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Presentation of Twente Technological University Library

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Twente University of Technology

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Ladies and Gentlemen

As so many colleagues from home and abroad have honoured us with a visit to our library, I should like to take this opportunity to tell you about the vote and accredited function of this library and a little about the way it actually functions. That is, if you are interested in hearing our view and how we regard our duties.

First of all, let me tell you that the Twente Technological University is the youngest of the three universities in Holland specializing in technology. This particular one was first founded in 1961 and enrolled its first students for their first semester in 1964. It is however, no longer the smallest nor the youngest university. In 1971, the State University of Limburg - albeit as of yet consisting only of a faculty of Medicine - was established in Maastricht, the most southerly town in the Netherlands, close to Aachen/Aix-la-Chapelle in the Federal Republic of Germany and Liége in Belgium.

Unlike other Dutch Universities, the T.H.T. (as we call the university for short) has been designed, as far as the layout is concerned, on Anglo-Saxon principles, being set up as a residential campus. It is situated in what used to be a country estate which was comprised of a large park with surrounding farmland. As is usual with universities situated on a campus, it provides on one single site, accommodation for everything and everyone: laboratories, faculty buildings, management, students and staff. This experiment in social integration has not received much credit, nor has it met with much sympathy on the side of the students who appear to prefer having rooms in town rather than making use of the accommodation provided on the campus itself - in spite of - or possibly because of - this ideal accommodation. These peculiar circumstances have not stood in the way of the rapid, almost turbulent development of the university. It started off with three faculties: Chemical, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering. The teaching programmes were rather unique in that they offered a baccalaureate degree, or to use the French term, a licentiate, something new to this country and regarded with a certain amount of disfavour. This in conjunction with a "doctoral" degree which can be used as a stepping stone in obtaining ones Ph.D. As of this moment, quite a number of theses have
been presented and defended against the queries of our senior scientific staff, comprising of some 100 full-time, plus part-time, (i.e. extraordinary) professors. This staff is complemented by approximately 400 other scholarly staff members together with other technical and administrative personnel which brings the total number of staff to between some 1,100 to 1,200 persons. At the present moment, having passed through 15 years of expansion, the university now affords other teaching facilities, beside those already mentioned, in the fields of Applied Mathematics, Applied Physics, Industrial Management and Public Administration.

Turbulent developments indeed! However, universities cannot keep expanding indefinitely; gates blow themselves out and, apparently, for some people, rather unexpectedly. And so we sailed into the doldrums. During the fifties, and even in the early sixties, there was this expectation of an unending and increasing need for new and differently educated engineers but, with the present economic recession, this situation has changed course completely. This is, however, not the place, nor the time, to dissect the underlying possible causes of this economic phenomenon. (One may call to mind the over-production of consumer goods, goods that might just as well, if not better, be produced in developing countries; the increase of wages and the explosive increase in the cost of living in the industrial countries; the physical transfer of technology and of complete production plants from Europe to the Third World. All this, together with society's changed attitude toward the so-called "blessings" of technology combined with an increasing awareness as to the negative aspects of industrial and military complexes.)

These phenomena have not missed out in making their effect felt in the social image of university education and in technological education in particular. This, consequently, has had a negative effect on the means available for education. Further to this, one result has been, that there is fierce competition between the universities, other schools as well as other levels of teaching, to lay claim to the scarce means available, such as staff and money. This battle, which is still going on, has resulted in our losing ground to primary, secondary and other forms of education. We can safely state, that growth is no longer dictated by internal factors. Accordingly, our university has re-orientated itself, and is still in the process of doing so. Despite the fact that it has never offered pure science in its study programme, always having occupied itself in the so-called applied sciences, the university's governing body has been re-assessing the situation, in the light of the previously mentioned developments. It has drawn the conclusion that, as a consequence, and in conformity with the expectations of society, it is necessary to be constantly on the look-out for other practical fields of study and research. In this context, I would like to mention the fields of bio-medical technology, intermediate technologies, technological assessment, educational technology, Third World aid programmes etc. etc.
The T.H.T. itself, is situated in a region which has already been suffering from economic stagnation for some time now. As far as the Government of the country is concerned, this also forms a political reason as to why one should seriously look into the relevancy of the university, an institution into which millions of guilders have been pumped over the past years, and to investigate as to whether new opportunities can be realized which, will not only stimulate the university, but also activate the economy of the region; but, just as elsewhere, Government policy is not always a product of linear and logical thinking. For that reason, the university will have to remain alert, so that it can react immediately - not impulsively, of course, but with imagination - to any possibility which may present itself. So much for the university.

How about the library? Under the present unstable conditions, aggravated by technological innovation, it is no easy task for this particular library (I would also think for any library) to formulate the library's goals and policy, but fortunately, some of the present library's characteristics - such as its internal structure and processes, the centralized administration together with the de-centralized provision of reader services through the various faculty libraries in conjunction with the Central Library - characteristics which were designed basically by my predecessor - have proved themselves successful over the years and, hopefully, will hold out for the next decade or so. The organizational structure of the library is designed very much along the lines advocated in an advisory report formulated by a group of library experts headed by Dr. Pinxter and nominated by the CAVIB, the State Universities Council's Advisory Committee for Library Affairs. The English translation of the summary of the said report, will be made available to you for your examination and comment.

We run the same number of library units, within the T.H.T., as there are faculties, complemented by the Central Library. The division of the various functions has been laid down in a brochure: "Bibliovisie" printed in 1969 and now under revision. Each of these libraries are headed by their own subject librarian, one who is both an expert in the subject(s) being taught and researched in the faculty itself as well as being a trained librarian. Further more, the staff of the faculty library is comprised of a library assistant whose responsibility it is, to fulfill all the further technical and clerical duties. The subject librarians are expected to act as intermediaries between the accumulated structured knowledge, on the one hand, and the range of users (both teaching staff and students) on the other. One of their responsibilities is the organization of courses so that staff and students are familiar with library operations and how they can tap the sources of information available to them. Staff and students also receive instruction in the operation of data bases and, despite the fact that our own experience is still somewhat limited, the training that the library can offer is very much appreciated and, as it increases, will no doubt lead us to fresh troubles due to shortage of library personnel.
The various faculty libraries hold the documentary materials (monographs and serials - including periodicals) pertaining to the special interest of the faculty itself. The Central Library (in our opinion, not what one would call the main library) affords the interested user the remainder of the literature available, provides for the student's own library, houses the circulation department, arranges inter-library loans and operates a readers advisory service (which we call the Reference and Bibliography section) whilst in the same Central Library building other logistic services are carried out such as, the acquisition section, the further processing and cataloguing section as well as the financial and accounting service. The university's librarian is the nominal head of all these libraries and services and it is this position which enables him to harmonise all operations and to take care that duplication is kept to a minimum and that services are maintained at an optimal standard, at least, that is what it is in theory. In order to ensure that a correct interface is maintained, parallel to the users wants, the separate faculty librarians are advised by small advisory bodies, the members of which being recruited from the teaching and research staff. The same thing applies to the Central Library in general, the advisory committee being composed of a different chairman of the separate faculty advisory boards, one or two students and some representatives of other university bodies. The chairman of the university's Board of Governors, Mr. A. Hooites Meursing, attends the meetings as an observer. Some other services are also represented on the advisory body. The distribution of available funds and the provision of reader services, including the previously mentioned training of students, are the main topics of discussion. This committee meets about six times a year.

The main aim of the library, is to provide a service. To this end, all of the library staff have had training in being generally helpful and never to be un-cooperative or negative which, in these days, can be a particular challenge in the light of the lack of financial means together with the scarcity of posts available. However, most of the library's users are not over-demanding (even if they are not fully satisfied) since they know, or can easily learn as to just what our limitations are as a result of the open policy structure carried out here.

The lay-out of the Central Library needs no explanation. Please feel free to wander around and see for yourself. The catalogue itself is still in card form and stored in cabinets - well known to you all - but will soon be replaced by C.O.M. fiches. The reader apparatus needed in conjunction with the fiches has already been ordered. We have estimated that we will be able to change over to the fiches system around October of the current year. Our possessions consist of some 130,000 volumes and which are complemented by somewhere in the region of 2,500 - 3,000 subscriptions to all kinds of journals. The greatest part of the collection is (still) housed within the various faculty libraries (each of these libraries comprising some 8 to 10,000 volumes as well as 3-400 journals, of which the current, as well as the back numbers, are kept). Of course, we
concentrate generalities, general bibliographies, encyclopaedia, multi-subject indices, review journals and the like, here in the Central Library. The same holds true for standards, statistics, government publications and so forth.

The literature itself, is partially housed in closed stacks but, the larger part of the collection, some 3/5, is readily accessible on open shelves. Roughly according to U.D.C.; we offer three catalogues: an author catalogue, a catalogue arranged according to class numbers (at the same time a shelf catalogue) and a subject catalogue, or to put it better, a catalogue arranged according to key words. All of these are, of course, in Dutch despite the fact that about 4/5 of our intake is of foreign, in particular, Anglo-Saxon, origin and is in the order of some 10,000 volumes per year - being the maximum amount that we can handle with a staff of 6-7 cataloguers within a total of 40 staff members occupying 37 positions, a number that, has to be reduced to 35 by 1980/81, which we consider impossible in light of the continuously changing circumstances, growing demands and the university's ambitions. We are, however, not complaining - only weeping, now and again, - particularly when we see that the provisions for the library (collection and premises) are not being put to their optimal use. It is our sincere belief that extra personnel could remedy the situation drastically and, upgrade the library's effectiveness and revenue in terms of literature consumption. I shall not dwell any longer on the library's present situation. The way it functions and its objectives are not so much different from those of other academic libraries. This somewhat depressing situation brings us to realize that we have to co-operate with other libraries and, it is for this reason, that we are represented on different regional and national bodies (not to mention international ones such as the IATUL, IFLA, LIBER, FID, POGSI and others), each of which are turning their attention to networking, co-operative acquisition, inter library lending, central cataloguing and the building up of Union catalogues, using automation as well as other means. The social image of libraries is of paramount importance and therefore, user behaviour studies, analysis of user needs and user training programmes demand our attention.

Before ending this short paper, which does not pretend to be anything other than a short introduction to this library - of which further details are described in the little brochure on display - I would like to draw your special attention to a video-programme which we have prepared and completed only very recently with the co-operation of the Centre for Didactic and Educational Research and, in particular, with its sub-division responsible for audio-visual productions. Due to this co-operation, we are now able to show you an adapted version with an English/Scottish speaking soundtrack. My friend, Robin Jeffrey, did the translation and presentation. The actors, amongst whom are Mr. Skaliks and Mr. Schoenmaker of the library staff, are Dutch. I hope that you will enjoy the film which deals with on-line literature search (a tape-slide presentation of the library will, hopefully, be ready by Friday next). The title of the video programme is called: "And -or - And Not".