digital Age - Challenges and Opportunities for Academic Libraries. You'll find the conference presentations at the conference homepage and the proceedings will be published later this year in *Library Hi Tech*.

On February 23 and 24, 2006, a Workshop on Preservation Microfilming was held at the National Library of Portugal in Lisbon. The workshop was set up as a joint initiative of the Biblioteca Nacional (Lisbon) and the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (The Hague), and carried out under the umbrella of the [LIBER Preservation Division](#). The Workshop aimed to raise awareness about technical issues that can affect the quality of microfilms. Hans van Dormolen led the Workshop. Together with Maria Luisa Cabral he sent in an article about the main topic of this workshop: sensitometry, a photographic science, which studies the relationship between light, contrast, density and the development of a film. Besides being this just a technical issue, this is also a management issue concerning the safeguarding of our memory and cultural heritage.

NOTES

1. See Peter Fox' article in this issue: "Changing LIBER"

WEB SITES REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT

8th International Bielefeld Conference 2006: Academic Library and Information Services: New Paradigms for the Digital Age. http://conference.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/

BibliOpass. http://www.bibliopass.ch/

CBU – Conférence des bibliothèques universitaires suisses. http://www.kub-cbu.ch/

Future of LIBER, January 2004. http://www.kb.dk/liber/news/liberfuture.htm

IDS - Informationsverbund Deutschschweiz. http://www.zb3.unizh.ch/ids/

LIBER Access Division. http://www.kb.dk/liber/division/access/

LIBER Preservation Division. http://www.kb.dk/liber/division/preserv/

OAI - Open Archives Initiative. http://www.openarchives.org/

RERO - Réseau des Bibliothèques de Suisse Occidentale. http://www.rero.ch/

SCONUL - Society of College, National and University Libraries. http://www.sconul.ac.uk/

SCONUL Research Extra. http://www.sconul.ac.uk/use_lib/srx/

Vision for LIBER's strategy 2003-2006. http://www.kb.dk/guests/intl/liber/vision/visionstatement.htm