February 1998

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Recommended Citation

Wilhite, Jeffrey M. (1998) "International Dateline: European Union Training Seminar," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 10: Iss. 1, Article 34.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3313>

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International Dateline

European Union Training Seminar

For the European Documentation Center Libraries, Brussels, Belgium, Dec. 1-3, 1997

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In December of 1997, the European Union (EU) hosted its seventh Training Seminar for the European Documentation Centres (EDCs) in Brussels, Belgium. The list of participants included librarians from the EU countries as well as invited delegates from non-EU countries. The EU countries represented were Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The EU Office of Press and Public Affairs, based in Washington D.C., issued the invitations to twelve European Union designated librarians in the United States; the states represented were California, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, New York, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia. Other non-EU countries represented were Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, and Turkey. Being from the heartland of Oklahoma, I was quite impressed with the showing.

The training seminar was held in Brussels, which is the main headquarters of the European Union. The European Union has its origins in 1952 when the Treaty of Paris established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The six founding states were Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands. In 1957, the Treaties of Rome were signed by the six member states, forming the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euroatom), concurrent with the ECSC. The three agencies merged in 1967 to form the basis of the European Community (EC). The main goals of the EC were to form a single market for Europe's economic resources. In 1973, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Ireland became members. Other countries joined quickly, including Greece in 1981, Spain and Portugal in 1986, and Finland, Sweden, and Austria in 1995. Throughout this period of growth, the EC adopted new goals to encom-

pass environmental movements, regulatory acts, and human rights concerns. In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty was ratified, which re-chartered the European Community as the European Union. The European Union presently has fifteen member states and has broadened its scope even further to promote unity both economically and socially among the people of Europe, to introduce a common European citizenship to all citizens from its member countries, and to assert a European identity on the international scene. Because of its central location in Europe and its international scope, Brussels was designated the main headquarters for the European Union.

The European Union has a long-standing tradition of maintaining EU depository libraries in the United States. The earliest of these depositories were established with the creation of the ECSC. The EU presently supports over fifty depositories in the United States. Most EU librarians in the U.S. also manage federal publications, but some solely manage EU collections. The EU also supports a system of European Documentation Centers (EDCs) throughout the EU member countries, with a total of 275 EDCs worldwide. Librarians from both of these types of libraries were invited to participate in this Training Session. The EU Office of Press and Public Affairs had sent many of the American EU Librarians to the previous sessions.

The EU publishes on a multitude of topics in a variety of formats. Statistics, parliamentary reports, current events, regulations, debate, and news items all fall within the range of EU publication topics. The format of publications is either paper, fiche or electronic. The type of publications include periodicals, monographs, and annuals. These publications fall in to a number of EU-specific categories: Green Papers, White Papers, Bulletins, Communications, Reports, Memorandum, and Press Releases. The main division of these items is between General Information and Official Documents. Depositories and EDCs automatically receive one copy of a majority of these items, free of charge, in the language they designated. The only items which are not part of this agree-

ment are the Technical Reports and the Press Materials issued by the Commission's Offices located outside of Brussels. The General Information items are free to the public; however, the public has to purchase the Official Documents from the Office for Official Publications (EUR-OP). Purchase requests can be made in writing, by phone or via the Internet. There is also a large cache of current information on the Internet, available through the EU Website. Some of the EU Internet material is free of charge while others incur a charge, as I was soon to find out.

The training session covered three days, Mon., Dec. 1st through Wed., Dec. 3rd, 1997. The locale of the training session was at the Albert Borschette Conference Center, in the European Union center of Brussels. The Conference Room looked as if it were from a James Bond movie: a place where world leaders convene to stop some villainous machination. The room contained console tables equipped with microphones and headsets, the names of our countries displayed before us, and a series of glass translator booths housing various foreigners gesticulating silently. Our hosts were **Mrs. Isabel Loff**, Directorate General X/A/6, and **Neville Keery**, Head of Unit "Libraries and European Documentation Centres." What followed was a series of international speakers from all areas of the European Union, some speaking in English, but most in French.

The first meeting provided us the basic outline of the training session. Each of the three days had a different theme. Day One covered what the EU is, gave an update on activity, and expounded upon its present challenges. Day Two focused on the institutions of the EU, their products, and their availability. Day Three revolved around what documents are being produced by the various agencies.

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*Box Facts (con't from pg 74)
for a book on the prevention and correction
of musculoskeletal deformities of children.
He coined the word "orthopedic" from the
Greek roots orthos (straight) and paedia
(rearing of children).*

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The meetings on Day One began with **Mr. M. Santopinto**, Directorate A "Central Information Office," presenting the basic goals of the training session as a whole. The goals were: to relay developments in EU policies, to increase awareness of EU sources and tools, and to meet, talk and discuss the EU with other EDC colleagues from around the world. **Neville Keery** then explained why there is a greater need for information and information access in the European Union. This proposition is based on the impending expansion of the EU. The EU presently has fifteen member countries, but there are ten new candidates waiting for admittance. The EU is frantically trying to put things in order and reorganize itself before the number of member countries reaches 25. An opinion poll was taken in the EU countries to discern people's ideas on this expansion; the main response was a desire for more information to be made available. There was also a reorganization of the European Depository Centres, moving them from The Information Relays and Networks Unit to the newly created Libraries and European Documentation Centres Unit, DG X/A/6. This new unit, headed by Mr. Keery himself, gives the centres more emphasis and leadership, to meet the current trend. As one may see, information and its dissemination has taken on even more importance in the EU today.

Another informative session on Day One detailed the current EU happenings in relation to the world. Mr. J. Vantomme, Head of Unit X/B/2 "Information Service for Non-Member Countries," presented the many-faceted developments that the EU is currently engaging in on the world front. By far, the most pressing issues are a single European currency, the Treaty of Amsterdam, and AGENDA 2000. The EU is now introducing a single currency system, with its basic monetary unit called the euro. By 1999, European financial services will be conducted in euros. By 2002, the euro coins and currency will be introduced alongside the countries current money. By mid-2002, all national coins and currency other than the euro will be canceled. The Treaty of Amsterdam was passed on July 16, 1997, and is soon to be ratified. This treaty has four main objectives: (1) to place employment at the top of the Union's agenda, (2) to allow greater mobility within the Union by strengthening security, (3) to give Europe a stronger, singular voice in world affairs, and (4) to make the Union more efficient in its preparation for enlargement. AGENDA 2000 is a project meant to strengthen European integration and prepare Europe for the EU enlargement.

Day Two brought the introduction of the EU institutions and their products. The session began with **Mme. M. Cattelain**, Unit

X/D/2 "Information On-Line" speaking on **EUROPA**, the EU Webpage. EUROPA (<http://europa.eu.int>) is impressive because it is inter-institutional, bringing together and linking all of the EU in one Web page. It is also impressive because it can be viewed in 10 languages, with two more languages to be added by 1999. EUROPA is divided into four major sections: ABC, Institutions, News, and Policies. There are also four icons: Information, Mail-Box, Search, and What's New. EUROPA is easy to use, has a good internal search engine, and for an institution as sprawling and gargantuan as the EU, is certainly complete. Kudos to the EU for doing what the American government is just now trying to do.

Day Two also brought a series of speakers from the various agencies of the EU. **Mr. R. Laurent** spoke on the European Commission, **Mrs. M.F. Contet** on the Court of Justice, **Mr. F. Watteau** on the European Parliament, and **Mr. L. Goebel** on the Council of

"Kudos to the EU for doing what the American government is just now trying to do."

Ministers. Each speaker not only detailed their institution's purpose, its history, and current affairs, but also described its type of publications and dissemination style. There was also a multi-media presentation by **Mr. J. Andreu**, Unit X/D/3, "Audiovisual Production and Studies," of EUROPA by Satellite, including EU television programming and video productions.

By Day Three of the training session, all the delegates had met, talked, exchanged ideas, and were comfortable with one another. In addition to bonding with the other American delegates at dinners and touring the beautiful city, I breakfasted with the Cypriot representative, lunched with the Swiss and Polish delegates, and had drinks with the fellows from the U.K. Day Three began with a tour of the European Commission Library. The library has over 500,000 titles, 3000 journal subscriptions, and they pull up to 500 items a day. We toured the cataloging and acquisitions areas as well as their reference rooms. The EU call numbering system is used, which is quite different from the familiar Dewey Decimal and Library of Congress systems.

The remainder of Day Three was spent with presentations about the myriad publi-

cations of the EU. Our speakers included **Mrs. J. Lowery-Kingston**, from the Office of Official Publications of the European Communities (EUR-OP), and **Mr. Pessanha**, for EUROSTAT. Mrs. June Lowery-Kingston, who gave one of the most informative and animated presentations, detailed EUR-OP, its policies, its distribution methods, and gave us an update on many of the EUR-OP products. Mr. Pessanha, who spoke to the American group at the New Directions: Technology and EU Information Meeting in Seattle earlier that year, started his presentation nervously. The Americans expected this because at the Seattle meeting he had announced that the EDCs would have to pay for the EUROSTAT products. A sigh of relief occurred when he announced that EUROSTAT had reversed its decision and was NOT going to charge the EDCs for the bulk of their products.

The last session of the training seminar was a summary coda by **Mrs. Isabel Loff**. She stressed a number of closing points: the importance of electronic technologies, the value of training for the EDC librarians, the worth of communication between countries not just at the national level but on the world stage, and the wealth of information the producers of EU publications can impart to all of us. Mrs. Loff ended the final session with a "thank you" to all the participants as applause filled the room. Soon all the international delegates were shaking hands, saying farewells amid more smattered applause, laughing, and exchanging business cards, all in a shower of various languages.

The EU Training Session was certainly something that I will remember for life. I had never before been to an international workshop, and certainly not as a representative of the United States. The session was useful for its information about the EU, its products, and policies, but more so as an opportunity to talk with fellow international librarians. The information I gleaned in these meetings, I will use throughout my career. But the experience of talking with librarians from all over the world about their federal documents, their thoughts on the impending currency change, and their management of EU documents back home is certainly an experience I will remember most prominently. On the long plane ride home to Oklahoma, I thought that in addition to accomplishing the three goals of the EU training session, I was leaving feeling much more fulfilled than I had ever expected. 🌻

*The first book manuscript ever prepared on a typewriter was the manuscript for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, completed in 1875 by Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens). His Remington typewriter keyboard had the same configuration currently used on most computers and typewriters, the "qwerty" keyboard.*