

International Cooperation Among Technological University Libraries

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International co-operation among technological university libraries

An address by Dr Dennis Shaw, President of IATUL

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Abstract

International co-operation is one of the main purposes for which IATUL was founded in 1955. Progress towards our objective during the last 34 years is briefly reviewed. Difficulties have been encountered in developing efficient communications with countries in Asia, South America, and East Europe. Possible unnecessary duplication of effort has been avoided by special agreement with IFLA. The way ahead is for IATUL to study detailed problems in library technology and management and to refer political problems to IFLA. Our association with ICSU (the International Council of Scientific Unions) has proved of substantial benefit in the international arena, and reference is made to this.

1. Introduction

First, let me extend a welcome to all delegates on behalf of the Board and the Conference Organizers. I would particularly like to welcome new members of IATUL and others attending their first IATUL meeting. We have 66 registered participants from 18 countries, which is as large as any recent IATUL International meeting. Let us congratulate Dr Nada Čučnik-Majcen and the other members of the Organizing Committee on their success in this achievement.

Second, I should like to offer our greetings and thanks to the Officials of Slovenia, Ljubljana and the Edvard Kardelj University of Technology and the Kankarjev Dom, for the way in which they have supported the planning and implementation of this meeting. I should like particularly to thank Professor Janez Peklenik, Rector of the University of Ljubljana for his cordial address of welcome from the Faculty and Staff of the University.

Also, on behalf of you all, I must express our gratitude to both Mr Ludvik Horvat, President of the Slovenian Ministry of Education, and Mr Marko Bulc, President of the Slovenian Chamber of Economy, for their presence at this Opening Session to give us speeches of welcome from their respective organizations. Dr Majcen has told me how much help, moral support, and other tangible benefits you have contributed to the planning of this occasion.

2. The conference theme

IATUL was founded 34 years ago to provide Directors of Science and Technology Libraries in Universities with a forum for the investigation of common problems. From the outset, emphasis was placed on the importance of action plans, and many of the early meetings were designated as workshops instead of conferences. Those of you who are interested will find a list of the 33 meetings organized during the period 1961-89 in the June 1989 issue of our journal *IATUL Quarterly*. These meetings fall into four classes:

- (a) *Workshops*. In the early years, IATUL held several workshops, many in co-operation with other bodies such as UNESCO and IFLA. The deliberations of six of these have been published in *IATUL Proceedings*. Topics covered include: assistance to developing African countries to build up academic libraries; problems of automation in libraries; and training staff for user education in developing countries.
- (b) *International conferences*. The regular series of International Meetings, required by the IATUL Constitution to be held at not less than three-yearly intervals, started in 1961 and this meeting here in Ljubljana is the 13th in the series. But we are not yet in 1997, which is the required 36 years on from the first meeting. The discrepancy arises from the fact that since 1975 these International Meetings have been held as biennial events.
- (c) *Regional seminars*. The North American and European groups of IATUL have been most active in arranging regional seminars. There are records of twelve such meetings in our *Proceeding*, four in North America, six in Europe, and one each in Asia and Australia.
- (d) *Reunions*. There have been several reunions of IATUL members at IFLA conferences, and some of these have included a formal programme of speakers. The most successful was in Sydney last year when over 100 delegates, including many non-IATUL members, were present to hear from Tom Cochrane, Nancy Fjällbrant, and Dieter Schmidmaier an account of recent events and activities. This is one of the few meetings to have been permanently recorded on magtape.

3. Is IATUL international?

Altogether, 23 of the 33 meetings referred to above have been held in European countries (see distribution in Table 1). This has given our Association an European image, a disadvantage which has been discussed often at Board meetings. A number of factors account for this apparent bias. First, international travel has never been generously supported by our Universities, and in recent years many members have been restricted to one overseas visit a year. As a result, our annual reunion at IFLA each summer has become much better supported and we have had two very lively meetings in Brighton and Sydney. I hope many of you will be able to come to the Palais des Congrès in Paris on Monday 21 August to hear about our plans in relation to the IFLA core programmes — particularly the UDT project (Universal or Transborder

Table 1 Distribution of IATUL Meetings by Country

A Asia	Country	Years	Number
	Israel	1967	1
	Japan	1986	1
	<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>2</u>
B Australasia			
	Australia	1988(2)	2
	<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>2</u>
C Europe			
	Belgium	1977	1
	Denmark	1973	1
	FRG	1968/1983	2
	Finland	1987	1
	France	1986/1989	2
	Hungary	1988	1
	Netherlands	1966(2)/1967/1968/1979/1985	6
	Sweden	1982/1987	2
	Switzerland	1975/1981	2
	UK	1970(2)/1985/1987	4
	Yugoslavia	1989	1
	<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>23</u>
D North America			
	Canada	1967	1
	USA	1984/1986/1987/1988/1989	5
	<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>6</u>

Dataflow). This will also give us an opportunity to consider further how we wish to participate in the European Community Action Plan for Libraries, which I will refer to later.

Second, universities in developing countries have difficulty in obtaining the hard currency required for payment of subscriptions and for conference travel. IATUL managed to obtain sponsorship for delegates to the Oxford conference in 1985 and for the UNESCO seminar in Gothenburg in 1987, but the needs are great and the resources for this sponsorship are very limited. It is possible that some progress in this direction may result from discussions with the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), which, like IATUL, is an Associate member of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU).

Table 2 Distribution of IATUL membership by continent

Continent	Ord	Obs	Ass	Hon	Sus	Tot
Africa	4	1	5	—	—	10
Asia	13	—	2	—	1	16
Australasia	9	—	3	—	1	13
Europe	84	10	1	6	3	104
North America	30	5	1	1	—	37
South America	1	—	—	—	1	2
<u>Totals</u>	141	16	12	7	6	<u>182</u>

Third, Universities of Science and Technology are well established in the European and North American regions, so that it is natural to find our members most active there (see Table 2). But, we must keep the needs of the remainder of the world in the forefront of our thinking and planning if we are to be truly international.

4. Co-operation with IFLA

There has always been a close collaboration between IATUL and IFLA. This has been particularly evident in such activities as UNISIST and in our attempts to help developing countries. The Science and Technology Libraries section of IFLA includes 27 IATUL members so that we have to watch carefully to avoid duplication of effort. In Chicago in 1985 the basis for an informal co-operation was established following an initiative which stemmed from the IATUL meeting in Oxford in April of that year. The details of the Agreement were published in *INSPEL* — the journal of the IFLA Special Libraries section, and in *IATUL Proceedings*.^{1,2} This relationship was developed further in Sydney when the IFLA Science & Technology Libraries Committee proposed that it should give scientific support to the IATUL programme on the development of better information services world-wide, and would provide the political support required for any action line which might prove necessary. This is an important step, paving the way ahead for both bodies to work more effectively and in closer co-operation.

5. European library co-operation

The Commission for the European Communities has recently shown an active interest in supporting library developments and we have been present at two meetings in Luxembourg with the status of Observer. At the last meeting in March this year an Action Plan for Libraries was presented and approved.³ This plan will call for a sum of \$100 million to be devoted to the support of innovative projects meeting the objectives of promoting

- (1) the availability and accessibility of modern library services throughout the Community, taking into account existing geographic discrepancies in library provision;
- (2) a more rapid but orderly penetration of new information technologies in libraries in a cost-effective way;
- (3) standardization of procedures and data recording in view of the practical consequences and economic impact; and
- (4) harmonization and convergence of national policies for libraries.

The Board of IATUL has been considering how we might encourage our members to put forward proposals for this Action Plan, and we invite you to engage in informal discussions during this week in Ljubljana.

Arising from this, I should like to mention the possibility that our European members might benefit from entering into a more formal association by

forming a European Regional Group. Such a group already exists informally, and the regular seminars to which I referred earlier are evidence of the activity of these members.

6. Review of major activities during 1988

The year 1988 was very significant for international co-operation in two respects: we held our first Pacific Seminar, and we attended our first ICSU General Assembly. The seminar, which was organized by two of our Australian members and held in the Council Chamber of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, attracted 40 delegates from eight countries. Selected papers from the proceedings, on the theme 'Potentialities and Limitations of Networking', were published in our journal *IATUL Quarterly* in 1989. The ICSU General Assembly was held in Beijing, and the delegates were hosted by the China Association for Science and Technology. The main topic for the Assembly was the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme which was launched in 1986 and for which the 1988 Plan of Action formed a major discussion document.⁴ We shall hear more of the IGBP programme, which is the largest and most ambitious international scientific research collaboration ever, in the years to come. Already, Governments in all continents have noted the problems of the environment which the programme seeks to elucidate.

7. Conclusion

And so, in conclusion, let us return to the theme of this IATUL Meeting. We can all look forward to an inspiring and stimulating series of papers and discussions. Let us remember that informal personal contacts are as important as discussion in the public sessions. I hope all of you whom I have not yet met will make yourselves known to me during one of the coffee breaks or at some other convenient time during the week. I wish you all a stimulating and memorable week here in Ljubljana, and I now have pleasure in declaring this 13th IATUL International Conference open.

References

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4. The International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme: a study of global change. IGBP—a plan for action. IGBP Global Change, Report No. 4, 1988. 200 p.