"Libraries of the Future": the sixty-first annual International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions general conference

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The 1995 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) General Conference took place in Istanbul, Turkey, August 20–26, 1995. The theme was "Libraries of the Future," reflecting contemporary challenges. As IFLA President Robert Wedgeworth remarked, while "we generate excitement about new programs, new technologies, and fresh ideas, let us not forget that millions of people around the world are trapped in a world of ignorance due to illiteracy and poverty."

This description may not fit Turkey, but it appeared that Turkish people are not used to reading extensively even if Turkish libraries are quite well developed. Hospital libraries have small budgets, little equipment, and reduced staffs, but research libraries communicate through the Internet. Nevertheless, the participation and enthusiasm of Turkish librarians at the conference was apparent: 625 were present among 2,390 total participants. Young librarians from Turkish library schools were very helpful in directing participants to the various meeting locations.

The biomedical section

A number of issues were discussed at the Biomedical Standing Committee meetings. Concern about the diminishing number of committee members was addressed. Special efforts will be made during the next two years to recruit new officers. The section also worked on distributing the section newsletter in electronic format by January 1996, on the IFLA server, IFLANET. The first electronic issue appeared in February. The section brochure is also available on IFLANET. In addition, the standing committee adopted a new goal regarding the development of new leaders in medical librarianship. The focus will be on the younger or more junior medical librarians in the country in which the IFLA meeting is held.

Finally, the section prepared a program for the IFLA conference in Beijing in August 1996. The theme was to be "The Challenge of Change: Libraries and Economic Development." The section program was to consist of four papers contributed by authors from the People's Republic of China and three papers from the United States, Canada, and Finland with the theme "East Meets West in Medical Librarianship."

A year of elections

This was a year of elections: new officers for the Biological and Medical Sciences Libraries Section were chosen. To ensure democratic elections, section members were invited by mail, prior to the Istanbul meeting, to nominate officers. Respondents unanimously selected Frances Groen, deputy director of McGill Libraries in Montreal, Canada, as chair; however, she declined. Jean-Philippe Accart, head librarian of the French Ministry of Work and Health, accepted the position when the present chair was unable to accept a renomination. Monique Cleland, hospital librarian in Lausanne, Switzerland, will serve a second term as secretary and treasurer for the 1995–1997 term. Christine Deschamps of the University of Paris, an active member of the section, was elected to the Executive Board of IFLA.

Joint program on archiving electronic journals

Frances Groen, as chair of the committee for the Istanbul conference, was responsible for the professional program. During the previous conference, the committee had agreed to hold a joint open session with the Section of Science and Technology Libraries with the theme "Archiving Electronic Journals." This session was very well attended, with about 120 participants. With Patricia Yocum of the University of Michigan as moderator, four speakers provided the perspectives of an editor, a vendor, a provider, and a librarian.

Wim Luijendijk, vice president of EBSCO-Europe, presented a paper from the serial information provider's perspective, asserting that products and services provided by all will have to change, but that missions will stay the same [1]. Although traditionally handled by librarians, archiving of electronic journals could be handled by publishers, libraries, serial information vendors, or even back-issue dealers. Document delivery providers will be involved in the archiving of articles in anticipation of customer requests, Luijendijk said.

Christian Lupovici, production director at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique-Institut National de l'Information Scientifique et Technique (CNRS-INIST) in France, spoke about the impact of electronic publishing [2]. Information systems and
procedures are changing a great deal with the use of
digitized information. Authors are now able to pub-
ish and distribute their own work, and libraries and
document-delivery centers have to change the way
they work, particularly with informatics and telecom-
munications tools. The INIST, which is both a data-
base producer (with PASCAL) and a document-de-
delivery center, could serve as a link between these two
activities.

Chris Kluiters, from Elsevier Publishing, talked
about the first commercial pilot project in Europe to
make available electronically 120 journals published
by Elsevier Science in the fields of economics, com-
puter science, and applied mathematics, at the cam-
pus network of Tilburg University in the Netherlands
[3]. In particular, he discussed issues regarding li-
cense, including authorized user communities, au-
 thorized usage, user feedback, and commercial terms
and conditions.

Finally, Bela Hatvany, president of SilverPlatter In-
f ormation Ltd., United Kingdom, gave an imagina-
tive talk on a virtual worldwide library [4].

Two reactors, Yaşar Tonta of the University of An-
kara and Jean-Philippe Accart, and audience mem-
ers posed additional questions: Can electronic pub-
lishing be considered a linear extension of printing?
Does the kind of communication permitted by elec-
tronic publishing have anything to do with printing?
Other points raised included the concern that pro-
viders of electronic data generally collect data cov-
ering only the previous few years, and that many
new providers cover different years; this makes it
necessary for librarians to check various sources, re-
quiring additional expense and effort. Many provid-
ers collect data from their own lists of journals and
documents, so there is no single source users can turn
to in every instance.

The session had a definite impact on participants
and speakers. Participants agreed that digitized doc-
uments lend themselves to the use of retrieval tools
as well as to various simultaneous forms of storage
(e.g., plain text, database format, hypertext). Elc-
tronic text may serve as a much more efficient tool
for recording archive knowledge than do print ma-
terials, but for users, two other considerations may
be more important: access to and accuracy of the in-
formation. Librarians need to remember this.

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