

FEATURE

ARTICLES

Danish librarians have also been active in EAHIL since the first meeting in Brussels 1986.

GENERAL TRENDS

Medical technology has given expectations of treatment never imagined possible years ago. Financing the health care system is a growing problem. Waiting lists add to the frustration of patients as well as hospital staff. In spite of all the technology people have a growing interest for alternative medicine. Priorities have to be made.

Compared with most countries Denmark is a very privileged country, yet women's life expectancy is going down. The WHO programme "Health for All by the Year 2000" focuses on prevention, healthy environment, healthy lifestyle and underscores the importance of research. If we define research as acquiring new knowledge in a systematic way, research is more necessary than ever - whether the focus is on evidence-based medicine, prevention, alternative medicine, sustainability, or more traditional research.

Medical research is international. 2 million articles are said to be published in medical journals every year.

The Internet will add to the information overload. Some people talk about the "information fatigue syndrome" overwhelming decision makers. It is a paradox that there is so much information available - and yet new information is needed to gain new knowledge. The medical librarian can assist tackling this problem.

In the future one of the most important roles for medical librarians will be to advise and teach our patrons

- how to choose relevant databases and Internet addresses
- how to search databases
- how to select and evaluate the quality of the information.

It is crucial that we are well prepared for this challenge.

INTERNET ADDRESSES:

- Ministry of Health:(English language version under preparation).
<http://www.sum.dk>
- Ministry of Education:
<http://www.uvm.dk/dik>
- Union of Danish Librarians:
<http://www.bf.dk/uk/lfeng.htm>
- Danish Research Library Association:
<http://www.dlh.dk/dpb/df/welcome.html>
- Royal School of Librarianship:
http://www.db.dk/home_uk.htm

Lise N. Christensen

Medical Library
Aalborg Hospital
Hobrovej 18-22
DK 9000 Aalborg
Denmark
tel: 45 9932 3405
fax: 45 9810 3722
e-mail: mebilnc@inet.uni-c.dk



An Overview of the Activities and Cooperation of Medical Libraries in Hungary

Aperçu des activités et de la coopération des bibliothèques médicales hongroises

*A*ujourd'hui, la seule voie de survie des bibliothèques passe par la coopération, le partage des ressources et le travail en réseau. Les questions financières, de rationalisation, des nouvelles technologies, des nouveaux moyens et de l'accroissement rapide du nombre d'informations concernent toutes les bibliothèques médicales. Les bibliothèques fournissant l'essentiel de l'accès à la lecture et à l'information sont des composants cruciaux de l'enseignement supérieur, de la recherche et de la médecine clinique. L'administration universitaire met l'accent sur l'automatisation et le développement de réseaux de bibliothèques. Le but principal des bibliothèques est d'être accessibles à tous, dans les bureaux, les laboratoires, les auditoriums et les lieux publics grâce aux réseaux locaux, régionaux ou (inter)nationaux.

Abstract

The only way of survival for libraries today is cooperation, resource sharing, and networking. Issues of funding, rationalization, new technology, new forms and rapidly growing amounts of information affect all medical libraries.

Libraries providing essential access to reading material and information are crucial components of higher education, research and clinical medicine. University administration lays special emphasis on the automation and development of library

networks. The main goal is to be accessible to all, in offices, laboratories, classrooms, and public areas through local, regional, or (inter)national networks.

"To Build a Fire"

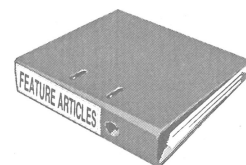
In one of the most powerful short stories of 20th century American literature, Jack London [1] depicts vividly and dramatically a lonely man struggling against nature for survival in vain. The only way of survival for libraries today is cooperation, resource sharing, and networking. Issues of funding, rationalization, new technology,

new forms and rapidly growing amounts of information affect all medical libraries. These changes are having profound influences on the way libraries operate and the nature of their future services [2].

Current efforts to generate a library network in Hungary are taking place on two levels: national and regional.

The National Network

The major medical libraries in Hungary are university libraries, which offer their services to hospital patrons as well. There



are four medical universities in the country, regionally well distributed, the one in Budapest being the biggest. The overall student population numbers about 12,000 with faculty and teaching staff of about 3,500. The stock of the four medical libraries comprises 1.1 million volumes of books and bound periodicals, and an average of approximately 600 titles of current foreign periodicals per library.

Its facilities are constantly growing in number: there are about 50 kilometres of optical cables, 170 Novell servers, 40 Unix hosts, and 4,000 personal computers working on the networks of medical universities, providing access to CD-ROM databases and the information resources of the Internet 24 hours a day. Library OPACs are accessible via the Internet by various interfaces (WWW, telnet, etc.). More and more libraries are using ERL (Electronic Reference Library, SilverPlatter) technology. ERL is a user-friendly system with client-server architecture, which saves time and energy by having only the questions and answers travelling via the network, and the client seeing and searching many databases simultaneously.

For the purposes of a better utilisation of the domestically available resources, the university libraries for the past decade have cooperated in the following areas:

- co-ordinated acquisition politics;
- co-ordinated implementation and development policies of LANs, WANs and databases;
- implementation of automated library systems (Voyager Integrated Library System in three of the medical libraries, and Dynix Integrated Library System in the fourth);
- implementation of a multimedia center in each of the participating libraries.

The network provides the following new services for the benefit of the whole university community of each partner but in a wider sense the information given by the system will be accessible to every academic institution [3]:

- electronic mailing facilities, including the exchange of interlibrary loan requests via e-mail;
- appropriate access to all computerised bibliographies and library documentation;
- access to collections of periodicals and books in full-text format;
- shared, multi-user, simultaneous access to online catalogues.

An Example of Regional / International Cooperation

The Hungarian-Slovak Academic Library Network (HuSloNet) was formed in 1993 with the membership of the Debrecen Agricultural University, Debrecen Medical University, the Debrecen Kossuth Lajos University, the Miskolc University and the Kosice J. P. Safarik University to set up and operate an Academic Library network based on the shared use of databases either purchased or built, as much as copyright laws allow, regardless of the place of their installation. It was a grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation in 1993, together with the World Bank financial support for the Debrecen Universitas to build the Debrecen FDDI network, and purchase the hardware and software for an integrated library system that made it possible for the organization to start its activity.

*The only way of
survival for libraries
today is cooperation,
resource sharing,
and networking*

At present, the HuSloNet member institutions are equipped with the hardware necessary for the shared use of CD-ROM databases, with the minimal but by no means ideal network conditions and they have subscribed to, installed and started to use the first CD-ROM databases considered to be the most important in their fields of activity. (Medline, Science Citation Index, Metadex, Biological Abstracts, Econlit)

The databases are heavily used in all member institutions, both by staff and students. The consortium - despite of its many problems mainly owing to not ideal network connections - has arrived at a stage when it operates functionally and its

members are devoted to find the ways for further development. University communities also find it important to continue with this project as a mean to provide the most important databases.

Conclusion

The past five years have seen a radical change in both the services we offer and the way we think about the role of the library. Libraries providing essential access to reading material and information are crucial components of higher education, research and clinical medicine. University administration lays special emphasis on the automation and development of library networks. The main goal is to be accessible to all, in offices, laboratories, classrooms, and public areas through the university network.

With these changes in mind, we cannot help re-thinking the tasks of the information specialists (earlier librarians): we have the computer "ON" all day, think in terms of a library without walls and work in a virtual reality; we do not tell the data but guide and assist the way the users access information. We have colleagues all over the country and all over the world.

We are building common fires - whether regional, national or international - to prepare a stone soup [4] for the inhabitants of the global village of the next century.

References

1. London, J. To Build a Fire. In: The American Tradition in Literature ed. by Perkins, Bradley, Beatty, Long. New York: Random House, 1985, vol.II. p. 892-902
2. Godbolt, S. Medicine & health-care. In: Handbook of Library Cooperation. Aldershot: Gower, 1991, p. 186-196
3. Viragos, M. Sharing library resources. In: Health Information New Possibilities. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995, p. 43-45
4. Colaiani, L.A. Interlibrary cooperation: new technologies change practices not principles. In: EAHIL Symposium on Cooperation of Medical Libraries, Prague, 20-21 September 1995. Prague: National Medical Library, 1995, p. 9-19

Gyongyi Karacsony
Central Library, Medical University
4012 Debrecen, Hungary
e-mail:gyongyi@lib.dote.hu