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Annual Review-UK-1998

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Annual Review – UK 1998

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In writing this review of some of the events and issues of 1998 in the UK I have had to be rather selective. Compared to the USA, the UK is quite a small country, but the level of innovation in the delivery of information to all sectors is very high, and there are a number of interesting and important initiatives underway at the present time.

NESLI

The development of the **National Electronic Site Licence**, NESLI, has been the subject of much discussion during 1998. NESLI is a three-year programme to deliver a national electronic journal service to the UK higher education and research community, starting on 1 January 1999. The service is a development of the **Pilot Site Licence Initiative (PSLI)** that ran from 1996 to 1998, in which the participating publishers were **Blackwell Science**, **Blackwells Publishing**, **Academic Press** and **Institute of Physics Publishing**. Among the major differences between PSLI and NESLI is that NESLI is only for electronic delivery, not the combined print/electronic package of the PSLI. An invitation to tender for the role of Managing Agent for the scheme was published towards the end of 1997, and the three short-listed companies were **Blackwells**, **Dawsons** and **Swets**, with the eventual winner being **Swets**, in conjunction with the **University of Manchester**.

The roles of the Managing Agent are to provide a negotiating body that would represent the **HEI (Higher Education Institutions)** in discussions with primary publishers, handle the subscription transactions, provide a single interface for e-journal access, and contribute to resolving some of the barriers inhibiting the take-up of e-journals. Much of the year has been occupied with the development of the **Model Site Licence**, which is currently on its seventh draft. To date only **Blackwell Science** has committed to the scheme, which given the start date of 1 January 1999 is rather disappointing to all concerned. One of the fundamental barriers that is virtually unique to the UK is that there is a 17.5% Value Added Tax payable on electronic materials. If print and electronic are co-delivered and invoiced then there is scope to reduce the tax liability, but for electronic-only the problems are acute, especially for academic institutions that cannot (unlike a company) pass on the tax to customers. For more information look at www.nesli.ac.uk.

Electronic journals in the corporate sector

There has been a growing awareness during the year that corporate librarians are also concerned about the management of e-journals. I have written about these in a previous

issue of *ATG* (see v.10#6, p.71) so here I will just say that the **Pharma Dokumentation Ring**, a group of librarians in the leading European pharmaceutical companies, has taken a very important initiative in setting out the issues that are of especial importance to the corporate sector, and representatives of PDR had some useful meetings with publishers in December. However, there is still a lot of work to be done, as evidenced by the fact that over 150 delegates attended a **TFPL/UK Serials Group conference** in November to explore the issues in more depth. Most of the papers given at the conference will be published in *Serials* in due course. In my view I think that the resolution of many of these issues will only come about through sectorial initiatives, but the work involved is such that hard-pressed information managers find it difficult to allocate adequate time to these initiatives.

Licensing digital resources

Behind all the technological issues is the fundamental problem of the management of intellectual property in an electronic age, including of course the problems of national digital archives. An important European initiative has been the **European Copyright User Platform**, which has been funded by the **Libraries Programme of the European Commission**. EDUP consists of the national library associations that are members of the **European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA)**. EBLIDA has been led with consummate skill by **Emanuella Giavarra**, who

is now leaving to go into private practice in London. Of the many deliverables from **ECUP** (which can be found at www.kaapeli.fi/ebilda/ecup) probably the most useful is the paper that Emanuella prepared in November 1998 entitled **Licensing Digital Resources: How to Avoid the Legal Pitfalls**. This provides clause by clause guidance on how to read between the lines of publishers contract terms, and is expertly prepared.

EBLIDA was also involved in an important statement on **Incidental Digitisation and Storage of STM Print Journal Articles**. This agreement covers situations where a library may wish to digitize the print version of a paper that it has already acquired to add it to a digital archive. A **Joint Statement** that recognises the need, and the need for the protection of intellectual property rights, was issued by **EBLIDA**, **ECUP** and the **International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM)** in November 1998. A list of those publishers participating in this agreement will be posted on www.stm-assoc.org, but don't rush to look as the site is still under construction.

UKOLN

The **UK Office for Library and Information Networking** is an invaluable source of information on all aspects of electronic

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information access in the UK. It is funded by The British Library Research and Innovation Centre (BLRIC), the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) of the Higher Education Funding Councils, as well as by project funding from the JISC's Electronic Libraries Programme and the European Union. UKOLN also receives support from the University of Bath where it is based. The Director is **Lorcan Dempsey**, an indefatigable promotor of best practice in electronic access.

The UKOLN Web site at www.ukoln.ac.uk also provides access to the work sponsored under the eLib programme. In 1993, an investigation into how to deal with the pressures on library resources, caused by the rapid expansion of student numbers and the worldwide explosion in academic knowledge and information, was undertaken by the Joint Funding Council's Libraries Review Group, chaired by **Sir Brian Follett**. This investigation resulted in the Follett Report. One of the key conclusions of this report was that the exploitation of IT was essential to create the effective library service of the future.

As a consequence, the **Higher Education Funding Bodies** in the UK invited proposals for projects which would "transform the use and storage of knowledge in higher education institutions." \$25 million was initially allocated to the "**Electronic Libraries Programme**," managed by the Joint Information Systems Committee on behalf of the funding bodies. A series of waves of funding, proposals and projects has resulted in the eLib programme consisting of around 60 projects. Many of the projects are involved in, or tackle, overlapping or complementary themes; several of the projects and programme areas are also working closely with other digital/electronic library initiatives, some of these having a more international focus. The first wave of projects began work in the spring of 1995. Project durations differ, so as some projects end, others either begin in further eLib waves, or continue through continuation funding or sponsorship. The programme is not overtly a research programme; its main remit is to provide a body of tangible, electronic resources and services for UK Higher Education, and to affect a cultural shift towards the acceptance and use of said resources and services in place of more traditional information storage and access methods.

Among the many valuable projects are **SuperJournal**, which sought to identify what both publishers and authors want from electronic journals, and **HERON**, which was described at the 1998 **Charleston Conference**.

HERON

HERON aims to create a successful, new learning/teaching information service to ben-

efit all **UK Higher Education** stakeholders by creating a sustainable business model in exchanging rights and access to electronic educational material for payment by licence or transactional fee to rights-holders. This will be achieved by developing a national database of digitised material and electronic texts. The database will provide pointers to other major resource banks of digitised texts (e.g. at publishers' own Web sites and the **British Library**) and build a resource bank of commercially published book chapters and journal articles, some retro-digitised on request by **HEIs**, plus current eLib project material (with extended licences), and **HEI**-owned electronic text. The importance of this project is that it starts to move the discussion beyond e-journals into the world of electronic monographs and other electronic resources.

Information and libraries in Britain

In many respects, information on the scale of the UK information sector is well documented. Two valuable resources are worth special mention. The **British Council**, which is the UK's international network for education, culture and development services published **Information and Libraries in Britain** last year. Compiled by **Patrick Villa** in support of the UK involvement in the 1998 **IFLA conference** (www.ifla.org) which took place in Amsterdam, it contains a wealth of useful statistics and comments. As far as the 100 main university libraries are concerned, the book stock is around 70 million titles, and there are 135,000 seats for users. The UK also has 4,100 public libraries, 5,600 school libraries and a further 600 other libraries in higher and further education.

"One of the key conclusions of the Follett Report was that the exploitation of IT was essential to create the effective library service of the future."

Excellent statistical data on the corporate and public sector libraries is compiled by the **Library and Statistics Unit** of **Loughborough University**, though the unit also covers academic and public library statistics. Details of all the reports published by the Unit can be found on <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dils/lisu/lisuhp.html>.

Incidentally if you want to get a view on the way in which academic bookselling is finding life very difficult in the UK do look at the article by **Richard Barker** in *The Bookseller*, 11 December 1998, pages 22-24. He ends his article with a set of questions about the future of academic bookselling, and concludes that although there are some talented people around [in **Blackwells** and **Waterstones**] to wrestle with these questions they will have their work cut out to maintain adequate levels of profitability in the academic sector.

Mergers and acquisitions

In the journals sector the main news was made by **Taylor and Francis** acquiring **Routledge** to become the third largest STM publisher, and then **Bertelsmann** acquired a significant stake in **Springer**. Another potential merger (or acquisition, depending on your point of view) is that between the two major professional societies in the UK, the **Library Association** and the smaller and younger **Institute of Information Scientists**. This is not the first time that the idea of a single professional organisation has been discussed, but it seems likely that this time there will be a unification. A discussion document, **Our Professional Future**, has been issued, with a timetable for the establishment of the new organisation as of 1 January 2000. In theory this is a good idea, but whether the new organisation will just be a force-fit of the current bodies, or a new organisation for the Millennium, remains to be seen.

Government activities

Last, but by no means least, a brief comment on what has been happening at Government level. In the UK it is the **Department of Culture, Media and Sport** that has the main responsibility for libraries in the public sector. The Minister, **Chris Smith**, is advised by the **Library and Information Commission** (www.lic.gov.uk) under the chairmanship of **Matthew Evans**, a distinguished publisher. During the year, there were a number of important issues for the information community to consider, including the future of the **British Library** (the new building for which is at last becoming populated with content and users), and the impact of

the proposed **National Grid for Learning** on the role of public libraries. During the year the Government completed a major spending review, and one of the outcomes was a proposal that a **Museums, Libraries and Archives Council** be set up from 1 April 2000 which would combine the present **LIC** and the **Museums and Galleries Commission**. The interests of publishers, especially in electronic content markets, are the responsibility of the **Department of Trade and Industry**, which commissioned a major market survey in 1998 entitled **The Advance of Electronic Publishing** (www.dti.gov.uk).

In conclusion

I hope that this has given you some feel for what has been happening in the UK over the last year. In 1999 will **NESLI** really pay off, how will consortia purchasing develop, and how quickly can we train users and information professionals to make the best use of new services? These and many other questions will be answered in due course, and many interim answers will no doubt be presented and discussed at the combined **UK Serials Group** and **European Serials Conference** in Manchester on 12-14 April 1999. (www.uksg.org)

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