

Co-operation in Collection Development : Summary of the Meeting of the Division of Collection Development, Prague, July 1999

by ANN WADE

Chair: Ann Wade, The British Library
Speakers: Bernard Naylor, Southampton University Library; Trix Bakker,
The Royal Library (KB), The Hague; Jacqueline Dubois,
Bibliothèque Musée de l'Homme, Paris.
Rapporteur: Elisabeth Eide

Bernard Naylor gave a summary of some important milestones leading up to the present situation in library co-operation in the UK. From 1979 to 1986 three reports from the UK Library and Information Services Council on the future development of libraries had been published. The reports had argued for a cross sectoral approach to any attempts at co-operation, for a regional focus, and for local information plans. The reports also emphasized that all planning involved participation both from the top/down and from the bottom/up. All reports had made clear that only limited funds would be available for future planning.

Early in the 1990's, the UK witnessed an increasing tendency to focus on co-operation among libraries as a contribution towards strengthening the support for academic research. The Follett report (1993), prepared for the UK Higher Education Funding Councils, is strongly permeated with this theme. The report proposed special „Non-Formula“ Funding (NFF) for research collections in humanities and focused on developing resource description and electronic access to the collections. Money was allocated not only to individual libraries for the improvement of resource description and electronic access but also for the development of co-operative projects among libraries which would help to strengthen academic research. A number of projects were instigated and carried out. Another outcome of the Follett report, the Electronic Library (eLib) programme, also placed major emphasis on the pursuit of co-operation, through innovative initiatives in electronic services. A

third major theme, urged on libraries by the Joint Information Systems Committee of the Higher Education Funding Councils (JISC) encouraged the adoption of information strategy statements. JISC was also a prime mover in discussions with the UK Publishers' Association, aimed at resolving some of the difficulties (such as copyright and licensing) which are being highlighted by the increase in electronic access.

A further stage in the follow-up to the Follett report came in 1995 with the Anderson report „on a national/regional strategy for library provision for researchers“ which argued strongly that special funds should be allocated to those libraries which incurred significant additional costs as a result of making their collections more widely available. Anderson also advocated that groups of libraries should come together to see what they, from a managerial point of view, could achieve through joint efforts. There would be no funding for acquisitions, but selective retro-conversion would be supported. The Research Support Libraries Programme (RSLP) is now giving effect to the Anderson Report. Again the allocation of awards is project driven; one applies for grants for specific projects.

Since the appearance of the Anderson Report, several initiatives can be observed which run in parallel with the themes of Anderson, such as:

- the formation of the CURL (Consortium of University Research Libraries) Resource Management Group, which is exploring what can be done to promote collaboration in collection development, exploitation and preservation among the member libraries of the consortium;
- a renewed emphasis at the British Library on the theme of collaboration with other libraries, with the allocation of a special budget;
- the collaborative efforts of the Scottish research libraries, which benefit from the greater cohesiveness and, in some respects, from the smaller scale of their activities;
- the initiative between JISC and the US National Science Foundation, which is aimed at promoting library collaboration across national boundaries;
- the activities of certain purchasing consortia which are taking on an increasing importance in the UK.

The situation is therefore one in which there is a range of activities which have collaboration and co-operation as central elements. One important task for all those associated with these projects is to ensure that there is satisfactory co-ordination among the various players. There is strong cross-

membership among the various groups and it is to be hoped that, as a result of this, the picture which will emerge will be coherent and, in itself, well coordinated.

Trix Bakker talked about 'Resource sharing in Dutch Libraries, a brief sketch of the last few years'.

Stagnant or declining budgets had, since the 1980's, forced the libraries to pay more attention to resource sharing. The decline in budgets had coincided with improved means of communication and document delivery and the result had been increased national (and international) co-operation between libraries in the fields of interlibrary loans and document deliveries.

In the Netherlands bibliographical information has been available, through the shared automated cataloging system (GGC) of the Pica, a centre for library automation and online information, since 1978. Another Dutch service is the ILL information function that forms, together with the Netherlands' Central Catalogue (NCC) the NCC/IBL system. This system, comprising bibliographical records of 12 million books, 500,000 periodical titles and records of electronic documents, music, maps and manuscripts, has been operational since 1983.

In 1990 Pica developed the Open Library Network (OBNF), where SURF, the organisation for advancement of computer sciences in higher education and scientific research, provided the network infrastructure. By means of this network users may now search not only their own catalogues, but the NCC, 15 local catalogues, 6 regional catalogues and 20 documentary databases in various specialist fields. In 1992 the OBNF also gave access to the Pica Online Contents (OLC) database which contains references to all articles that appear in more than 12,000 current, mostly academic periodicals. In 1997 Pica developed PiCarta, an integrated multimedia database with request facilities offering access to online resources and electronic documents. This implies that a user can search several databases in one search.

Even though the technological infrastructure in the Netherlands was well developed, the traditional task of building up and managing collections had been left to the individual libraries. When the number of volumes acquired by 13 university libraries were reduced by 30 - 50 % from 1980 to 1990 and the serials claimed more and more of the annual budgets, it became evident that something had to be done.

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Since 1993 cooperation in collection development, linked to discussion platforms between collection development librarians at discipline level, has intensified. Collecting and collection profiles are made with the Conspectus method and with Dutch Basis Classification (BC) which is also used for shared indexing. With the Conspectus method the libraries rank their collections and current collecting intensities by some 2,000 subject headings of the BC on a scale of 1 - 5. The profiles thus made have proved useful in negotiations with the faculties, in contacts with new institutes, with partners of a consortium etc. In other words: a profile can be used as a collection management instrument to develop collections more efficiently and effectively.

In 1995 the Royal Library (KB) set up a research project to assess the coverage of foreign titles held by Dutch libraries as compared with German academic collections. On average the coverage was 70 %, but for a number of disciplines in the humanities the coverage was substantially lower. In June 1996 five universities came to an agreement with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences to maintain a broad and differentiated national co-ordinated supply of material on the humanities. This agreement led to another research project concerning the humanities collections in six universities and the KB. The aim of this project was:

- a) to develop an efficient and effective approach to collection management,
- b) to get additional funding from the Ministry.

The final report has led to an extra funding of 5 million guilders for the years 1998-99. The money thus allocated must go to additional national collection building where the material becomes available through the NCC-IBL system. Possible continuation of funding will depend upon results reached. A distribution of scholarly disciplines that will obtain enhanced funding has been made between seven libraries, based on the number of professional chairs for those disciplines, the budgets and on the collection development profiles.

Jacqueline Dubois talked about 'A new Era of Co-operation between the Bibliotheque Nationale de France (BnF) and the 'poles associes', the example of the Bibliotheque Musee de l'Homme'.

The initiative to co-operate in France came initially from the BnF, and it took as its starting point the many lacunas at the BnF. The library made a survey of 28 scientific collections at various other institutions in Paris and in the

provinces. In certain areas the BnF felt that they, or another institution, needed to make an extra effort to enlarge their collections in order to increase the possibilities for scholarly research within the country.

15 specialized libraries, whose collections needed supplementing in some of their fields of study and where the BnF collections also fell short of the desired level, agreed to participate in the BnF scheme to strengthen the national research resource. A programme for strengthening, between the BnF and these 'poles associes', was set up for the years 1994 – 1998. BnF undertook to allocate funding, and the selected libraries undertook to:

- develop their collections within a specified field, and in close cooperation with the collections at the BnF;
- catalogue and classify all documents acquired;
- make their resources available to local and remote users.

Money was allocated on a yearly basis, with an assessment of the results achieved at the end of each year. As regards the results at the Musee de l'Homme this programme worked very well the first year. Money was forthcoming and quite a lot of extra material could be purchased. But the next year became problematic because the whole transaction of acquiring materials from all over the world (ordering, receiving, managing invoices and making payment to the vendors) could not be completed within one year. Managing the allocation took more than one year and impacted upon the regularity of the incoming allocations. From the experience of the Musee de l'Homme, the speaker concluded that the programme would work well on a biannual level, one year with funding and one year with evaluation, but that, with the present set-up the programme could not work on a yearly basis. However, in spite of the administrative difficulties, the Library found great benefit in the new acquisitions sharing policy and considered the national policy of the BnF to be a major improvement. The Library also gained recognition as a national collection through the 'association'.

All three papers showed that recent co-operative projects have led to extra funding, but the continuation of the funding depends on the results achieved.

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