THE ROLE OF ASSOCIATIONS OF INFORMATION AND LIBRARY EDUCATION IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH: recent and potential developments in Britain and Europe

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Abstract

This paper considers the development of associations of Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences, illustrated by recent experiences in Britain and Europe, and examines their potential future contribution. It discusses in general terms the need for the Schools to establish a vehicle for collective action, and notes the origins of BAILER: the British Association for Information and Library Education and Research, and of EUCLID: the European Association for Library and Information Education and Research. It reviews the potential for associations of Schools to play a part in staff development, in student development, and in developing the discipline and its standing. It describes the activities of BAILER and EUCLID in facilitating information exchanges between member Schools, and in supporting international conferences. It discusses the potential and actual use of Information and Communications Technologies in the work of the associations, and briefly considers other operational issues such as membership involvement and financial support.

Introduction

Just before the emergence of the standard Personal Computer, Marco (1977) discussed the premise that Schools of any sort were not necessary in an occupation that had not yet reached a point of critical complexity. He thus initiated the debate that has surrounded the unprecedented development of professional education in the subsequent quarter Century, a period during which changes in professional practice and professional education have not always appeared synchronous. The ambivalent attitude of practicing professionals, and sometimes of the general professional associations, towards the Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences during recent years may not have been unreciprocated. More recently, for example, Glendenning and Gordon (1997), in discussing the Schools' efforts to encourage their students to support professional associations, offered the perceptive comment that:

> *"Traditionally, library Schools have recognised the importance of professional organisations for librarians, but the future of that relationship is uncertain with the advent of 'Information Management' Schools replacing traditional library Schools."*

Circumstances have indeed compelled the Schools to re-evaluate their attitude to professional associations, not least to those to which they themselves belong. Higher education has not

been sheltered from the effects of the phenomenal change in society that has most recently been compared to 'white water rafting' (Vaill, 1996). The turbulence has encouraged the LIS Schools to cling together, not only for safety and comfort, but also to ensure that they have the skills and strength to survive and that their voices are heard amidst the surrounding clamour. Although the nature of the state education system in Central and Eastern Europe formerly compelled some kinds of collaboration between Schools, voluntary cooperation has been more commonplace in Western Europe, and led during the last decade to the formation of the professional associations that are discussed in this paper.

While the professional literature contains accounts of the work of professional associations in general, and many examples of collaborative activities between Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences (LIS), it has given little attention to the recent growth and potential of the associations of Schools that are becoming a major vehicle for such collaboration. This paper is therefore intended to review the development of those associations in supporting teaching and research for librarianship and information science. It examines the range of possible activities of associations in this field, and considers the potential benefits from association. It will illustrate this by examples particularly from the British and European experiences of developing professional associations for the Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences. Finally, it is intended to include some personal, but objective comments about what appear to be realistic expectations of professional associations in the field of LIS.

Common goals of Schools

The IFLA World Guide to Library, Archive and Information Science Education reports the existence of 443 Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences (Fang, 1995). Many are small, and most are in transition from traditional librarianship to contemporary information and knowledge management. Change is not a new phenomenon in higher education, but there can be no doubt that the scale and pace of change has increased. The last 20 years have undoubtedly been turbulent times for the Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences.

The impact of major social and technological changes on professional practice have had to be matched by the creation of many new Schools; and significant developments in the curriculum and teaching methods; leading to different demands for human and material resources. Practicing professionals, academic managers, and politicians are also expressing growing expectations of the Schools, because the discipline is so fundamental to the emerging 'knowledge society'. At the same time, throughout the world, it appears that the same external forces are impacting on academic institutions. The challenge of implementing the necessary changes has taken place against a background of two international economic recessions, radical shifts in the political and fiscal stance of most governments, and major shifts in social attitudes, disrupting the traditional academic culture of reflective learning, scholarship, and job security.

In many countries in Europe, professional education has largely been conducted in higher education institutions outwith the university sector, e.g. the English Polytechnics, the Dutch Hogeschools, and the German Fachhochschulen. Moreover, LIS Schools within Universities frequently had a difficult time being accepted as full members of the university community because their very professional nature was not always well understood by their peers in more traditional academic disciplines (Gardner, 1987). Recently Schools in several countries have been moved into the University sector, and then expected not only to teach at a higher level but also to engage in research activities.

The equally recent extension of the Schools' curricula to include teaching information management and technology, and the convergence within information studies (archival studies, librarianship and records management), has brought increased contact with allied fields. Whilst there are significant opportunities for cooperation and indeed for the LIS Schools to take a leading position in multi-disciplinary developments, the LIS Schools have for the first time found themselves not only needing to educate the public and policy makers (Casey, 1997), but also competing with other, larger and more powerful disciplines (Koenig, 1986).

In this changing environment, Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences found themselves particularly at the mercy of external forces. A changing market, escalating costs, and ageing teachers were not a strong foundation for coping with new demands for productivity and fiscal accountability (Childers, 1996). Many of the older established ones were ill equipped, professionally and temperamentally, to adapt to their changing environment, and, regrettably, some have not survived. Others have been unable to avoid being absorbed into departments of computer science, business and management, communication and even public policy to form larger units within the university.

This radical transformation of certain Schools has caused some apprehension. Generally the existence of most Schools is fragile, and - potentially - any might benefit from cooperation and collaboration with others in their own country or internationally. Confronted with potential threats, it is always wiser to anticipate and try to prevent the threat from developing, and to emphasise the strength that can be derived from sharing and developing the common interests of a number of organisations. Professional associations can provide this strength and be pro-active in promoting library and information education and research.

The emergence of new associations

In Britain the Association of British Library (and Information Science) Schools (ABLS, later ABLISS) appears to have been for many years little more than a convivial meeting of the Heads of the Schools. Age and/or dramatic changes in the British government's approach to higher education led to the retirement of almost all the Heads within the space of a few years, and in 1991/92 agreement was easily reached by their successors on the establishment of a replacement for ABLISS. The new organisation, BAILER - the British Association for Information and Library Education and Research differs from its predecessor in several significant ways, and a number of its successes will be noted in this paper.

For Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences there are particular challenges in working together across international boundaries: differences in the organisational structures within which they operate; differences between the level at which librarianship is taught (undergraduate and/or post-graduate); differences in curricular structures and durations; and differences in the timing of the academic year. In fact, the need for collective strength through voluntary cooperation had been recognised at an international level long before these changes began, and groupings of Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences have existed on an international basis for some time. Schools from Europe have, for example, generally affiliated to the relevant Sections and Round Tables within the International Federation of Library Association's (IFLA) Division of Education and Research, and/or to the education and training committee of the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID-ET), reflecting their international outlook. For a number of years, FID-ET supported the activities of WERTID, the Western European Round Table on Information

and Documentation, which took an active interest in professional education in the region.[a] However, it must be acknowledged that economic realities can constrain active participation; and the activities of IFLA and FID-ET are largely based on the global aims of the associations, rather than on the more specific national or even regional needs of the Schools.

Library Schools in the USA and Canada have enjoyed institutional relationships with those in other countries for many years, and the former Association of American Library Schools (AALS) encouraged the formation of a Program of International Partnerships (PIP) to foster these activities (Marco, 1980). Some of the European Schools have affiliated to AALS's successor, ALISE (the Association for Library and Information Science Education). This reflects their established contacts in the USA and Canada, but the activities of ALISE generally focus on the interests and needs of the social and educational system in North America, and are not necessarily relevant to the situation in Europe. Other European Schools have been involved in AIESI, Association Internationale des Ecoles en Sciences de l'Information, which comprises about 30 Schools and 12 associate members from Canada and the Francophone countries of Europe and Africa, and which has a particular commitment to assisting Schools in the developing countries. For example, since 1978 the Ecole National Superieure des Sciences de l'Information et des Bibliotheques in France has been involved in bilateral technical assistance programmes with other members of AIESI (Lajeunesse, 1987).

These international collaborations were partly in response to the concern of several inter-governmental organisations, including UNESCO to encourage international cooperation in library and information manpower development and partly to take advantage of their interest and the availability of funding. With the emergence of the UNISIST and NATIS programmes in the 1970s, international programmes for increasing manpower in the field began to be promoted widely in the developing countries (Gopinath, 1978).

In Europe, unique circumstances called for a unique response. Since the establishment of the European Union, there has been a major thrust towards the integration of all aspects of society. These developments tended to suggest that a geographically and culturally closer grouping with an institutional focus would be a more appropriate and probably a more effective professional association to represent and develop the interests of the Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences in Europe. It was to help meet these challenges that a general invitation was issued to the Heads of European Schools, to attend a conference in October 1991 in Stuttgart, Germany. The call to establish EUCLID, as it became known, was the result of informal discussions between the Heads of several Schools - Ole Harbo (Copenhagen, Denmark), Tor Henriksen (Oslo, Norway), Tom Wilson (Sheffield, U.K.), Geza Fulop (Budapest, Hungary), and Peter Vodosek (Stuttgart) - about the need for an organisation to foster cooperation between the library and information science educational institutions throughout Europe. One consequence is that the Schools in Europe now have an organisation in place that aims to provide a forum within which they can exchange ideas and information, and establish a common policy position in relation to trans-national developments that are beginning to be discussed by high-level groups of academic managers (EUCLID, 1993).

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[a] In 1991 the participants in WERTID established it as an independent body, the European Council of Information Associations (ECIA). ECIA recently managed DECIDOC, a European Commission funded project intended to outline guidelines for qualifications and certification of information professionals in the European Union's member states.

These new associations in have identified several key activities, and the next part of this paper focuses on them, with examples from the work to date of BAILER and EUCLID, and a discussion of the potential still to be released.

Staff Development

Staff development is a particular challenge for professional Schools. Developing the knowledge and skills of the practising LIS professional is widely catered for through continuing professional development programmes. The needs of the teacher of Librarianship and Information Sciences go beyond these, as it is necessary to consider how much needs to be taught, and to devise the most effective means of achieving this (and, usually, to decide what has to be squeezed out of a crowded curriculum to make room for something new). Schools tend not to be large organisations within which experience and ideas can be easily shared with people equally familiar with the specialist area, but collaboration with other institutions can offer opportunities for this, and for sharing teaching materials which are labour intensive to produce. BAILER has organised a number of staff development events focused on e.g. management teaching, research supervision, etc.

The European Union (EU) has been establishing a framework for a broader international educational collaboration between Universities, for example the ERASMUS programme in Western Europe (more recently embedded within a broader range of programmes known collectively as SOCRATES), and the TEMPUS-PHARE and TEMPUS-TACIS development programmes in Central and Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union respectively. These programmes usually require international collaborative effort by institutions from at least 3 countries, and international associations such as EUCLID have a clear role in facilitating the initial meetings and partner building activities that precede bids for support, as well as in disseminating the results of projects through conference activities.

Following the political changes in 1990, the TEMPUS programme was established to support the collaborative development of University departments in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Some significant efforts were made through the TEMPUS programme by a number of the Schools in Western Europe to assist some of the Schools in almost every one of the emerging democracies in Eastern Europe to upgrade their equipment and curricula. Numerous partnerships were established that included staff and student exchanges as part of projects to develop the curriculum and resources. Many of these were based on professional friendships developed in earlier meetings of the international professional bodies. An evaluation of at least one of these TEMPUS projects did point towards the staff development benefits that stemmed from it for the West European Schools involved (Johnson, 1997b). Recent shifts in the priories for TEMPUS have focused the programme priorities on the educational underpinning required to facilitate the integration of the states of Eastern Europe that have applied to join the EU, and the impetus for development in the LIS Schools has slowed.

More recently, the EU has established the MED-CAMPUS programme with the Mediterranean states, the ALFA programme in Latin America, and the INCO programme with developing countries in general.[b] As yet, however, these other opportunities for international cooperative activity do not appear to have been successfully exploited by any great number of LIS Schools. There appears to be a need for national and international

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[b] Further information on all these programmes can be found on the web pages of the European Commission's Directorate General for External Relations, viewed on 02 October 2008 at URL: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/external_relations/index_en.htm

professional associations to review their role in encouraging and assisting their members to take part in these projects.

From the beginning it has been stressed that one of the aims of EUCLID should be to facilitate partnerships to undertake bilateral and multilateral ventures to take advantage of these opportunities, and those presented by the EU's scientific and technological development research programmes. Almost all these programmes have an information dimension, and those managed by the European Commission's Directorate General for the Information Society [c] are of particular interest to the Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences. The European Commission has made a significant contribution to developing LIS education, and some successful research and development projects have been undertaken within the framework of the former TELEMATICS for Libraries programme (Stork, 1998). However, perhaps not as many of the research projects involved the LIS Schools, as some people believed that they might have and should have done (Johnson, 1997b).

Student development

More success can be observed, in Europe, in arranging projects involving students. For many years, the EU's SOCRATES-ERASMUS programme has encouraged the development of educational programmes involving formal interchange of staff and students between universities in different member states in Western Europe.[d] It must be acknowledged that there are particular difficulties in exchanging students. Many of the general problems of international students have been widely reported (e.g. Tallman, 1990; Conference, 1992). These reports have tended to focus on the full-time student seeking an academic qualification. For students undertaking short-term exchanges within Europe, there are other problems. Financial support is one, but it must be acknowledged that there appears to be a growing awareness that the European Union programmes will need to provide more generous support for the students participating in trans-national exvchanges, particularly but not only the students from eastern Europe This may mean that fewer students will be assisted to undertake these exchanges unless the Commission is able to re-allocate part of its overall budget. This is an issue which a professional association such as EUCLID must consider and which must be the subject of representations by EUCLID to the European Commission when the opportunity arises.

Language proficiency is another issue. The nature of many undergraduate LIS programmes excludes the opportunity for students to enhance their language capabilities to the level required to spend a period living in a country where another language is spoken, and postgraduate programmes are usually too short to include a period of mobility between countries. Despite these problems, there have been several excellent programmes developed, of which perhaps one of the most interesting and imaginative was the development of a one Semester course at the Danmarks Biblioteksskole in Copenhagen. There, students from all the School's ERASMUS partner institutions, and occasionally from others, were taught in English by staff from all the partner institutions, each undertaking a one or two week contribution. Regrettably, the changing circumstances of the Danish School seem likely to lead to the termination of that course.

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[c] Viewed on 02 October 2008 at URL: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/information_society/index_en.htm
[d] Further information on the SOCRATES programme can be found on the web pages of the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture, viewed on 02 October 2008 at URL: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm

Student motivation and the international mobility of qualifications are other topics that must be addressed in Europe. At the moment, it appears that – in many cases – students are undertaking exchange programmes to improve their language skills, to have the experience of living for a time in another country, and perhaps to take part in a different learning experience. It must be questioned whether these comprise a sufficiently strong argument for the Schools to accept the costs that are incurred in preparing students to go to other countries, or in receiving students from other countries. The European Commiission has made its own position clear – it wishes to encourage mutual recognition of curricula or parts of curricula through the operation of the European Credit Transfer Scheme (ECTS). In other words, students should undertake exchanges which are principally intended to obtain academic credit in the subject they are studying. The ECTS scheme appears to be being gradually adopted by the EU member states, but its implementation still seems to require some effort by institutions or by subject associations to determine equivalences and academic frameworks for credit transfer. It is also the case that since 1991, under the European Commission's Directive on Rights of Establishment, citizens of one member state have been eligible for employment in any other state within the EU without formalities such as work permits, etc. There is no information about the extent to which librarians are taking advantage of the possibilities of job mobility between the member States, as well as uncertainty about the international equivalence of national professional qualifications.

To overcome these problems the European Commission has been encouraging universities to improve the compatability of documentation about courses. The attention of teachers has focused largely on the compatability of curricular content, and is beginning to turn to understanding differences in national approaches to assessment. Meanwhile national governments and university managers have been reviewing the varying structures of higher education qualifications within the EU (Confederation, 1999), and some moves have begun towards achieving a common position, for example in clarifying the university status of higher vocational and professional education and in the name and nature of academic awards in several countries.

At a national level in Britain there is a long established pattern of collaboration between the associations representing the LIS Schools and the main bodies influencing professional eductaion, particularly in developing a framework for accreditation and quality assurance. For example the Library Association and the Institute of Information Scientists consulted with BAILER before finalising their recent agreement on joint Procedures for the accreditation of courses.[e] All the Universities in Britian are subject to regular external assessment by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), acting at the behest of government. It was to BAILER that the QAA turned recently to establsih the representative panel that was tasked with drawing up the subject benchmarks against which LIS education would be assessed.[f] IFLA has already done much to help to understand the issues relating to equivalences and international reciprocity of qualifications on a global basis. The Federation has already, in collaboration with UNESCO, supported the collection of data for determining criteria for the interpretation of professional qualifications worldwide to provide a basis for comparison and international recognition of professional qualifications (Fang, 1987), and prepared an international reference guide to professional education and training programmes worldwide (Fang, 1995). This suggests that there may be the potential for EUCLID and the national professional associations of Schools to work together and with the national professional bodies to address the detailed issues that need to be resolved to put in place a

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[e] Viewed on the Web on 2 October 2008 at URL – http://www.la-hq.org.uk/directory/careers.html
[f] The Librarianship and Information Management Benchmark Statement was viewed on 28 April 2000 at URL – http://www.qaa.ac.uk/benchmark/index.htm

generally acceptable framework for LIS credit transfer and professional mobility within Europe.

There remains one other area of student experience that has yet to be addressed in Britain and in Europe. The North American Schools, with their greater involvement to date in supervising doctoral research students, have for many years organised regional and national conferences for those students, to share ideas, improve training in research methods, and to promote and reward excellence in research. The scope for doing this at the national level in any of the European countries or for organising a European event is not clear. In Britain the Library and Information Research Group offers annual prizes for the best dissertations submitted by undergraduate and postgraduate students. There is, however, no comparable award for the growing number of research students. These are in many cases the teachers of the future - and must be developed so that they become leaders not only in the LIS profession, but also in society as a whole - a society in which the profession will play a more significant role than in the past. Another European programme that the Schools must therefore explore and exploit is the programme for the mobility of researchers, and some efforts must be made by EUCLID to identify how many students in Europe are undertaking research degrees.

Subject development

In almost all countries, there are some common trends in the system of education for librarianship and information sciences. Most noticeable is the continual revisions being made to curricula as Schools respond to the changing demands for professional skills in their countries. There is a natural tendency to try to emulate advances elsewhere, but it is important that there should be an understanding not only of the nature of those changes, but also of the context in which they take place. Clearly sharing this information and experience at the national and international level can facilitate the process of change, and one role of the professional associations is to facilitate this.

The founder members of the Executive Board of EUCLID spent some time discussing how cooperation between member institutions can best be encouraged. The Board recognised that in many cases it will be too difficult to make general arrangements that include all members, and therefore suggested a system of smaller networks might be encouraged, where 4-8 institutions cooperate closely to:
• exchange the institutions' own material in the major European languages
• exchange other material that the institutions have access to (e.g. copies of periodicals)
• exchange articles in major European languages written by the institutions' staff (authors' copies)
• exchange spare copies from the institutions' libraries
• exchange teaching materials, etc.
• translate articles of common interest

It is also important to recognise that professional organizations concerned with LIS education can provide valuable support for the member universities that goes beyond generating, collecting, and disseminating the data that enables their own performance to be benchmarked. In an age in which computer ands information literacy are seen as key skills that any university graduate must be able to demonstrate, the Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences provide a valuable reservoir of information and advice on best practice in developing those skills. The value of the Schools' contribution to the achievement of the universities' overall goals needs to be continually emphasised to assure the administrators' support for participation of school staff members in professional organizations (Ricketts, 1982).

It is equally important that the teachers of LIS look outside their institutions and try to influence government and the international agencies that play a part in shaping the future of education and research in general and in LIS in particular. As Immelman (1963) pointed out many years ago, the work of the Schools cannot be considered in a vacuum, and there must be a medium for exchanging views and information with the profession at large and with government and other influential bodies. Hilliard (1976) has also pointed to the need for effective single representation to counter the growing interest in and impact on the affairs of the profession of national libraries and government departments. If everyone is saying the same thing, they are more likely to be listened to.

In the context of the Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences, this implies a need to come together to share experiences and understanding of emerging situations, and to establish a forum in which a common view can be developed to put forward to the decision makers in the academic and political environment to try to influence policies before they are decided. The results of failure to do so are all too evident. The disappearance of a separately identifiable programme for libraries within the research and development activities of the European Commission's Directorate General for the Information Society [g] must be attributable partly to the failure of the professional associations to lobby effectively in support of the activity, and the failure of the Schools to mobilise the support of the main professional associations. The decline in UNESCO's involvement in education for the LIS profession – at a time when UNESCO's other activities reflect the emergence of the 'Information Society', must be attributed in part to a failure on the part of the Schools to exert a collective influence on UNESCO through the professional associations and the national UNESCO commissions. EUCLID has already been in contact with UNESCO to press the case for a reversal of this decline, and will do so again in response to the recent call for suggestions for a working title and activities for UNESCO's proposed, refocused programme for information.[h]

It is, however, important to recognise that professional associations representing the Schools of librarianship and information scences are relatively small bodies, and may not have the resources to do everything alone. Indeed, as the Schools must live with 2 competing cultures that have very different values and interests - the University and the practising profession - that exert competing expectations and demands upon library and information science education (Raber and Connaway, 1996), they need to develop a relationship with national library associations and international organizationsto ensure that they fully understand and can properly represent the Schools' interests. BAILER has a continual and productive dialogue with the national professional associations and the other main, relevant agencies in Britain, such as government departments, the Higher Education Funding Councils, the National Training Organisation for Information and Library Services, the Research Councils, etc. It has always been recognised that an appropriate role for EUCLID would be to represent the interests of the sector to the European Commission and to the Council of Europe, initially to let them know that EUCLID exists and what its concerns are, and ultimately to establish itself as a unified and effective consultative body. The Executive Board of EUCLID has recently agreed to approach EBLIDA (the European Bureau for Library, Information and Documentation Associations) to discuss changes in its membership structure to enable EUCLID to affiliate.

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[g] The electronic archive of the former TELEMATICS for Libraries programme was available on 2 October 2008 at URL - http://158.169.50.95:10080/libraries/en/libraries.html
[h] Further information may be found on the UNESCO Web site, viewed on 2 October 2008 at URL – http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future/index/shtml

The Schools also understand that they have a common interest in attracting more and better individuals into careers in librarianship and information sciences. To meet the changing demands of professional practice, the Schools need to attract more, different, and better students - and perhaps teachers - than those traditionally attracted into librarianship. To draw attention to current courses, the BAILER member Schools have shared a joint stand in the Exhibition at the annual International Online Conference in London, and have collaborated with the Library Association in a similar national event providing information about careers and courses for students about to graduate from university. BAILER is now also discussing how it can best be represented on the 'British' stand in the IFLA Conference Exhibition that is organised annually by the British Council, the British Library and the Library Association.

Exchanging information

Exchanging information is clearly an activity that is an essential role for any professional association. A printed directory of the Schools' courses, staff, and resources has been published regularly by BAILER, and once by EUCLID. BAILER has also collected information annually from the Schools about the number of students and staff, and their income from a variety of sources, and distributed this so that Schools could benchmark their performance against others. It is also envisaged that EUCLID could provide a similar information exchange to provide a basis of statistical and other information on the development of LIS education in Europe, just as ALISE does in the USA.

BAILER has never sought to develop a journal or newsletter, but aims to ensure that news of its key initiatives and activities are widely reported in the existing printed media. Although EUCLID has published an occasional newsletter, an agreement has been reached that any news is now published in the journal *Education for Information*. This provides a wide international circulation, but restricts access to this form of communication to those proficient in English. In the European context, where a multiplicity of national languages are spoken by a total population little larger than that of the USA and Canada combined, and English is perhaps the most widely spoken second language, this issue raises particular challenges and sensitivities, not least because the British, as Moore (1990) has observed, have been notoriously disinclined to learn any other language. Although English has tended to be the predominant language of conventional publishing in the discipline, the emergence of electronic publishing offers far greater scope for the wider dissemination of professional texts in a variety of languages, and this may offer some scope for exploitation by EUCLID.

Conference activity

In this electronic age, it is important to recognise that much still depends on personal contact. To facilitate this, and to spread best practice, a regular joint conference has been organised by BAILER with colleagues from the Nordic Schools every second year since 1993 centred around invited papers on recent developments in teaching and research. The Nordic Schools had organised regular joint meetings for a number of years (Harbo, 1994). The British-Nordic conferences arose from a view that, while productive, the annual meetings sponsored by the Nordic Network of Scandinavian library Schools were too limited in their perspectives, particularly before the expansion in the number of Schools in the region during the 1990s. These conferences are not restricted to the staff of the participating Schools, but are open to anyone who wishes to attend. There has been a small but growing participation from other parts of Europe and the rest of the world, and publication of the proceedings ensures them a wider audience (e.g. New, 1999). The fourth Conference will be hosted by University College Dublin in March 2001. The rapid emergence of new Schools in Spain during the

1990s has led to regular meetings of a Committee of Deans, and one School took an initiative to try to establish regular contacts between the Spanish Schools and BAILER by hosting a conference in Barcelona in 2000.

Many of the same people who founded EUCLID were also involved, at about the same time, in the foundation of the BOBCATSSS Conference. The Conference was initiated in 1993 by Dr. Ruud Bruyns of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam as a means to stimulate understanding and cooperation between new generations in Europe. Initially, the Conference was supported by the partners in a consortium of Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences in Budapest, Oslo, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Tampere, Sheffield, Stuttgart, and Szombathely, hence the acronym BOBCATSSS. They wanted their students to have the same opportunities that they had enjoyed, particularly the opportunity to meet colleagues from other countries and to develop professional and personal friendships as a basis for international cooperation. Since 1999, the development of BOBCATSSS has been the responsibility of the EUCLID Executive Board.

BOBCATSSS is an annual professional Conference hosted by a EUCLID member School of Librarianship and Information Sciences in Central or Eastern Europe, and organised in collaboration with one or two Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences in Western Europe. It enjoys a unique character as a professional event, being entirely conceptualised, planned, organised and implemented by students. The main effort of Conference organisation falls on groups of students, working under the direction of academic staff. It provides the opportunity for developing a wide range of professional skills. The Conference focuses on a theme of contemporary interest and aims at a high standard, with papers from senior educators and practitioners subject to a rigorous professional refereeing process before acceptance and publication (e.g. Access, 2000). BOBCATSSS usually takes place in January, and attracts a growing international audience of senior professionals, as well as students. The number of participants in recent years has been 200-300. The 9th BOBCATSSS Conference will take place in Vilnius in Lithuania in 2001, organised in collaboration with the School in Oslo, and in future years it is likely to be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia (2002, in association with Stuttgart) and Torun, Poland (2003, with Amsterdam). The EUCLID Board is also considering how best it can establish a regular international conference for European teachers of librarianship and information sciences, similar to the annual ALISE meeting in the USA, and linked to BOBCATSSS or more likely as a separate event, perhaps replacing the bi-lateral meetings that have taken place to date.

Wider international collaboration

For many years, IFLA and FID have worked together with international development agencies such as UNESCO and national agencies such as the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) towards the development of library and information services (Von Ledebur, 1981). Frequently the Non-Governmental Organisations have taken a leading role in brokering joint efforts by international and national governmental agencies in developing training activities or guidelines on policy and practice. EUCLID has also already undertaken a similar role, working with UNESCO and European Union funding to identify needs in the newly democratised states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Workshop, 1995).

The foundation of EUCLID appears to have been a catalyst for the development of other regional cooperative groups. In the 1980s UNESCO had facilitated several regional meetings of teachers in the field with the aim of identifying their needs for assistance, but in the early

1990s it also began encouraging the establishment of regional and international associations of Schools as a basis for collaboration and mutual support, and an association was established in the Arab World in 1993 (UNESCO, 1993). In Africa four of the leading Schools formed themselves into the Consortium of African Schools of Information Science (CASIS) in 1994 (Aiyepeku, 1999) with support from the Canadian government funded International Development Research Centre. However, plans for an African Association of Schools of Librarianship, first proposed in 1992, have yet to come to fruition for lack of funds (Rosenberg, 1999). One regional association of LIS Schools covering the whole of Latin America, ALECBI, the Latin American Association of Librarianship and Information Science Schools, appears to have enjoyed only a short life, but sub-regional meetings have been held within the framework of CONOSUR, the Association of Librarians' Schools of the Southern Cone, based in Uruguay and bringing together the Schools in the southernmost countries. With UNESCO encouragement, a new regional association, EDIBCIC - *asociación de EDucacion e Investigacion en Bibliotecologia, archivologia, y Ciencia de la informacion y documentacion de Iberoamerica y el Caribe* was formally established in 1998 (Johnson, 1999). EUCLID plans to establish contacts with these other regional groups, to try to follow up the precedent set by the joint meeting of ALISE and AIESI in Montreal in 1988 (Theorie, 1988), but the possibility of a joint conference between EUCLID and ALISE has been discussed on several occasions without conclusion.

The virtual professional community

Menou (1993) has suggested that the personal networks of professionals in the less wealthy and less industrialised countries are likely to be smaller than those of their peers in the advanced countries, and that the professional literature relevant to their needs is likely to be not only smaller in quantity but also more widely scattered and less easily accessible for financial or linguistic reasons. In the rapidly changing environment, this severely inhibits not only professional progress in LIS, but also national development. The creation of a cooperative system to share information and materials to support new developments in teaching has long been an interest of library Schools (Shearer, 1984). The global expansion of the Internet and the emergence of web technologies promise to fulfil this dream. Indeed, the future basis for many forms of collaboration appears to depend on the successful adoption of the new Information and Communication Technologies by the professional associations. During 1989 Dosa and Katzer (1991) carried out a feasibility study for UNESCO for what was intended to be a 4-year pilot project utilising an electronic network to connect information science programmes in developing countries, and identified the potential benefits and problems of the network. The ultimate goal of the proposed project was to support educational innovation through increased cooperation among developing countries, enabling them to share ideas, materials, and news of publications. It was expected that this would not only lead to enhanced skills and capabilities, but also to an increased awareness of the importance and application of information in development. However, whilst it should lead to changes in attitudes and effectiveness, it would also lead to changes in expectations and costs. Dosa and Katzer also highlighted a number of problems requiring further research, including factors stemming from cross-cultural communication and those factors required to successfully embed a culture of innovation and leadership.

Experience with computer mediated communication in the USA suggests that that although computer conferencing is not a panacea for teacher development, it can foster awareness of wider issues, bring to attention new approaches to effective teaching, and facilitate dialogue on issues that are often given only limited treatment in the professional press (Rud, 1995). Valauskas (1997) has also discussed the opportunities offered by developing a virtual

association and the challenges it presents. Many associations have used their web sites to replace paper directories and documents, enhancing communication with their members through improved availability and speed of delivery whilst reducing costs. The potential for conference activity is, however, only just beginning to be exploited despite the savings in participants' travel costs, etc. that have long been recognised as a benefit of using new technologies for this purpose (Oseman, 1989).

Both BAILER and EUCLID are taking advantage of the communication infrastructure that is emerging through the growth of the Internet. Electronic networks already link Schools nationally and internationally, and lis-bailer in Britain, like JESSE in the USA, is open to participants from other countries. Lis-bailer is an open email discussion list, and provides a medium for circulating information of interest to members. A separate, closed discussion list facilitates confidential exchanges between the Heads of Schools. Using email to consult its members has enabled BAILER to respond quickly and authoritatively to numerous calls from government and intergovernmental agencies for comments on proposed policy developments, and has established the association as a body with some influence. There is no doubt that the availability and immediacy of email can also transform the activities of an association, democratising its activities and mobilising its collective strength, although this can place additional pressures on the time of the officers of the association and may call for a review of priorities.

Before Web sites became widespread, the BAILER Web site provided information about the member Schools similar to that in the printed directory. In future it will probably concentrate on providing links to the Schools' own sites, and presenting copies of BAILER policy statements. A EUCLID web site has also been established, providing basic information about the association, and the potential for greater use of e.mail networks for communication between members and for distributing news is being investigated.

The intention of SLISNET, an experimental international network of 16 Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences launched by UNESCO in 1995, was that the exchange of advice and information between Schools in advanced and developing countries would be facilitated by communication through the Internet (UNESCO, 1995). It provided a web site for information about the Schools' teaching and research capabilities[i], and an email discussion list. The latter was little used. The initiative collapsed quite quickly, partly because of linguistic and cultural barriers (Johnson, 1997c), and partly through the declining emphasis that UNESCO Headquarters has placed on direct support for education for librarianship and information sciences in recent years (Johnson, 1998). Much of the initiative for development now rests with the professional associations at a regional level. It is likely that all the Schools in Europe have some form of access to the Internet. It might be useful to explore the feasibility of creating and funding the technical infrastructure for a regional variant of SLISNET, and examining the need and potential for facilitating multi-lingual exchanges of teaching materials, etc.

Operational issues

The time and energy required to undertake these activities raises a number of issues relating to the management and operation of these associations that need to be considered.

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[i] The SLISNET Web site could be viewed on 21 November 1999 at URL - http://enssibhp.enssib.fr/SLISNET/

Professional associations usually depend on the voluntary efforts of individuals, whose 'day job' is probably becoming more demanding. ALISE is unusual in that it is able to employ the services of an agency to manage its routine operations. It is therefore important to be realistic about what is expected of small professionals associations and what they can achieve, and that the association's work is distributed between as many people as possible.

Membership of BAILER is largely on an institutional basis, but includes all the academic staff of the Schools. Whilst the Committee of Heads of Schools retains responsibility for policy matters, an elected Committee of staff members has been charged with organising staff development activities and with the general promotion of the Schools. The chairmen of the two committees are members of both committees to facilitate dialogue between them. Membership of EUCLID is also on an institutional basis, but the membership of the Executive Board is open to all staff of the member Schools. The Board is, however, structured to be representative in another way. It is expected that there will be one member from each region of Europe, north, south, east and west, in addition to the Chairman.

Finance

Money is always a problem. In discussing the potential for the British Schools to cooperate with their European colleagues, Moore (1990) pointed to the problem of the relatively low level of resources then available to them, a phenomenon not unique in Britain. However, those who have had financial responsibilities within their institutions would probably agree that it is easier to approve a subscription to an organisation that to justify paying the travelling expenses of staff participating as committee members. Both BAILER and EUCLID have therefore agreed not only that the annual subscriptions of members should reflect the financial capacity of the members, but also that the income would cover travel costs of committee members that cannot be met from institutional funds. To support this, the BAILER Heads agreed on a basis for providing core funding for the organisation, through a common base subscription supplemented by a *per capita* levy based on the size of each School's staff. To facilitate membership from all countries in Europe, EUCLID subscriptions are based not only on the size of each member School's staff, but also on an international indicator of the relative wealth of it country.

Potential benefits

This short paper has outlined the recent experience of the Schools in Britain and Europe to demonstrate that their professional associations are already successful and yet still have an unfulfilled potential for:
• enhancing staff development
• maintaining the currency of curricula and educational practices
• creating partnerships for joint courses or research projects
• raising the profile of member institutions
• developing the influence of the LIS academic community.

Realising the full potential of these associations depends, of course, on the willingness of individuals to make a contribution to the association's activities. As Fisher (1997) has argued, the value derived from membership organisations depends on what members put into the organisation. If cooperation and collaborative activities are approached with a clear sense of purpose and commitment, the investment of time and money in supporting the efforts of professional associations can benefit individual institutions as well as the profession as a whole.

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Ian Johnson has been Head of the School of Information and Media at The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland since 1989. There he is responsible for 26 academic staff and 10 researchers, and about 500 undergraduate and postgraduate students of library and information sciences, publishing studies, and corporate communication. Previously he was in charge of industry liaison and continuing education programmes at the College of Librarianship Wales (the University of Wales School of Librarianship and Information Studies); Assistant to the British Government's Advisers on library matters; and an operational manager in public libraries.

He was Chairman of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Section on Education and Training from 1991 to 1993, and Chairman of the Professional Board of IFLA from 1993 to 1995. From 1993 to 1995 he was also Chairman of The (British) Library Association's Personnel, Training and Education Group, and from 1996 to 2000 represented the Group on the Council of The Library Association. He is currently a member of the Editorial Board of *Education for Information;* and Chairman of both the Heads of Schools and Departments Committee of BAILER: the British Association for Information and Library Education and Research, and of the Executive Board of EUCLID: the European Association for Library and Information Education and Research. The views expressed are the author's and not necessarily those of either organisation.

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