



LIGUE DES BIBLIOTHÈQUES EUROPÉENNES DE RECHERCHE

A VISION FOR LIBER'S STRATEGY 2003-2006 LIBER'S MISSION

LIBER represents and promotes the interests of research libraries in Europe.

The general aim of LIBER is to assist research libraries in Europe to become a functional network across national boundaries in order to ensure the preservation of the European cultural heritage, to improve access to collections in European research libraries, and to provide more efficient information services in Europe.

From LIBER Statutes, adopted in Göttingen in July 1994.

RECENT SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS IN EUROPEAN RESEARCH LIBRARIES

- Development of the 'hybrid' or 'electronic' library with a changing emphasis between physical and digital collections.
- Increasing availability of research information in electronic form capable of being accessed over global networks from anywhere and at any time.
- Significant changes in the information chain since direct communication between authors and readers is possible on a global scale.
- More co-operation among libraries through regional, national and international networks and consortia, and the development of consortial agreements with publishers.
- Changes in the concept of collection development in line with the gradual evolution of virtual collections.
- In the area of electronic information, agreements between libraries and publishers will no longer be primarily governed by copyright law but by contract law, which governs the nature of licences.
- Development of e-services and e-management in libraries.

RECENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

Governments

- Governments are assigning proportionately less funding to the whole field of culture and education, hence also to libraries. At the same time library operations are becoming more expensive, partly because of the need for dual services: print and electronic.
- Governments are more inclined to give universities and autonomous national libraries 'single-line' or 'lump sum' budgets, leaving them to select their priorities.
- Governments are showing more interest in 'skills' and 'needs-based' education with greater emphasis on the economic rationale.

Universities

- Universities are more interested in what their libraries do, and more inclined to concentrate physical library facilities, in order to save costs; some universities may be doubtful of the need for a large central library.
- Universities will tend either to give their libraries a 'single-line' budget, or will devolve a proportion of library expenditure to faculties/schools and departments; either way there will be less central control by the university of library expenditure.
- Universities are making their research publications available on the Web, and are exploring alternatives to commercial publishing.
- Governments and universities are becoming interested in 'e-science' (scientific research conducted by exploiting large masses of electronic data) and 'e-learning' (teaching materials, and learning support, delivered over networks); and libraries are at the forefront of e-services.

FUTURE ASSUMPTIONS FOR RESEARCH LIBRARIES IN EUROPE

- The strongest influence on research libraries will be the global networked economy.
- The primary element in the information chain will be the network.
- Much of what libraries traditionally store on their shelves will be digitised and made available over networks.
- The archiving and preservation of digital material will be one of the most important challenges facing libraries.
- Legal deposit of digital material will become the norm within five years.

- Traditional processes for adding value to information in libraries (e.g. cataloguing) will continue to migrate from the 'back office' to the 'front office', where library staff meet the readers; though new 'back office' tasks (metadata and standards) will become important.
- Networks will make possible more collaboration and sharing; the critical decision will be to define at what level (regional, national or international) such sharing takes place.
- There will be a need for standardisation to facilitate electronic information exchange and information discovery.
- Intellectual property rights will continue to demand major discussion: authors, universities, libraries and publishers will seek to reposition themselves, especially with regard to copyright.
- To remain most useful to library users, networked material needs to remain, like shelved material, under the control of the participating libraries.
- The issue of intellectual property rights will raise questions of payment for the use of material: who pays, on behalf of whom, and at what point?
- Commercial operators will provide competition for libraries, especially for document delivery.

KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH LIBRARIES IN EUROPE IN THE NEXT PERIOD

- Coping with differentiated developments in different parts of Europe, and the need to ensure consistent development across libraries in the whole of Europe.
- Developing and implementing standards to facilitate electronic information exchange and information discovery.
- Identifying and implementing sound solutions for digital archiving and preservation.
- Coping with competition from commercial operators, especially in regard to document delivery.
- Strengthening and promoting co-operation among heritage institutions (archives, museums and galleries).
- Developing and strengthening relations with corresponding institutions internationally.

WHAT WILL LIBER DO FOR RESEARCH LIBRARIES IN EUROPE?

Libraries and their users have entered a common electronic space in which services can easily be made available across the boundaries of individual libraries and countries. The barriers preventing libraries from making full use of the benefits of networked services are essentially administrative (often combined with the ambitions of individual institutions), rather than technological.

A Vision for Liber's Strategy

LIBER should, therefore, encourage libraries to develop new policies both at a local, national and international level in order to remove these barriers. Over the period 2003 to 2006, LIBER will seek to:

- Help libraries in creating new comprehensive national (or regional) approaches, instead of acting in isolation and competing with each other.
- Encourage libraries to replace the former type of co-operation with new international, national, or regional infrastructures for the production of, and access to, electronic services, and long-term storage of electronic material, in a way that is more cost-effective, more professional and safeguards continuity. This will be important with respect to -
 1. provision of access to collections in European research libraries
 2. development of and access to virtual European research libraries
 3. preservation of the European cultural heritage
 4. recognition of the diversity of languages in Europe
 5. development of a virtual pan-European catalogue
 6. archiving and preservation of electronic resources generated by libraries in
 7. Europe.
- Help individual libraries in analysing their role as part of a national and international network, and in focusing on core functions which must be carried out locally.
- Stimulate and support developments towards standardisation for electronic information exchange and information discovery.
- Support restructuring of the information cycle and the current model of (electronic) publishing in order to guarantee public access to information and to strengthen the position of authors and users.
- Support high quality electronic publishing initiatives from the research community in Europe.
- Support the interests of libraries and their users in the development of fair European and national legislation and policies with respect to copyright issues.
- Support libraries in the development of fair licence agreements with publishers, intermediaries and other vendors.
- Develop strategic thinking in European research libraries by pooling knowledge, exchanging ideas about globally-driven issues, organizing courses and by publishing exemplars of good practice, and of change management.
- Help to revise library processes and attitudes by publicising good practices and stimulating discussion on new business models in single organizations and

models for advancing partnerships among libraries in the networked environment.

- Strive to ensure consistent development across libraries over the whole of Europe.
- Strengthen and promote co-operation between libraries and other cultural and heritage institutions (archives, museums and galleries).
- Strengthen relations with corresponding organisations internationally.
- Act as an umbrella organization for European projects.
- Work in association with other organizations such as the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL), the European University Association (EUA), and the European Science Foundation (ESF).

Endorsed by the LIBER Executive Board in Göttingen on 12 January 2003.

Erland Kolding Nielsen

President