

## OCLC / PICA – A New European Organisation to Build Transatlantic Library Cooperation

by JANET MITCHELL LEES

Sir Winston Churchill, with whom I share a birthday, is reputed to have said „The Americans can be counted on to do the right thing ... once all the available alternatives have been exhausted!“ Surprisingly, the OCLC Information Center was unable to provide me with a citation for this remark!

Sir Winston was, of course, a true transatlantic creature - the eldest son of the British Lord Randolph Churchill and the American Beauty Jennie Jerome from Brooklyn, New York. Transatlantic cooperation was in his blood and history ascribes to him his tireless efforts in creating and implementing an effective alliance that was to create the political and economic shape of the western world in the second half of the twentieth century.

In a speech at Harvard University on September 6<sup>th</sup> 1943, in the presence of President Eisenhower Churchill reflected on the benefits of transatlantic cooperation concluding that „If we are together, nothing is impossible. If we are divided, all will fail“. Churchill travelled endlessly both within Europe and in the United States discussing strategy with the leaders of all the allied nations. This personal consensus building and his understanding of both US and European culture was probably the key to the ultimate success he achieved. And he acknowledged this in his Harvard speech „I would not say there are never divergencies of view among these high professional authorities. It would be unnatural if there were not. That is why it is necessary to have plenary meetings of principals every two or three months. All these men (! *Sic - remember it was 1943!*) know each other, they trust each other, they like each other, and most of them have been at work together for a long time. When they meet they thrash things out with great candor and plain blunt speech. But after a few days the President and I find ourselves furnished with sincere and united advice“. Sounds like a good basis for a membership cooperative.

Today I would like to explore some of the issues relating to transatlantic library cooperation as an important element within the concept of global library cooperation. I would like to explore some of the issues and indeed some of the barriers and to discuss this within the context of the new OCLC Pica European library organisation.

Tommy G. Thompson, Governor of Wisconsin took up a parallel theme in an address delivered to the Herbert Quandt Stiftung Transatlantic Dinner held in Munich on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1998. He suggested some guidelines that could be applied both to Transatlantic Cooperation and, one could suggest, to Daily Life.

1. Know the problem
2. Know your strengths and assets
3. Be bold – and prudent
4. Be benevolent – do the „right thing”
5. Connect the parts – success requires connection and integration
6. Timing is everything

I will use these guidelines to organise my remarks.

#### 1. KNOW THE PROBLEM

So what is the problem or challenge facing libraries, and particularly research libraries at the beginning of the 21st century? Well there are many but in the interest of time I will restrict myself to two.

The first is the changing needs and behaviour patterns of end users. As Sam Walton of Wal-Mart fame tells his staff „The customer is the one that can fire us all” ... We would do well not to lose sight of that.

There is increasing evidence that students and researchers of all ages begin and end their searches for information on the web and not in the library. Dr. Stuart Weibel, a research scientist at OCLC has stated that „for the past 25 years, OPACs have been at the center of the library world. That era is now over. Ask any student or researcher how many times a week he uses an OPAC and how many times a week he uses a web search engine. The answer should scare us”. Weaving libraries into the web and the web into libraries is a key issue that we need to address. We need to match the desktop accessibility and ease of use of the commercial search engines whilst adding the value of our

professional collection building, indexing and searching skills in making scholarly information *through the library* attractive to the point and click generation of researchers.

The second, and related issue, is that of increasing globalisation. Here I am delighted to refer to Fred Friend's paper „Libraries of One World: Libraries Look Across the Oceans” since Fred, when he was Librarian of University of Essex became the first OCLC member library in Europe, some twenty years ago in 1981. However, to return to the question Fred poses for his paper „Now that the geographical barriers to the flow of information are breaking down or disappearing, how can we use the new internationalism to provide users with a better service?” Fred suggests: „This is not a question of technology but of structures. Our cooperative structures were shaped in an age of geographic barriers to information. Should they or can they be reshaped in a truly international way?” I need to acknowledge here that Fred was both complimentary and critical of OCLC's international growth and I hope to answer some of his comments in this paper.

Basic research is increasingly international and collaborative - our universities and research organisations frequently collaborate and the results of this collaboration increasingly occurs simultaneously around the world,, often by multi-national publishers. Our users think global and act local - that is they search worldwide but expect the delivery of information at their desktop. They look for integrated, seamless and immediate information services. If the library can provide this through a presence on the web supported by effective delivery mechanisms then fine, if not then it is likely to be relegated to the place of last resort. Through extensive collaboration and cooperation libraries have succeeded in creating online access to entire collections, mechanisms for interlibrary lending and access to online reference services and more recently full text. Often our shop window is rather cluttered and difficult to navigate, built as it is on cooperative infrastructures that as Fred correctly indicates are organised by type of library or geographic region. Most of us in this room will have bank cards, library cards and possibly airline tickets in our wallets. How global are the networks each of these are linked to? I agree with Fred that there is a need for libraries and their cooperative infrastructures to form global cooperative alliances to meet the information needs of the world wide scholar and researcher.

## 2. KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

European research libraries hold valuable cultural heritage and research collections. The majority play leading roles in their national research infrastructure including the contribution of holdings to national union catalogues. US research libraries have through state and private funding developed extensive collections and play the same role both at the individual state level and also at the federal level through their participation in RLG and OCLC. Many US library directors have indicated their desire to cooperate more closely with European users and are disappointed when they discover that in many cases they have to set up individual programmes in each European country.

During the last 30 years OCLC has developed its Online Union Catalogue WorldCat to become an international union catalogue. Consisting of some 47 million bibliographic records and 750 million holdings statements it has become an increasingly useful international resource for bibliographic records and holdings used by 39,000 libraries in 76 countries around the world. This centralised model has been useful to many but has not been attractive to all libraries. In many regions of the world libraries either use such an international database as a secondary resources to supplement a regional or national resource or continue to catalogue each item from scratch due to differences in cataloguing and format standards, character sets and in support of national resource sharing structures at the expense of international resource sharing.

OCLC's leadership in research and information technology enables it to address technical issues and to provide input to international standards. Last year for example we implemented an arabic vernacular cataloguing tool that enables all libraries to create and share bibliographic records that can be used either in the vernacular arabic or in transliterated form.

At ALA last month OCLC announced that it had selected Oracle database technology as the new platform for the OCLC WorldCat database and its online services in cataloguing, resource sharing and reference. Oracle's database technology will enable OCLC to provide access not only to bibliographic information but abstracts, full text, images and sound files customised to the needs of libraries and users around the world. The Oracle platform will replace proprietary systems that OCLC has developed and updated over the past 30 years. It will enable us to support UNICODE as well as IFLA standards for bibliographic records and we will be able to store records from the world's written languages in the vernacular. Through this migration OCLC

will be able to consolidate systems used to support online cataloguing, inter-library loan and reference services which holds the promise of reducing operating costs and development time as we move forward with new services based on open systems architecture and international standards.

OCLC's leadership is more than technical. It includes a 30 year history of supporting the cooperative approach to addressing the issues of the day facing libraries and librarians. More recently it has included a high level cooperative approach to advanced library management issues through the OCLC Institute.

Over the past thirty years Pica has developed from a library cooperative of six Dutch university libraries and the Royal Library to a company providing cataloguing, end user, local systems and central systems in Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France. Modelled on the OCLC concept, in fact seeded with a donation of bibliographic records from OCLC, the Pica project aimed to create a shared cataloguing service and a national union catalogue that would allow librarians to identify the holdings and locations of books and periodicals. Like OCLC Pica developed an interlending module, but different to OCLC Pica developed both local and nationally or regionally based central systems. Whilst continuing to maintain and manage the Dutch national union catalogue, Pica's central system architecture has been successfully parameterised to provide the platform for Die Deutsche Bibliothek, GBV and Hessen in Germany and more recently for the Système universitaire in France. Similarly to OCLC, Pica has, in the last decade, developed online end user services, which provide access to a range of both bibliographic and full text databases and include ILL and document delivery services and suites of software tools to enable libraries to create information portals to unify access to electronic resources. Pica's services have been developed with a European focus designed to support multi-lingual interfaces and their technical expertise is based on european and international standards making Pica a leading European library solutions organisation.

The synergies of the two organisations are clear to see – the combination of scale, experience and library focus on both sides results in a european style organisation with global reach and resources.

### 3. BE BOLD – AND PRUDENT

Many of you will recognise that the changes I have described represent a new direction for OCLC who's prior initiatives, technical development, product

development and cooperative structures have been organised on a strong centralised model with a consequent US centric focus. These changes are part of a strategic planning process called „Extending the Cooperative” which addresses OCLC’s product development, membership and governance structure and its global role. Progress on this plan can be tracked through the web site <<http://www.oclc.org/strategy>>.

As with all strategic plans the process began by redefining the future vision for OCLC.

„OCLC will be the leading global library cooperative, helping libraries serve people by providing economic access to knowledge through innovation and collaboration”.

This new plan represents a strategic and fundamental change in direction for OCLC in that it defines the future extended WorldCat not as a single centrally based database but as a globally distributed network of regional hubs which will develop the mix and match to reflect the needs of individual library communities „respecting national cultures and yet cooperating across borders” as Fred Friend recommends by creating a series of semi-autonomous regional organisations each with its own staff and leadership.

In creating the first of these regional hubs in Europe OCLC will merge the EMEA office with the Pica office to create a new organisation which will develop a range of products and services designed to meet the needs of European libraries but which could be developed on either side of the Atlantic or jointly as appropriate.

The initial priorities for the new European regional organisation are your priorities. In discussion with leading library managers in Europe we learned that „sharing resources between libraries in Europe, based on a central union catalogue providing access to leading European library holdings and integrated interlibrary loan services should be one of the major focus points for development”. Other interesting results from the survey, which included participants from the UK, Germany and the Netherlands, were:

- 87.5% of the participants indicated they would contribute their library collections to a pan-European integrated service. Reciprocity was one of the major reasons in connection with sharing resources and collection development

- Although most libraries do not expect a vast number of cross border ILL requests, the majority consider it important to stimulate pan-European cooperation ..... and I would add global cooperation.

The survey was carried out in the first quarter of 2001 and results gathered in April and May. For those of you that may have participated – thank you.

We have taken some other important features that you mentioned including advanced searching and navigation features and portal management tools and added this together with a global priority for digital content management and preservation services to form the priorities for the new European organisation.

The underlying concept is to provide a European wide access to European union catalogues with linked metadata for the patrons of European libraries with additional links to other regional OCLC hubs including WorldCat. The service is called PiCarta.

The PiCarta concept acknowledges that most European countries have their own union catalogue on a national, federal state or regional level – each of which reflects the culture, language and cataloguing rules of the individual country/state/region.

Turning to the library user perspective, each user will have access to his „own” union catalogue and in addition to that to the union catalogues of foreign libraries and collections that are of interest to him/her.

As a foundation the PiCarta „EU Catalogue” holds two union catalogues – the Dutch NCC and the GBV database. During database creation the bibliographic records of NCC and GBV are checked for duplicates on the basis of ISBN and ISSN. Matching records are not merged but are linked. Authentication provides the preferred local view and language interface for the end user. In our basic example when a German user is browsing through a set of bibliographic records he will be able to see the German record, together with German and, if selected, Dutch records. The other way around Dutch user will see the Dutch record and holdings additional German holdings.

As the number of union catalogues are increased the end user working in his preferred language interface will be able to select the countries/regions holdings that he wishes to see.

The main focus of the service is designed to move beyond the retrieval of metadata to document ordering and delivery of all material types including journal articles – including full text, books, musical scores, av and electronic resources. The service is designed to include commercial document delivery services and other „for free” services including „buy it” services through links to booksellers based on the open-url technology.

This is a bold plan – so some of you may be questioning the prudence, which is in the implementation. The new European regional organisation will phase in new services region by region beginning with the UK, Netherlands, France and Germany whilst continuing to support existing OCLC and Pica services in all European countries.

#### 4. BE BENEVOLENT – DO THE „RIGHT THING”

Let me return to Fred Friend’s remarks about reengineering cooperative library structures, for that is what I believe it requires. What is the organisational model for a membership organisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century - a century that has already seen the dramatic rise and fall of the dot coms - within a profession that holds the key to both our combined cultural heritage and our scientific and technological future?

Our model for the new European library membership organisation is to develop a new concept – that of „business like membership” a phrase which was coined by Wim van Drimmeln, Librarian, Dutch Royal Library at a meeting held in his library attended by representatives of the Dutch academic library community in March this year.

There are some important remarks I would make that would underline our interpretation of business like membership.

Firstly, the model has to built on a firm financial and economic foundation if it is to succeed. The shareholders in the organisation, currently the Pica Foundation and OCLC Inc, will wish to see a small return on investment in order to be able to re-invest in further system and service development. Secondly, membership should be inclusive rather than exclusive and based on a wide concept of commitment to resource sharing that will need to be continually reviewed over time. Membership will be a central OCLC global principle that is currently being developed through an ad hoc committee of the OCLC Members Council and OCLC Board and which will be appropriately applied across

the global cooperative. Thirdly, the European regional organisation itself will have European leadership and direction. Over time the new management structure will, it is hoped, develop from its anglo-dutch beginnings, reflecting on the initial Birmingham and Leiden locations, to a more European look and feel.

One of our initial acts will be to create a European regional user platform, including an Advisory Board, to create a European user focus and to support European library membership. This will be developed, like the definition of membership in parallel with the OCLC global changes in Members Council governance structure.

#### 5. CONNECT THE PARTS

The European regional organisation is set up to provide a new focus for European library cooperation whilst acknowledging that individual library communities will continue to develop infrastructure that reflects national cultures and traditions. Technically we expect these national systems will be increasingly developed to comply with international standards and open systems. The regional organisation will also then provide the external connectivity to both the US hub in Dublin and future regional organisations including some already in planning in Canada, Middle East and South East Asia.

Professionally we expect the same ,n' way linking to occur. The European organisation through its membership and education programmes will provide a platform for librarians at middle and senior levels to discuss regional issues and concerns and to provide ongoing educational programmes to support change and new information technology techniques, whilst links with other regional organisations and the global OCLC management will build to develop and support the concept of a global library cooperative.

#### 6. TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Fred Kilgour's vision some twenty plus years ago remains valid. As with many visionaries it has taken time for both technology and indeed the organisational structures to develop to realise it.

The new European regional organisation will come into being on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002 some 20 plus years after the foundation of the OCLC office in Birming-

ham and the Pica project in the Hague. An interim management team is already working together. The first European service – PiCarta - is currently in pilot phase testing by the GBV libraries with the expectation that the service will be in production before the end of 2001. Discussions with European preservation partner organisations are currently underway and the portal management software is planned to be launched in Q4 of 2001.

Business like membership is an appropriate model for a 21<sup>st</sup> century global library cooperative – it evokes a customer focussed approach for the cooperative and involvement for its individual member libraries. This new European organisation can be a building block for both transatlantic and global library cooperation to serve users and researchers worldwide. We invite discussion and your involvement for „If we are together, nothing is impossible, but, If we are divided, all will fail”.

Thank you.

#### REFERENCES

Speech, Sir Winston Churchill. Harvard University, 6 September 1943. In voices of History, pp 331-333.

Thompson, Thommy G: „Benevolent judgement and actions: transatlantic cooperation and commerce.“ Vital Speeches of the Day. V65 (10) (Mar 1 1999), pp 299-301.

Friend, Frederick J.: „Libraries of One World: Librarians look across the oceans.“ International Perspectives 2000, pp 281-287.