



Section of Public Libraries

Standing committee members 1997-2001

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Newsletter

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your dynamic connection to the
international world of library
and information services

you can also find the newsletter on the web

www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/VII/s8/spl.htm

Short paragraphs

[*] The P.L. Section hereby welcomes the new coordinator of professional activities at IFLA Headquarters, Mr. Sjoerd Koopman, and is looking forward to a fruitful cooperation with him.

[*] Mrs. Maria José Moura, a long time member of the section, will receive the IBC Award. The reception will be arranged at the conference in Amsterdam in August. Look for further information in the IFLA booth.

[*] The Section of Public Libraries is holding a pre-conference seminar at the Hotel Noordzee, Noordwijk from 11-14 August. The theme of the seminar, which is for an invited group of 22 participants from 20 different countries, is "The Public Library as a Gateway to the Information Society: the revision of IFLA's Guidelines for Public Libraries". It is the first stage in the consultative process for this important project and is supported by a grant from Unesco. A report on the outcome of the seminar will be presented at the Section's Open Session on 19 August by the Committee Chair, Philip Gill

Schedule for the 64th IFLA General Conference, Amsterdam, Netherlands

- Programme of the Section of Public Libraries

Saturday, 15 August

08.00-10.50 Standing Committees Meeting. *Okura Hotel, Room Starlight 2*

Sunday, 16 August

13.00-17.00 Workshops "Professional work with Internet in Public libraries". Speakers include Eeva Murtomaa (Finland), Hanne Albrechtsen (Denmark), Elin Jacob (USA), Marc Storms (Belgium) and Alexandra Horvath (Croatia)

Monday, 17 August

10.45-12.45 Open Forum. Division of Libraries serving the General Public.

Wednesday, 19 August

15.00-17.30 Open session. Section of Public Libraries. The Unesco Model Library project - Kerstin Hassner (Sweden), National information policies - a survey - Hellen Niegaard /Denmark), Evaluating public library services - Beverly Lynch (USA), Revising IFLA's guidelines for Public Libraries - Philip Gill (UK)

Friday, 21 August

10.30-12.20 Standing Committee meeting

Short from the minutes

Bangkok 1999

Wanted: speakers on the subject "Electronic resources and the public library development". Come forward, do not hesitate! Get in contact with the section if you want to give a paper or if you have names on potential speakers.

Spring meeting

The spring meeting, which took place in Cleveland, Ohio, on the 22-24 of April, was hosted by Marilyn Gell Mason. The Section heartfully thanks Marilyn and her staff for their professional and warm-hearted hospitality. Only nine members of the Section participated in the meeting. The committee held their

meetings in the magnificent new Louis Stokes wing of Cleveland Public Library and had the opportunity to tour the building and meet some of the staff. They also visited the Carnegie library next door which is being renovated, the Lakeshore facility where the acquisition and preservation departments are based and the Headquarters of OCLC in Columbus, Ohio. Parts of the discussions held at the meeting are to be found on the web at www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/VII/s8/spl.htm.

The Section has 8 goals. You can find them in issue no.17 of the newsletter or on the web at www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/VII/s8/spl.htm.

National Information Policies

A Survey;

To enable it to investigate which countries have National Information Policies and/or National Information Technology Strategies, the Section for Public Libraries kindly requests your cooperation.

Before answering the questions, see the definition and the introduction to the background of this project below. If your association/institution is not able to answer the questions, please hand this letter and the enclosed questionnaire over to the relevant person/institution in your country.

Definition of National Information Policy/IT-Strategies as regards of the role of libraries.

The object of a National Information Policy or a set of IT-Strategies is to determine the role of the public sector (national and local authorities).

1. in providing the information needed by society and its citizens
2. in meeting the challenges of the Information Society and of the new information technologies.

Today the Information Society generates and consumes enormous amounts of information, and technological progress has made it easy to process, store and communicate information in new ways that are rational and very effective.

However at the same time the large amount of information available creates a number of different problems, because it is difficult to assess exactly what information is available and how specific users may get it.

In the light of this situation development of a national policy strategy is therefore needed. Including the way that information is generated, stored and made available to all users and citizens by institutions such as libraries.

The question we ask here is therefore – does your country have a National Information Policy and/or a set of National IT_Strategies, or something alike? If yes, are the libraries and their functions included?

All persons answering the survey will receive a copy of the survey report, when it is ready.

Hellen Niegaard
Standing committee member

If you want to tell the world what is going on in the library world in your country please contact the editor by telephone, fax or mail. Address on the frontpage of this Newsletter.

June 14, 1998

An interview with Philip Gill, chair of the Section

The IFLA Public Libraries Section Standing Committee held its mid-year meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, USA in mid April 1998. At that time standing committee member Barbara Clubb (Ottawa, Canada) interviewed Public Library Section Chair Philip Gill for this issue of the newsletter.

Question 1

What do you think are the opportunities for the public libraries in the information age?

Gill: I believe there are major opportunities and challenges for public libraries at a time when the world is going through such dramatic change as a result of information technology. I see libraries at the centre of this change and public libraries having a key role to play in providing access and ensuring that the gap between the information rich and poor does not grow too wide.

Even though it is apparent that countries are at very different stages in their library development, the need for public libraries in all countries has never been greater. Despite of, or perhaps because of these huge advances in technology, this need for a publicly funded library service available to all, is becoming more and more recognized and accepted. I find this tremendously encouraging but it brings with it great responsibilities.

Question 2

Given these challenges, what do you hope the IFLA Public Libraries Section can achieve in the next three years?

Gill: In the last term, our Section concentrated on the development of the new, third version of the Public Library Manifesto with UNESCO and encouraged its translation into more than 20 different languages. The process took more than three years of drafting, consultation and review before it was confirmed by UNESCO in 1994. This most recent review of the text, first published in 1949, was required because of technological development and the constant crisis in some national economies. But the result has been a strong statement that is tuned to the modern age and can be used as a solid foundation for the future of public library services, particularly in developing

countries.

Now, we have to build on that achievement and both promote the awareness and understanding of the Manifesto and help public library movements in countries all over the world to implement the Manifesto. Right now the Section is mounting versions in as many languages as possible up on the IFLA Website to make it more readily accessible through the Internet.

In this term the Public Library Section's other major project will be to develop public library guidelines to be used by libraries and governments throughout the world. We hope that the eventual outcome of these guidelines will be to build a network of public libraries at many different stages of development and that these libraries will be able to seek assistance and guidance from each other as they develop and work with both the Public Library Manifesto and the Guidelines.

Question 3

How are you going to build and strengthen this network of public libraries throughout the world?

Gill: Well first, I as section chair have been very fortunate to be able to attend a number of regional conferences, like the ones in Malaysia and Brazil held in the last year. These particular events were the first IFLA conferences in these parts of the world to focus solely on public library development. On behalf of the section I can work on building bridges of communication and understanding regarding public library development. These conferences have been an amazing experience for me to see how these countries were using the Manifesto to support their public library development agendas. I am looking forward to a similar conference in Africa.

Second, we have a Section committee working on the Guidelines with representatives from all over the world. Though the consultative process is likely to be lengthy, I believe the outcome will be more thoughtful, representative and satisfactory as a result.

Third, we are in the process of strengthening

the Public Library section of the IFLA website thereby making our work more open and accessible than has ever been possible before. As a Section we believe that we have to represent the whole world of public libraries and not just a privileged few in developed countries. We are encouraging all our section members to get involved in activities from a global perspective and to use technology to make our work known and accessible. The website will be a big part of that work. While the website is still very much a 'work in progress' I encourage readers to take a look at www.nlc-bnc/ifla/VII/s8/.

Finally, section members are involved in the Model Libraries project that originally flowed from the Manifesto in 1951 and initially included model libraries in India, Colombia and Nigeria. Currently there are model library projects in Sweden, Estonia, Portugal, Zimbabwe and Spain based on the implementation of the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto. There will be an evaluative report at the 1998 IFLA conference in Amsterdam. This may lead to the expansion of the project to other countries that are eager to get involved and additional model library projects to support public library development.

Question 4

What do you see as the main mission of IFLA?

Gill: I believe that IFLA is an important forum for people from all types of libraries to come together, to discuss and develop positions. This is something which no other international body provides. IFLA currently has members from more than 140 countries and I believe that we should use our influence to state and promote positions on things like censorship and copyright. The hard work is largely done by the sections and round tables where we can have influence with and provide assistance to specific types of libraries and library services at the local level.

IFLA has an obligation to sell itself within the library community of its member countries. IFLA members have to work at creating a clear role for themselves in their countries. This is really important and, due to improved technology, it is becoming easier to work with individuals in an increasingly shrinking world. We have to make com-

munications technology work for us.

It is a continuing challenge for IFLA to ensure that members and especially potential members understand the value IFLA can bring. When library resources are threatened or reduced at the local level, is often difficult to understand or to believe that a world body like IFLA can help. Sometimes I think that the IFLA "regulars" don't appreciate how distant their work seems to library workers to can't get to conferences, who don't have access to IFLA publications on a regular basis, who don't hear about IFLA at their regional and national conferences, who don't have access to e-mail and the Internet.

Question 5

How do you think that IFLA could work with other library associations?

Gill: I think that we/IFLA, have to work on developing creative two-way links so that IFLA becomes more a part of the professional library scene. I know that there is great scepticism about IFLA among library professionals who often believe that international work is the least important of their interests or responsibilities. Therefore, IFLA members have to work to be more part of the national and state or provincial library association scene...to be seen to be making a valuable contribution. This demands a lot of work on interacting with national and regional library organizations. That's why our attendance and work at regional conferences is so important.

The Public Libraries Section is one of the most active IFLA sections in building these links but there is still lots of room for improvement.

Question 6

How do you think that the Public Library Section can have more influence in IFLA itself?

Gill: It is no secret that the public librarians have a challenge on their hands to get their voices heard within IFLA. It goes without saying that we believe that public libraries are a critical part of librarianship and so we worked hard to get representation on IFLA's executive board where many important decisions are made. We want to make sure that the public library perspective is always part of the discussion.

Current Trends

in some parts of the World of Public Libraries

Armenia

Nerses Hayrapetyan

Since the Draft agenda foresees also the discussion of "Promotion of Unesco Public Library Manifesto" I would like to take the opportunity to report that this days the Armenian translation of the Manifesto (translated by me) was published in the Armenian Library Association (ALA) annual "bulletin". It is delivered to all members of the Association and to all major libraries of Armenia.

During March-June by financial help of Open Society Institute ALA organise special monthly courses for librarians. 80 librarians from academic,

public and school libraries will participate to this courses. About 1/3 of training is practice with computers through Internet, teaching CDS/ISIS program, UNIMARC format. Very important issue are fundraising, acquisitions, management of libraries in a changing society.

On April 3, 10 librarians participated in "Finding Resources for Non-Commercial Projects" Gran Proposal writing and Fundraising one day workshop organised by IREX- International Research and Exchange Board.

Nerses Hayrapetyan

*Deputy Director, National Library of Armenia
President, Armenian Library association
Standing committee member*

Canada

Barbara Clubb & Wendy Newman

The 1997/1998 Public Library Issues Report

The fabric of issues connecting public libraries in Canada all concern access. Who is to have access to what, and how is that access affected by changes in technology and partnerships among libraries and other types of information providers?

Internet access went mainstream in small and remote communities, through the federal government's Community Access Program (CAP). Public libraries led many of the most successful CAP proposals, showcasing the assets of libraries as community access points. By mid-year, the Canadian Library Association, CAPL, PTLDC (provincial and territorial library

directors), and CALUPL (large public library directors) were systematically calling upon the federal government to implement LibraryNet: comprehensive local access through public libraries. The September 1997 Throne Speech gave the long-awaited signal of government commitment – thought to be the first Throne Speech in Canadian history to include libraries. It is hoped that the federal support program will address infrastructure, training, content development, coordination, and sustainability, enabling national and local partnerships.

In December 1997, CALUPL, the group representing large public libraries serving populations over 100,000, submitted a proposal called Connecting Canadians, to the federal government department of Industry Canada. The CALUPL libraries collectively serve more than one third of all Canadians. The proposal is a five year scheme for funding for connectivity, content development, training, research and evaluation in Canada's major public libraries.

Costed at \$115 million over 5 years the proposal's central concept is that public libraries can help the federal government deliver on its "connectivity" agenda. In February the federal budget speech included a new \$205 million over three years to support public access and connectivity. The Minister of Industry Canada, the department largely responsible for Information Highway issues, will be speaking to the Canadian Library Association conference in June and Canadian librarians are expecting the first funding announcements.

With wider access came greater attention to *intellectual freedom issues* and some high-profile challenges. Episodes in Vancouver, Burlington, Victoria and elsewhere drew not just local, but national attention. Industry Canada commissioned a report on Internet access and the law (*Cyberspace is not a No-Law Land*) that gave rise to additional concern. Public libraries wrestled with the challenges of local policies, and some adopted filtering software and other restrictive access approaches. A thoughtful and constructive statement from CLA advocated revisions in Canadian law.

Networks and consortia in provinces and regions assumed greater importance. Across the country, there was increased interest in group buying and licensing of electronic products. Many visionary access programs achieved or approached implementation – to note only a few: The province of Saskatchewan's InterLEND license and its connection of over half the public library branches in the province to the PLEIS network; the province of Alberta Public Library Network in its first phase, and the Alberta Library in its second year of operation. All public libraries in the province of Nova Scotia are now connected; regional library systems have purchased a joint license to INFOTRAC web-based data bases. The province of Ontario's Network 2000 was launched during the year, with the objective of connecting public libraries to a broadband high speed network by the year 2000.

After the disappointing result in *copyright* legislation, public libraries turned their attention to implementation issues. Negotiations between CALUPL and CANCOPY produced a "boiler

plate contract" as a basis for local application. There were differences in implementation across the country, as some provinces negotiated province-wide contracts and others left the implementation to local libraries.

In the province of New Brunswick, the provincial government implemented a much more centralized provincial system. In Ontario, Bill 109, which would have replaced the current prescriptive framework of boards and free core services with greater latitude for municipal governments, and withdrawn provincial direct support to public libraries altogether, went to third reading before it was withdrawn. In the province of Quebec the government announced major new development initiatives for public libraries and for the building of a new facility in Montreal which would house both the Bibliothèque nationale de Quebec and the Bibliothèque publique de Montréal central branch.

Funding remained a prominent concern, with libraries challenged to respond to the rising expectations of communities for longer hours, in parallel with retail services, and more sophisticated services. As traditional government grant programs became leaner, many public libraries worked towards diversifying their funding to some extent. Many turned to more systematic fund raising, through Board effort, staff positions, Friends groups, foundations and endowment funds, or combinations of these. Although core funding remained pressed, more public libraries parlayed their physical accessibility, concomitant information resources, and staff skills into successful partnerships with government, especially with Human Resources Development Canada (federal government department). Kiosks of job information and Internet access stations funded by HRDC became increasingly common, increasing the usefulness of public libraries as job search centres. These partnerships brought in much-needed Internet access. Many public libraries collaborated with municipal staff on Web page development to support economic development and community information initiatives.

Amalgamations of library systems were

occasioned by overall municipal amalgamations. The largest of these was the new City of Toronto, which now has one of the five largest library systems in North America with 97 urban branches. The new Chief Librarian is Ms. Jo Bryant. Another example was the merger of the City and County of Halifax with the City of Dartmouth in the province of Nova Scotia. Suffice it to say that the time, effort, and money required to implement amalgamations, and the opportunity cost thereof, are still being learned.

At the beginning of 1998, many public libraries in eastern Ontario (province of) and the province of Quebec encountered their biggest obstacle in the weather – the worst ice storm in memory closed facilities when electricity was cut off across a wide region. They re-opened with amazing pluck, providing once again that librarians are not descended from the faint-hearted!

Through the year, we saw growing recognition of the value of skilled *advocacy* in support of Canada's public libraries. Recognizing that we have

far to go, we know how to get there. We look forward to a comprehensive advocacy program, through which we place the advocacy for our libraries in the hands of our communities, where it must be. We're here, we're clear, and we're not going away.

Awards: Frances Schwenger, Chief Executive Officer of the Toronto Reference Library and a former member of the IFLA Public Libraries Standing Committee, has been awarded the CLA Outstanding Public Service Award for 1998. Following the acceptance of her award in June of 1998, Frances will be taking early retirement at the end of July. Congratulations Frances.

Wendy Newman

Chair Canadian Association of Public Libraries

Barbara Clubb

Standing committee Member

Finland

Tuula Haavisto

The draft for the Library Act, concerning public libraries, is under work this spring in Parliament. Different Committees of the Parliament have organized large hearings concerning the draft. These have been important political discussions - this indicates that public libraries have achieved a significant role in the information society development.

The draft has been supported in the Committee

reports published since now. The main elements of the new Act will be:

- every local community is obliged to arrange library service for its' population
- library networking is supported strongly
- loans and in-situ use of the material owned by a certain library must be chargeless in that library
- evaluation of public library service will begin
- regional state administration of public libraries will be established in the Act as well (this means to include the present practice in the Act)
- staff requirements are expressed in a very general way.

Tuula Haavisto

Standing committee member

France

Nic Diament

After a first phase which consisted in increasing the number of libraries on the entire French territory, the time has now come to network these establishments at different levels:

- for medium-sized towns, between the central library and a network of district branches;
- for the French départements, with the setting up of points-lecture, i.e. reading spots, of leisure reading, i.e. reading stopovers and of larger libraries, under the control of the Bibliothèques Départementales de Prêt, i.e. Département Lending Libraries, which are responsible for the circulation of documents, cultural activities and staff training;
- for the regional level, with the setting up of Bibliothèques Municipales à Vocation Régionale, i.e. City Libraries with a Regional role, the building and operating of which have been partly subsidised by the government;
- for the national level, with the networking of national union catalogues in order to share University Libraries resources, the Pancatalogue, as well as the Bibliothèque Nationale de France Union Catalogue (CCN).

In 1998, the opening of a researchers department, Rez-de-jardin, will complete the Bibliothèque Nationale de France project.

Moreover, the missions assigned to public libraries have diversified and now include:

- a social role in citizen awareness undertaken by district branches,
- a role in continuing education, etc.
- a more democratic access to information.

Information technology has long been present in university libraries and is massively spreading to public libraries - an increasing number of CD-Roms, multimedia documents and public access to the Internet are turning French public libraries into genuine multimedia, modern-technology-oriented libraries.

The local library staff status and the Bi staff category training matters are still a concern for the profession. The difficulties encountered by library directors when hiring qualified staff, the trouble students have in finding jobs matching their academic levels, the lack of initial, as well as professional training among some staff categories who are hired after general competitive exams and whose professional training allegedly takes place after being hired, all this has brought about a somewhat depressed atmosphere among librarians and a certain nostalgia for past years.

The debate concerning a framework law on libraries is topical. This law, called for by librarians for decades, was initiated by the former Minister of Culture in 1996 and the present government has promised it for the coming Autumn. Some still think this law is a must, others oppose it, fearing that decentralisation (1982 and 1983 laws) which public libraries have benefited by might come to an end due to this framework law. The recent attacks carried out by the Front National Party against four libraries in the south of France have made more crucial what is at stake. In order to help libraries defend themselves better against fascist attacks, should a law be voted in haste which might lack serenity and hindsight? Should better days be awaited and local or regional administration be left to initiate the development of public libraries?

The authors and publishers associations are hoping that the European recommendation dealing with a lending fee in libraries will be included in this law. Most librarians stand strongly against the idea of a lending fee per document. A further debated matter between librarians and publishers addresses the copyright issue as publishers increasingly oppose the uncontrolled photocopying of their books in libraries (in January 1995 a law was voted and a fee is now paid for each photocopy printed in a library).

As it can be noted, different issues continue to be debated in the librarian profession and in spite of credit cuts libraries are still one step ahead.

Nic Diament

Standing committee member

Germany

Ilona Glashoff & Reinhard Stridde

As a result of the political situation in Germany after the reunification of both the German states the problems in the development of the public library development are ongoing.

Closing of the Deutsches Bundesinstitut (DBI) in Berlin

The Institute had been financed by the federal and the state government. It has been operating for all kinds of libraries, library organization and development. The Deutscher Wissenschaftsrat refused further financing and proposed the closing of the DBI. This is a severe situation especially for German public libraries as there is no other comparable institution within the country. The German library professional associations and organizations protested against this decision and try to find a solution.

Financing public libraries

Public libraries in general are financed by communities. A library law does not exist. Public Libraries have always been a frequent service of the communities. The severe financial situation of German communities caused new forms of administration like budgeting. This is an ongoing development all over the country.

Performance measurement

Public libraries of the bigger German cities developed indexes for performance measurement, especially fixing how to evaluate by basic statistical data (output-figures) in order to be comparable more to each other than to other community institutions.

New forms of library organization

As money keeps being short most of the libraries are working on developing new models of structuring libraries, especially concerning branches: instead of building stocks for all kinds of library users they try to offer more services towards their own and special customers. Diverse projects and models of customer orientation and centralising and decentralising services are still in development.

There were in-depth discussions in library journals about management of the media stock. This debate concentrates more on media services for education and life-long learning than towards the needs of a leisure society. It culminates in decisions like not to buy any more popular fiction. There seems to be a big gap between orientation towards argumentations for money giving institutions and the needs of the changing society and its cultural needs.

Ilona Glashoff

Standing committee secretary

Leipzig, April 1998

The public libraries in Germany are further in a bad economic situation. Very often the development leads into a financial participation of the citizens. In the former GDR there was, corresponding with the centralistic form of the state, a very close net of public libraries available. After the reunification the librarianship of this part of the country had to take over the federal structures. In the end of these processes the librarianship of Germany lost over 30 % of public libraries. That

often means the end of the librarian service for the communities in former East Germany.

Professional discussions are focused not only on new forms of managing, for example the running of public libraries as a private limited company by the city and other partners, but also the question of the role of public libraries is debated (as always in critical times). There are two polar positions about the role of the library. These can be polemized characterized

as either the provider of popular education or the provider of popular amusements.

The quality differences of the services of public libraries are growing up. The most public libraries in smaller communities are falling behind the development of information technologies. (See also the study from the European Commission "Public Libraries and the Information Society" – www.echo.lu/libraries/en/libraries.html). This is a product of cultural sovereignty and lawless,

uniformless culture politics.

The German public librarianship are not on top of the international standard. The public libraries are fighting in the moment for the German standards.

Reinhard Stridde

*Director, Leipziger Städtische Bibliotheken
Standing committee member*

Hungary

Ferenc Nagy

As we approach the Millennium, it seems that the concept underpinning the development of Hungarian public libraries is being formulated at the highest level.

At the end of the 1980s, library professionals hoped that co-ordinated automation - built on the existing library network - would take Hungarian libraries up onto a higher plane. Unfortunately, almost all government assistance so far has been concentrated in several "well defined" projects formulated without reference to library professionals. These projects came to an end without achieving any meaningful results.

The existing library system would have been - indeed, it still is - a solid basis for new undertakings in the field of informatics. Libraries and other information services are crucial in the modern world, and have a vital role to play in helping Hungary to become an "information society".

Although Hungarian libraries used to co-operate closely on a nationwide basis, discussing important issues and collaborating in a number of organizations, workshops, and projects - despite increasing erosion on all sides - in the initial period after the political and economic

transformation they were not well enough prepared to play a leading role in the creation of an information society.

Now the situation has changed, and there appears to be some light at the end of the tunnel for those who care about the future of Hungarian libraries. The Ministry of Culture and Education has made available on the Internet important web pages dealing with the concept of a library information network development program. The program is part of the National Information Strategy, and its main aim is to make sure that existing databases and those in preparation - as part of the national information network - must carry only material of the highest quality. Alongside the development of economic, governmental, and municipal databases, the most important part of the program is the digitalization of our cultural heritage, including the conversion of library catalogues. This is a real challenge for librarians, who in the first place require help in infrastructure development. The traditional "manual" mode of library organization, which worked well in the past, will be reorganized with the addition of up-to-date information technology. This will corroborate the view of many professionals, that the most cost-effective method is automation.

The following projects are currently under way:

A promising shared cataloguing project (MOKKA), which was launched last year, and is currently sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and

Education. The crucial problem concerns how special (for example, local history) databases may be constructed and disseminated. Libraries at present construct these databases in co-operation with one another. The academic and special libraries have the most important role to play in the development of the library system, but the public libraries are also indispensable partners (county libraries and the Budapest Metropolitan Library). The shared catalogue will be available for the biggest institutions, and of course it requires an adequate telecommunications network. The planned network will make possible nation-wide interlibrary loans, and will also offer gateways to international electronic resources.

Among the prominent government-sponsored projects we must mention the development of the Hungarian Electronic Library (MEK), and the decision to establish a new national institution by the year 2000, the Neumann Multimedia Centre and Digital Library.

The National Information and Infrastructure Programme (NIIFP) plays a co-ordinating role. It has just finished an investigation of the level of computerization and telematic investments in Hungarian libraries. It also offers financial and methodological resources for libraries which would like to join a shared cataloguing system and integrate their OPACs on the Internet. Applicants using an automatic library system compatible with the Z39-50 protocol (for example, Horizon, OLIB, Aleph, and so on) are at an advantage in this respect.

It will be an important step forward when the new integrated software Amicus is introduced in the National Széchényi Library, which is responsible for central bibliographical services in Hungary.

The Ministry of Culture and Education - in mutual agreement with the library profession - is seeking

the best ways to integrate the libraries with the "Intelligent Country" program by the Millennium. The cultivation of the library service's non-profit character, of the great myth of the public library system - the provision of services free of charge - did not lead to poor quality services. Nevertheless, Hungarian librarians still have to implement the ideas contained in the UNESCO Manifesto, in competition with profit-oriented rivals.

The crucial lack of financial resources is the main problem facing further development, alongside acquisition of the high-quality databases which are key elements of our modern information society. Unfortunately, librarians are still not familiar enough with the world of business, although this will hopefully change after the implementation of practical training programs. Librarians must consolidate their self-esteem and reinforce their faith in the values they represent. At the same time, librarians are becoming more active at professional events and conferences, which shows that they intend to be key players in the information business.

Last but not least, on 1 January 1998 a new law came into effect on the protection of cultural values, museums, libraries open for the general public (public libraries, academic and special libraries), and cultural activities. The original draft of the library legislation was inserted into the final document without any fundamental change.

Ferenc Nagy

Corresponding member of the section

Israel

Dr. Snunith Shoham

In Israel, there are today approximately 200 networks of public libraries (1000 public libraries). Public libraries are lacking in only 43 communities – mostly small or new, accounting for only 4 % of the citizens of the state. Thus 96 % of the citizens have the privilege of public library service.

The Division of Libraries of the Ministry of Education and Culture has worked with and supported public libraries since the early 1960s. Since then, there has been an emphasis on the development of public libraries and on advising librarians, organizing supplemental programs and conferences, data collection surveys, payments for authors, and even allocation of funds (in addition to the library budgets within jurisdiction) for materials acquisition and special projects.

Services and departments that are common in Israeli public libraries include: circulation of rea-

ding materials, reference collections and services, extension services for children (storytelling is provided in practically all libraries), activities for encouragement of reading and meetings with authors.

About 80 % of all libraries (and about 90 % of the main libraries) have automated catalogues. In 1997, 68 libraries were granted financial funds from the Division of Libraries for computerizing their collections. CD-ROMS and multimedia are found in approximately half the libraries. Here, there is more of an emphasis on indexing and abstracting data bases and encyclopedias than on children's games and coursewares. Audio and video libraries are found in only a few libraries.

Today only 20 libraries have Internet connections. However, in 1998 the Division of Libraries is focusing on this issue. This year the Division has allocated part of its projects budget to connecting the public libraries to the Internet. Already, as of March, 117 libraries have requested to be included in the project.

Snunith Shoham

Netherlands

Dick Scheepstra

ICT-development within the field of education

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has published an ambitious plan under the title "*Investment in Progress*", which aims at introducing information and communication technology on a large scale within the educational system. The project includes the creation of Edunet, a computer network for educational purposes, which will have its own Intranet structure.

ProBiblio has taken the initiative to further develop the support function of library work. It has formed a consortium with a large publisher of educational material and with a company having expert knowledge of the educational world. This consortium will offer an integrated service pack-

age for elementary schools and for the "study house" in secondary education. ProBiblio operates on behalf of and with the support of the Dutch national library organizations, the provincial library centres and the four large cities, i.e. its approach may be called branch-wide.

New introductions by ProBiblio include a newly developed integrated catalogue system for school libraries (in primary and secondary education); the library phone on the Internet; a selection of links on the Internet (supplied by Edunet); and media education/reading promotion.

The above project offers excellent perspectives for school-library relations.

National Programme Electronic Highway

As part of the National Action Programme Electronic Highways the Dutch Interior Ministry is starting a large-scale programme to promote

communication between authorities and citizens. The project (named Communication Authorities – Citizens) has three aims; to enlarge the supply of electronic government information, to improve accessibility of that information and to open it up for public use. This is where the public libraries come in. Within two years all public libraries should be linked up to the Internet. At the same time, their employees should be trained in helping the public in finding government information. The Interior Ministry provides a total of NLG 20 million for the project, of which 15 million goes to the public libraries. In principle, the infrastructure will be provided by Edunet. In order to avoid queuing, every separate library (except lending posts and mobile libraries) will be equipped with at least five terminals for public training. NLG 10 million are intended for this purpose. By the end of 1999, when the training programme of the employees will be concluded, every library should have at least one full-time professional available for assistance to the public. The project is supervised by the Interior Ministry; the PR-campaign is organized by the NBLC (Dutch Library and Literature Center) in cooperation with the Information Service of the Dutch government. The libraries will also be involved in the development of user-friendly search systems and a standardized access to electronic government information.

Classification System

Efforts are made to extend the national library network, as part of the project *"Co-ordination and Quality"*. Out of a standardized system of product/market combinations (PMCs), every library (front office) has to make a selection. With good distribution channels, access to regional, provincial and national automated catalogues and a well-organized back office, every library could serve as a gate to all public information.

The proposal for a multi-levelled library structure comprises three levels – a Service library, an Information library and an Advisory library (formerly one was thinking of 6 levels).

The materials most requested are in the Service library, which offers a number of product/market combinations selected on the basis of market analysis

and local policies. The S-library employs a librarian (on an intermediate vocational education level) who helps the client to find the materials he is looking for, if necessary in another library. The librarian also acts as a co-ordinator for the client and answers common questions. He passes on the more complex questions to the information consultant at the back office and feeds back the answers to the client. As the library is connected to the regional library network, it has access to all main databanks.

A more extended offer of materials is supplied by the Information library, which serves people with particular wishes. It employs an information consultant who helps the client to find more specified information. Special attention is given to broadening the people's demand and increasing the possibilities to search a wider range of sources. The back office develops new products for the general public. In the development of new products and services, the Information libraries function as an intermediary between the Service libraries and the Advisory libraries.

The Advisory library constitutes a *"knowledge centre"*. It offers a large supply of materials and has on-line links with all national databanks. In addition, the A-library employs librarians with specified knowledge. They can answer specific questions and thus complement the services of the I-library. Information technology will play a central role in the A-library. The librarian's task is either to inform the client or advise him. The knowledge centre will have to be expanded with the specialist assistance of the provincial library centres.

The above mentioned types of libraries will have to meet a number of minimal requirements. Efficiency may be improved by reorganizing the supply of technical facilities. The back and front offices will have to be supported by the general and technical services of the provincial library centres and the national library services.

Efforts are made to standardize the services toward the client, improving general quality.

United Kingdom

Philip Gill

The election of a Labour Government in May 1997 seemed to inaugurate a new period for public libraries. The Library and Information Commission's important report "*New Library: The People's network*" which recommended that government should signal its commitment to an information policy with a central role for public libraries and that a Public Library Networking Agency be established was welcomed by government. The government has stated that education is its top priority and produced a consultation paper "*Connecting the Learning Society: the National Grid for Learning*" which identifies libraries as one of the elements in the proposed grid. The government also announced its intention to publish a White Paper of Lifelong Learning but this has subsequently been changed to a Green Paper i.e. a consultative document. A White Paper on Freedom of Information which it is hoped will lead to legislation has been published and generally well received. Access to lottery funding, previously not available for public library services, has now been provided through a New Opportunities Fund. This can be used for IT-training of librarians and the digitisation of content. Other initiatives could include use of funds for the creation of after school activities and for the creation of healthy living centres.

All these are positive signs of a greater interest in public libraries and their services by government. However the Treasury remains committed to a low inflation policy and maintaining a tight hold on public expenditure. Any additional resources are being channelled into education, the health service and the reduction of unemployment. As a result many local authorities have little or no extra funding for public libraries many of which are facing further reductions to already diminished budgets. For some the situation is desperate. The book fund in one county is now so low that it has had to ask the public not only to donate books but also to give money for the purchase of new books. Staff in the libraries in the London Borough of Camden have been on strike for six weeks in pro-

test at the measures proposed to reduce expenditure on libraries.

The library profession is continuing to inform politicians and others of the importance of public libraries in the information age. The Advisory Council on Libraries which advises the government on public libraries has issued a statement "Public Libraries: a Vision for the Future". Twenty-eight organisations in the library and information community including The Library Association have issued a Declaration welcoming the government's commitment to a learning society and supporting the creation of the People's Network and the National Grid for Learning. For the moment the dichotomy between the aspirations of government and the library and information community for the future development of public libraries and the lack of funds available for that development remains and many feel that action is now required to turn words into deeds.

One positive development is the creation of a National Year of Reading as part of the government's National Literacy Strategy. The Department for Employment and Education has made a £ 0,75 m pump-priming fund available to support local projects and over 100 bids for funding were received. The initiative will be publicised through the media and celebrities will be used to promote it. The Library Association has set up 200 local co-ordinators to help develop activities and a national website for the National Year of Reading will be launched in May 1998.

Public librarians are experiencing a situation in which the government is more approachable and apparently more sympathetic to public libraries than has been the case for many years whilst finding little relief to the chronic funding difficulties they have faced in the past decade. It must be hoped that the coming year will see a satisfactory resolution of this paradox.

Philip Gill

Chair of standing committee

