Opening address

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It is good to be in England
now that April's here

I shall not make a key-note speech; I shall not anticipate anything of what the real contributors to this conference are going to say. I shall, for reasons that will become clear as I go along, dwell somewhat on the IATUL past and consequently draw rather heavily on what has already been written.

But firstly I would like, on behalf of the Board of IATUL, to welcome you to the eleventh IATUL Conference.

We on the Board are very pleased indeed that so many of our Members have been able to take part in this conference. As you know, the conference has been organized in association with F.I.D. - Federation Internationale de Documentation - and the IFLA section of Science and Technology Libraries. Both these organizations are represented at our conference by persons who are also IATUL members - IFLA by Dr. Franziska Heinzle of the Fachhochschule Aachen and Secretary of the IFLA Section of Science and Technology Libraries, F.I.D. by their President, Mr. Michael Hill of the Science Reference Library in London.

Another special mention is due to organizations, formally outside the actual membership of IATUL but who have always taken great interest in our work and showed great generosity in arranging receptions at our conferences and elsewhere. I welcome very much indeed the representatives of Blackwell's, Pergamon Press, and Swets, not all here today but joining us during the week.

I would like also especially to welcome those of you who have taken the trouble to come here from faraway countries and continents. We are glad to see with us members from Australia, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, South Africa and the United States. It is, of course, a pleasure to note that both Eastern and Southern Europe and Israel are represented here to-day. All of you - old as well as new members - are heartily welcome to our conference.
There is, however, one important member missing today. I have the sad duty to tell you that the Director of the Library of the Technological University of Norway, in Trondheim - Knut Thalberg - died only a few weeks ago. He had planned to take part in this conference, and we can only deeply regret his absence. With Knut Thalberg, we have lost one of the most notable and loyal IATUL Members, who, for several years, served our association as an active member of our Board. In 1976, he very actively planned to host the 7th IATUL Conference in Trondheim. This, regretfully, was not - for economical reasons - possible to carry through, and I know that he was disappointed as he always took a very keen interest in IATUL affairs. I would like you all to stand up in a few moments silence in homage to Knut Thalberg.

The future of information resources for science and technology is the subject and theme of our conference, and to look forward, therefore, seems to be what we should do. However, we have just looked back for a moment, briefly, and, for a special reason, I will continue to do so in this address. The International Association of Technological University Libraries was in fact founded in Düsseldorf in May 1955 as an international forum for the exchange of ideas relevant to librarianship in Technological Universities around the world. Among the founders were the Library Directors of the Technological Universities in Delft, Dr. van der Wolk, and in Gothenburg - Chalmers - Dr. Hemlin, who also became the first President of IATUL. In September 1955, IATUL was recognized as a subsection of the International Library Association's division of IFLA. It now works in close association with the IFLA Section of Science and Technology Libraries. This means that IATUL this year celebrates her 30th anniversary - a mere girl you might say, when you compare her with larger and older sister associations - but still, considering what has been achieved during those 30 years, quite mature.

The time relation past - present - future - seems, against this background, a relevant focal point for my address today. It brings to mind the opening stanza of the first of T.S. Elliot's "Four quartets", "Burnt Norton":

"Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present."
Sitting back and taking stock of what has been might be a help in assessing where we are at present and what we may expect and demand from the future. IATUL - as it is put in our information brochure - is a voluntary international organization consisting essentially of a group of libraries represented by their library directors and senior librarians with closely similar interests and responsibilities. It is small enough for the individual members to be able to develop a close relationship yet widespread enough to cover the interests of libraries operating in virtually all modern social, economic and political situations. Furthermore, the majority of the members provide library services not only to the research, teaching and student members of a university but also to the industrial organizations in their vicinity. The essential objective is to provide a forum where library directors can meet to exchange views on matters of current significance and provide an opportunity for them to develop a collaborative approach to problems.

IATUL is an excellent example of the development of an effective informal international network between libraries of similar type with a common high level of professional expertise and offering a similar kind of service. The possibility of IATUL being actively involved in the development of an effective technological library network was implied in recommendation 7 of UNISIST report (1971) which says:

"A strong scientific library system should be recognized as an essential component of scientific information transfer in modern times. In collaboration with the international and national organizations concerned (IFLA, IATUL, etc.) UNISIST should direct its effort to a statement of the minimum set of functions and levels of performance that scientific libraries ... ought to maintain for their optimum performance".

IATUL brings its members together at biennial conferences and encourages and stimulates contact and collaboration between them during the intervening periods. Though an independent organization, IATUL maintains close contact with IFLA, of which it is an International Member. What - then - is the achievement of IATUL?

I would recommend you to read Dr. Schmidmaier's paper on the history of IATUL which is short and very much to the point.* In it are highlighted the associations' statutes, its publication activities and - specially - its conferences. Of special interest - today - are, perhaps, the conferences. The conferences were preceeded by meetings held at Munich in 1956, Fulda in 1958 and Trier in 1960. The first conference, which was officially called so, was held in Delft in 1961 on the theme "Technological Universities and Progress". I continue, citing Dr. Smidmaier:

"In 12 papers and many discussions the whole range of librarianship in Technological University Libraries was covered. Unfortunately, separate Conference Proceedings were not published".

The conferences following this first one have all been centred on special themes. Thus the second conference in Stuttgart in 1964 treated the problems of "Modern Library Building and Equipment". Only abstracts of the programme were published in LIBRI. The Third World's library problems were discussed at the following conference at Haifa in 1967 on the theme: "The Organization and Management of a Library in a Developing Country". No complete official record of this conference has been published. Library User Education - today a recognized important part of a library's work - was the centre of interest at the 4th Meeting at Loughborough in 1970 on "Educating the Library User". Apart from the lectures, demonstrations of practical staff participation in user instruction were given.

Computerized information services were treated at a conference - the 5th one - in 1973 at Vedbaek outside Copenhagen, under the heading "Computer-based Information Services in Technological University Libraries". It was very well organized in very pleasant surroundings, and since this was the first IATUL conference I took part in, I remember it well.

The 6th Conference in Zürich in 1975 was on the theme "University Libraries as Information Centres". Eleven papers were read covering the relationship between the University Library and Information Centres, the role of the Librarian, and coordination of bibliographic activities.

The 7th Conference in 1977, at the Catholic University of Louvain, centred on the theme of "Developing Library Effectiveness for the Next Decade", while the next meeting at Enschede in the Netherlands treated "Library Cooperation", where the crucial point turned out to be when to co-operate and when not to co-operate, or whether you should try to co-operate at all costs or rather prefer to go it alone. "Libraries and the Communication Process" as a conference theme was treated at the following meeting at Lausanne. It was presented in a penetrating and interesting introductory paper by Dr. Jean-Pierre Sydler, who was the President of IATUL. A brilliant summing up of this conference was given by Mr. Michael Hill of the Science Reference Library.

I am sorry to say I was not able to attend the Conference at Essen in 1983, but the problems discussed there - concerning "The Future of Serials: Publication, Automation and Management" - are problems that we are facing daily and which insist on a solution being found.

Apart from the conferences, special seminars have been arranged - the most recent in Delft in 1984 on "User Education in the On-Line Age II". The proceedings of this seminar have just been printed and is currently being distributed to the membership.
The IATUL publishing activities have, however, not been confined to the Conference Proceedings. Another series, which appears irregularly, but with remarkable frequency, is the IATUL Proceedings. The similarity in title with the Conference Proceedings has, perhaps, caused some confusion in the periodicals registration departments. Still, this other series is quite interesting as it has developed from rather general issues, where papers on very different problems have been put together, into theme numbers where papers have centred round a main theme and highlighted different aspects and approaches to this theme. Thus we have such themes as "User Education in University of Technology Libraries", "Library Buildings", "Online Issue", "Education for Work in Technological University Libraries", "User Education in the Online Age", "Library Development: Australia".

So much for what has been. Are there, today, any regrets about what might have been? Looking back, it is perhaps often easy to see and say that this, that and the other could have been done better - I still think that even mistakes can be useful tools for making things better now and in the future.

Our present conference concerns the future: "The Future of Information Resources for Science and Technology and the Role of Libraries". We have a host of papers and communications, invited and offered, to which we look forward with interest. I do not consider it my role here to anticipate what our contributors are going to present, nor to offer a personal view of the implications of the problems that it is necessary to discuss within the framework of the commanding theme.

Thus, I confine myself to once again wishing you all heartily welcome to our Conference.

Thank you.