



Universal Availability of Publications Core Activity 7th Interlending and Document Supply International Conference

Opening address

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It is a pleasure to express my excitement of having the opportunity to welcome you to my country. As the Director General of professional work in the Slovenian national library, I am pleased to host this conference for specialists in library and information science, coming from 33 different countries around the world, and to share with you new ideas and experiences.

I met some of you, especially our American colleagues, at the IFLA conference in Boston only two weeks before the tragic events in New York and I would therefore like to give a special welcome to all of our American colleagues present at this conference.

Way back in 1989 I attended the 1st International Conference on Interlending and Document Supply in London. Graham was there and since then we have met almost each year at different conferences. At the time of the 1st conference I didn't even dream that I would host one of these conferences in Ljubljana. I still remember one of the main topics of that first conference: the presentation and introduction of ISDN technology in document supply and I remember that I felt very important being informed about that latest achievement in communication technology.

Today, to begin with, I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with some essential information about my country, and of course, about the Slovenian national library. Communication with colleagues from abroad has shown that there still exists some difficulties in putting Slovenia on the map, that many people erroneously take Slovenia for Slovakia and so on, despite the fact that Slovenia used to be a place of important events in distant and recent European history. (Namely, in Spring Slovenia hosted the two presidents George W Bush and Vladimir Putin on the occasion of their first meeting)

Slovenia became an independent country in 1991 (we celebrated the 10th anniversary last year); from 1945 to that date it was one of the six republics of federal Yugoslavia; until 1918 it had been for centuries a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and from then until 1945 part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians.

The predecessor of the national library was established in 1774 and we shall soon celebrate its 230th anniversary. During these two centuries the library has functioned as the County of Carniola library, later as the state library and the university library. It was only after 1945 that the library was given the legal status of the Slovenian national library. I would like to emphasise that there was not one central national or state library in former Yugoslavia; each republic established its national library and developed its publishing production in the national language. I receive many questions from my foreign colleagues about what was the Slovenian national library in former Yugoslavia. So, it was then also a national library. The library has been performing all the national library core activities as well as the educational and training activities for all Slovenian librarians, and also the advisory and supervisory functions within the Slovenian library network.

The introduction of library automation was conceived at the Yugoslav level. COMARC format, based on UNIMARC international format, was developed to support bibliographic information. The shared cataloguing system COBISS was implemented in 1987 using software support provided by IZUM (Institute of Information Science), who act as host. The system, on the Yugoslav level, was interrupted in 1991 by the outbreak of war, but Slovenian libraries were in a position to continue to use it, since IZUM is situated in Slovenia. Today there are around 240 libraries participating actively in the system. The union database COBIB contains over 2 million records, covering all types of publications, including to a lesser extent even Slovenian articles.

The library and information system of Slovenia consists of the national library, three university libraries, 69 academic libraries, 167 special libraries, 60 public libraries (with 247 branch libraries) and 700 school libraries. The next important elements of the system are the already mentioned IZUM, the host of the COBISS system, the Union of Slovenian libraries regional associations and the Department of Library and Information Studies at the Faculty of Art (University of Ljubljana). There are two major financiers of the system: the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, as well as local communities.

The national library information services

The national library provides access to some specialised databases created by Slovenian producers and also to many foreign databases. Special contracts have been signed with major information providers etc. Servers have been installed to provide networked access to CD-ROMs, purchased by NUK. Researchers and students of Ljubljana University are able to access and retrieve all databases (around 70) using their own work-stations from all faculty (academic) or departmental libraries. They are able also to access and retrieve many international databases on the Internet. Electronic ordering systems are used to support interlibrary loan and document supply services when documents are required from abroad. Thus, the major online systems are largely used.

International co-operation and projects

The National and University Library was a founder member of CERL (Consortium of European Research Libraries) and in 1999 contributed approximately 20,000 bibliographic records for Slovenian books printed between 1450 and 1850 to the CERL Hand Press Book Database. The records (in UNIMARC format) are available on the Research Library Group Information Network, located in California.

It was of major importance to the Library to reach an agreement with OCLC, Dublin (Ohio), concerning the contribution of bibliographic records (about the Slovenian publishing output) into the world's largest online catalogue. This was considered an outstanding opportunity to promote the national cultural and scientific achievements.

In 2001 NUK started to participate in 4 international research projects with financial support from the European Commission: the TEL and the LEAF projects within the IST2000 programme, and the preservation projects PAPYLUM and INKCOR.

Retrospective conversion and digitisation

The library successfully carried out the retrospective conversion of bibliographic records, stored in the library's oldest catalogue. This consists of entries for books published between 1450 and 1947, around 100,000 entries altogether. The catalogue is considered to be a cultural monument since the first catalogue entries were hand-written by renowned men in the field of Slovenian culture, and were also the first Directors of the library.

The next phase of the project involved scanning of bibliographic records for material published between 1947 and 1987 (ie up to the beginning of the online union catalogue) and was completed some months ago. Apart from these two projects the retrospective conversion of bibliographic data about articles published in Slovenian periodicals for the years 1797 to 1945 period is ongoing.

As far as the digitisation of full texts is concerned, we have not made much progress. Therefore in 1998 the National and University Library implemented initial projects to digitise an extremely important collection of medieval Slavic manuscripts, with financial aid from the Open Society Fund in Budapest

(the George Soros' foundation). Some manuscripts in the collection are unique world-wide. The second project the library successfully carried out was the digitisation of portraits (11,000 images) of the most important men from Slovenian culture and science. Needless to say, digitisation of complete texts will be continued.

At present, no Internet electronic publications are being harvested and archived in the library, but we have nevertheless made the initial steps. A special brochure has been published to inform publishers and other libraries in detail about the topic in question, along with library procedures, which are necessary to define, catalogue and archive electronic documents. A strategic plan and priorities have been set up in terms of what types of electronic publications are to be archived first.

Going back to the conference, I am not here to convince you of its significance but I would nevertheless like to emphasise the importance of exchanging knowledge, the importance of international co-operation, contacts and understanding, because we are witnessing every day that globalisation has brought about an even greater inter-dependence of countries that has ever existed.

The hard work quite apart, I do hope that you will find enough time to do some sightseeing around Ljubljana as well. I invite you to enjoy the cultural and historical sites and the beautiful countryside of Slovenia.

Let me thank all those who have worked actively on the preparation of the conference, especially to the organising committee and all the sponsors, without whom we would not be able to hold this conference.