September 2001

And They Were There-Reports of Meetings-XI. Transborder Library Forum and Innovative Users Group

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Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3614

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And They Were There — Reports of Meetings

XI. Transborder Library Forum, 2001 and IUG Meets in Santa Clara

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XI. Transborder Library Forum, 2001
“World Information: knowledge without boundaries”
Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, March 15-17.

Report by Elizabeth N. Steinmagen
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Titled “World Information: knowledge without boundaries,” this year’s Transborder Library Forum was held in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, March 15-17. Hosted jointly by the Universidad de Sonora (UNISON), and the Food and Development Research Center (CIAD), the event again attracted approximately 300 professionals, as in previous years, from mostly border states, with a number of representatives of libraries from other areas of Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. The theme was globalization, a concept that is here to stay and which has had a profound impact on how things are done today. The outcome of newer and better technologies in the realm of information exchange has revolutionized our way of seeking knowledge that may be generated thousands of miles away, anywhere in the world.

For the above reasons, the organizers of this XI. FORO envisioned an event that would present more than a physical space where librarians from our two sister countries, the United States and Mexico, could exchange experiences and share ideas about common problems not just relevant to border areas, but where they could also begin to brainstorm on ways to improve on daily tasks for the ultimate benefit of local users as well as those from remote areas.

From its simple beginnings in the late 1980s, when librarians from Arizona and Sonora realized the need to improve communication between libraries in the border states, attendance and scope have increased considerably. Simultaneous interpretation at all FOROs has eliminated language barriers by providing each attendant with the opportunity to participate actively, while at the same time the number of bilingual librarians able to take part in the discussions regardless of language appears also to have increased. Each FORO has been organized by an extraordinary and dedicated team of volunteers from the host site, and so far, the event has remained the sole responsibility — and sometimes headache — of the local hosts. However, while the informality of the group, the lack of structure, of dues, and of membership obligations, remain one of the major attractions, questions arose at the close of the X. FORO in 2000, about the continuity of these gatherings. Indeed, after lengthy discussions at the end of the recent XI. FORO, those present decided to look into the feasibility of coming up with some sort of structure that would provide the group with at least a semi-formal identity and standing. While all participants continue to cherish the informality and the social interactions, it is hoped that the group they elected to study and proposed new status will arrive at a solution that ensures the ongoing existence of these meetings.

These transborder conferences have been growing in importance and relevance as libraries and their users access information beyond their physical and geographical borders. There was ample evidence for it throughout the 3-day program that brought together practitioners from all areas of librarianship. It was preceded by a number of workshops presented by librarians from Mexico and the United States, which included a session on searching MEDLINE and MEDLINEplus for biomedical and consumer health information; a workshop on basic serials cataloging, based on the CONSER Serials Cataloging Cooperative Training Program (SCCTP); a session on developing a library accessible to the community through design, attitude and technology; and another one on modern and general archives.

At the close of the opening ceremonies, the two keynote speakers offered interesting views on the present situation. Estela Morales C. of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México spoke about globalization and the importance of making more local information available to all users.

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Ernesto Camou H. of the Food and Development Research Center regaled the listeners with a humorous description of local history and the development of a population whose identity is rooted in agricultural and livestock activities. The above speakers were followed by a panel of Mexican library association presidents, joined by the current SLA President, Donna Scheeder.

Group sessions included overviews of important Sonoran archives and special collections, as well as a presentation on a binational archival digitization project jointly undertaken by the states of Arizona and Sonora. Round tables included sessions on library education in Baja California, on the globalization of higher education, on training of students in school libraries to use libraries, and on distance learning. Several presentations covered issues of the informatics of border health, and on developing instruments to transmit health information to culturally diverse consumers in the Mexican-U.S. border areas. Others spoke on the use of the Internet in digital libraries to provide resources for educational purposes in academic libraries. Also of interest was an overview of the interlibrary loan activities in Mexican institutions and on the future of document delivery among international libraries, based on the use of Ariel and the Web. Some specialized presentations centered on the use of Spanish as a vehicle of culture, i.e., on how Spanish is being used in U.S. libraries, and on the development of Spanish language training tools such as the CONSER Cataloging Manual and the tools used in the train-the-trainer program which are being translated into Spanish. Other presentations spoke about the problems presented by some bibliographic records in international databases created in languages other than English and based on standards different from AACR2.

In an interesting aside from purely librarians and librarians, a few of the papers dealt with the native towns of northwest Mexico, with the archaeological heritage of Sonora, and with the anthropology of the region’s indigenous populations.

On the whole, it was refreshing to hear that our Mexican colleagues are grappling with problems and issues very similar to ours, especially as the many new technologies offer some tempting but often unattainable solutions and which may, in fact, create problems of their own. These problems were forgotten, obviously, in the course of the many special events and socials that have helped, over the years, to give the FORO the reputation of being one of the friendliest meetings on either side of the border!

It is to be hoped that those in attendance were able to learn from one another and to forge lasting and collegial friendships which will make the next, XII FORO, to be held in Laredo, Texas, in March of 2002 equally attractive.

Ninth Innovative Users Group Meeting Organized by Innovative Interfaces
May 19-22, 2001, Santa Clara, California

Report by Sever Bordeianu and Chris R. Johnson
(University of New Mexico General Library)

The Ninth Innovative Users Group (IUG) meeting took place in Santa Clara, California, from May 19-22, 2001. This is an annual event organized by Innovative Interfaces for its customers, which provides the company an opportunity to showcase new products, demonstrate product applications, and announce new developments, enhancements, and features of the system. The schedule consisted of continuous consecutive meetings covering all aspects of running an Innovative system, ranging from technical issues such as system administration to the entire range of library applications that the online catalog supports. Most of the workshops were repeated at least once during the three-day conference, giving participants the opportunity to learn about most of their topics of interest. Two preconference workshops were also presented, one on System Administration and Security, the other on Help Desk Techniques.

The rich variety of topics covered in the workshops underlies how versatile library online systems have become, and specifically, the potentials for delivering information to users by Innovative system libraries. As is usual at this type of specialized conference, all participants spoke the same jargon. There was no need to translate to each other such terms as item records, bib records, and order records, or to define the difference between a branch code and a location code. And, of course, there is Millenium, which is Innovative’s Web interface, and Release 2001, which incorporates the latest technical enhancements to the system.

There were two types of presentations. The first type could be characterized as sales presentations or demonstrations by company employees that focused either on specific products for sale by the company, or enhancements to existing modules. The second type consisted of demonstrations by librarians who have implemented or adopted new products and services. In many cases, the workshops combined a presentation by a company employee and a demonstration from librarians showcasing the particular product or service. This combination, which is not unique to IUG, works very well. A report of this type can’t possibly cover all the workshops, nor should it. But it can give a good flavor of the variety of topics discussed.

“netLibrary and VIPs” presented the partnership between Innovative Interfaces and netLibrary, as well as other Valued Information Providers, such as Britannica, Informata (a company that provides links to Webpages containing book jackets), RealRead (an online review service), and many others. While Innovative does not sell the products, they can serve as a middleman between libraries and vendors. More importantly, the system’s software supports access to these vendors’ products. “A Question of Language” showed the process of translating Innovative’s Millennium system into Irish. It discussed technical and linguistic difficulties, and provided useful information for others interested in translating Millenium into languages that are not part of the standard Innovative package.

“Millenium Cataloging Product Demo” was of particular interest to catalogers, because it showed the much anticipated release of the cataloging module which allows increased flexibility in list creation and updating. There were several workshops on list and report creation techniques, which every Innovative user knows is an addictive process. List creation allows the identification of records based on a variety of parameters, and then the possibility of doing rapid updates as needed. “Codes and You” discussed the importance of assigning logical codes for patron, location, material, item, and so on in order to be able to create and update lists efficiently. During this workshop it was also suggested that codes be reviewed every five years, since needs and system capabilities change significantly in this kind of time period. A presentation by John de Santis of Dartmouth College demonstrated the relationship between the 680 field (public-displayed local note, as opposed to 667 and 670 fields which do not display) and cross-references within subject authority records. At Dartmouth, 680 notes are used to denote special information about local authors, headings of local historical interest, special collections, etc. Dartmouth also uses 260 (complex see) and 360 (complex see also) locally as local scope notes. Within the notes, N and a subfields are used to further define relationships between main headings and cross-references. Using these forms of notes locally could aid the patron in better understanding those relationships.

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Violet Johnson of the Houston Area Library Automated Network Consortium presented information on more efficient list creation. The management of information for multiple libraries within a consortium requires pre-planning and understanding of what specific information is to be sought. An understanding of the search structure as well as an understanding of the codes within the various records will greatly improve the validity of the list output. When one wishes to search older or newer records (e.g., patron activity within the past month), the search can be narrowed to those records within that range for greater accuracy. A feature of the Millennium list creation module will allow for cross tabulation of any two data elements.

The list creation feature can also be used to do inventories. Helen Dungan of Lafayette College showed how creating an inventory list can aid in weeding, shelving, and identifying missing volumes. Lafayette College uses student assistants to process the lists by doing the shelving. The list is printed onto a form that allows the shelfreader to verify the information on the list and also to identify miscoded list items. A systematic search of all missing volumes on the list takes place each summer.

Errors within records can be located easier with the Create List module used in conjunction with the Statistical Reports function. Sharon Saunders and Marnie Gardner, both of Bates College, illustrated the procedure used at Bates College to identify and correct errors. The title of the workshop was appropriately named "Errors, Errors, Go Away." Using a statistical report can show the number of records falling within error criteria, and a list can be generated to list each record with the error. For errors occurring within the record itself (e.g. misspellings, miscoded branch/location information), corrections can be made using Rapid Update. Other types of errors would require checking the shelves and adjusting the records one by one.

Listing some workshop titles, which neither author was able to attend, will give a more complete idea of the breadth of this conference. Most of the titles are self-explanatory: "Image Management," "Distance Education and Innovation," "OPAC Magic," "Implementing Circulation Notices via Email," "Do You Know Where your Books Are?" "Your WebPac: Not Just a Catalog Anymore," and "Turbo-Charged Downloading." There were also several specialized sessions for system administrators that dealt with using the user manual, running proxy servers, running Millennium on alternate platforms, record loads, Z39.50 in Innopac, customizing the Web, and XML. Again, this is not a comprehensive list of all the workshops, but it does provide an idea of how dynamic and informative the conference was.

The workshops were excellent. They included the schedule, the summary, and a large three-ring binder with workshop descriptions and ample room for notes. All these materials, which were well designed, easy to use, and to a certain extent redundant, made attendance at the conference more productive. They are also useful as in-house tools in the library. The infrastructure was excellent. The conference facilities and the environment were pleasant and comfortable, breaks and lunches were well stocked, and the presentation software, the ubiquitous PowerPoint, worked without glitches. Like other library conferences, IUG allows for plenty of networking, interacting with vendors in the exhibit area, information gathering and exchange. Next year's annual meeting will take place in Houston.