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Digital discovery: strategies and solutions: Report on the 29th annual Conference of the International Association of Technological University Libraries (IATUL) held in Auckland, New Zealand, 21-24 April 2008
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FEATURE ARTICLE

Digital discovery: strategies and solutions

Report on the 29th annual Conference of the International Association of Technological University Libraries (IATUL) held in Auckland, New Zealand, 21-24 April 2008

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the 29th IATUL Conference on "Digital discovery: strategies and solutions" held in Auckland, New Zealand in April 2008.

Design/methodology/approach – The article gives an outline of the issues, content, keynote speakers, social networking and location of this conference.

Findings – The IATUL meeting presented a wide range of cutting-edge topics defining the future roles of librarians in a globalised information society. Participants gained insights into the workings and visions of librarians around the globe, had the opportunity to share experiences and best practice and to find new inspiration and encouragement for their own daily work. The conference included areas such as policies for the information society, digitalization strategies, open access initiatives, e-research developments, library support for e-science, library customer orientation, Web 2.0 applications for libraries, learning experiences of the Net generation, information literacy as well as data and knowledge management.

Originality/value – The paper provides a conference report of value to library and information professionals, in particular to library directors and senior managers, regarding the development of a modern dynamic infrastructure for digital information and communication and the role of libraries therein.

Keywords Conferences, Technology led strategy, E-learning, Social groups, Information society, Librarians, Libraries

Paper type Viewpoint

Research and application of modern science increasingly rely on gigabit and terabit networks, allowing sharing of supercomputer resources and collaborate authoring of multimedia documents alike. University courses are given online, students use blogs, wikis and social networking sites to create information and thus become authors themselves. This paper reports about the 29th annual IATUL conference, held in Auckland, New Zealand, discussing diverse aspects of Web 2.0,

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national and international e-science infrastructure projects and the role of libraries therein.

With emphasis placed on what is required of academic libraries catering to the technical, natural sciences, conferences and seminars of the IATUL (www.iatul.org) pay particular attention to the role of electronic data processing in information supply. This year's conference in Auckland from 21 to 24 April was no exception, with a great deal to be heard about e-learning portals, open access and institutional repositories, Web 2.0, information competence and e-science. Benchmarking and quality management were also as high on the agenda as the role of libraries in university rankings assessed by university administrations.

Digital discovery: strategies and solutions

This year's conference motto was "Digital discovery: strategies and solutions" (www.iatul.org/conferences/pastconferences/2008proceedings.asp). Accordingly, the three-day conference was particularly dedicated to digitalisation, strategies for a digital information and communication infrastructure, library politics, e-science and support of e-science by libraries, and concepts for the conveyance of information competence.

1. "Digital strategy" – strategies to develop an infrastructure for digital information and communication

The first day of the conference was mainly set aside for outlining national and transnational initiatives to develop a modern infrastructure for digital information and communication.

Paul Ayris, Director of the University College London (UCL) Library Services, was one of the keynote speakers on the first day, and emphasised the importance of library customer orientation in his address. Ayris commented that, on the one hand, libraries no longer hold a key position as information providers, but are instead forced to compete with other sources, and, on the other hand, the ways in which resources are used by students and academics have undergone dramatic change. He reported that the importance of access control systems and the internet presence of libraries has risen sharply due to demands from all user groups concerned that the availability of library services be as independent of time and location constraints as possible. Ayris quoted the most recent report produced by the CIBER Group at UCL (www.bl.uk/news/2008/pressrelease20080116.html.), which states that it is primarily the younger generation who prefer to use conventional single-line search engines for their literary research activities. Although he remarked that the ability of this "Google generation" to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant search results is limited. This is where libraries should step in more proactively to bring an urgently needed degree of information competence to their customers and ponder categorically about the characteristics of the new student generation's learning process. Ayris inferred that the visual consumption of information has now replaced traditional reading as the primary method of learning and that we need to explore the impact this will have on library services.

He mentioned it is also important to note that the library system is just one of many service providers within a university. Researchers and students, he affirmed, draw on the services of personnel administration and computer centres, use the e-learning and

payment systems of central administration and other proprietary portals, the multiplicity of which, he commented, is an easy avenue for complication. An IT infrastructure of this nature, prevalent at many historical universities, is, he stated, anything but service-oriented and requires prompt reorientation. Consequently, a cornerstone of the IT strategy at University College London, according to Ayris, is the creation of a front end for integration of all web-based services at the university. He mentioned that the library is keen to co-ordinate the preparation of the overall plan as well as implementation of a university portal that will soon act as a "one stop shop" for users at all locations around the clock, and which will also facilitate access to the library's own electronic services. Ayris continued, to remark that further enhancements to these are a primary objective of the library's development plan at UCL and are extremely complex. A few years ago, he said, library users could still be sure to find earlier volumes of printed journals in their library. But what happens if "e-only-licences" have to be cancelled? The conventions of individual publishing companies vary greatly, according to Ayris, and archiving policies for digital items are hard to come by. In The Netherlands, for instance, libraries can draw on the e-Depot (www.kb.nl/dnp/e-depot/e-depot-en.html und http://www.kb.nl/dnp/e-depot/e-depot-en.html) at the National Library in The Hague, for the rest Ayris cited the Portico Initiative (www.portico.org/), the EU project PLANETS (www.planets-project.eu/) and the LOCKSS Service (www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/programme_preservation/programme_lockss.aspx) in Great Britain – starting points that will hopefully secure long-term access to electronic journals worldwide in the foreseeable future.

Ayris put across the point that had libraries also been able to gather in-depth experience in the field of electronic journals in previous years, the types of use and demand for electronic books would still be relatively unknown. The findings of the SuperBook (www.homepages.ucl.ac.uk/ ~ uczciro/findings.pdf) project are set to shed new light on this innovative medium in summer 2008, a survey headed and carried out by the UCL School of Library, Archive and Information Studies. According to Ayris, it is already evident that the topicality of the material, the ability to copy this conveniently, the ease with which this can be accessed and the economy of space created are valued aspects of eBooks. Readability, on the other hand, is widely criticised. He indicated that nobody would be prepared to read a substantial piece of text on-screen. In this regard, Ayris warned against mass digitalisation without considering the content and preferred methods of use, citing Google as an example. Rather, we should aim for a common, co-ordinated process of digitalisation. There must be agreements and standard regulations like those striven for in the CENL (www.nlib.ee/cenl/) and EUROPEANA (www.europeana.eu) initiatives, for instance, with focus placed on content-specific criteria ahead of all other concerns; multiple digitalisation should be prevented to the extent possible. In doing so, he affirmed, the formulation of standards for meta data is just as necessary as the provision of standardised interfaces for access to information portals.

In a speech that was as on the mark as it was fascinating, Paul Ayris highlighted a wide range of library-specific topics and initiatives in Europe, from open access and e-science to digital document delivery and granted his audience an insight into the many European projects that will ultimately lay the groundwork and establish a modern, comprehensive and dynamic information infrastructure in Europe.

In contrast, Paul Reynolds from the Library and Information Advisory Commission (LIAC) in New Zealand examined developments in his own country, from the perspective of policy makers and visionaries. He used his speech to outline advances in information technology in New Zealand, predicting an intensified use of digital information and changing habits among users accompanied by changing demands on information service providers, drafting a global schematic of our digital future, in which, he says, everyone around the world will be able to create, access, use and share information and knowledge. Internet-supported communication is, he reported, a milestone in tapping the full potential of individuals, groups and nations and will improve the quality of life of all people in terms of the principles of the United Nations Human Rights Charter. In the speaker's opinion, the digital world of the internet and the use of digital content will be commonplace in just a few years. For our children's generation, the internet will be fundamental in defining lessons, lectures and interaction with friends. And while Paul Reynolds' enthusiasm for the internet's potential in 2020 was clearly evident, many in the audience were sceptical about whether these prospects were really something to look forward to. Reynolds backed a multi-stakeholder approach to implement this programme, where societal powers, legal policies, economic technical innovation and a politically desired digital strategy – all of which place focus on the people and their needs – come together. This approach is currently being put into practice in New Zealand through the government initiative "Digital strategy 2.0 – a digital future for all New Zealanders" (www.digitalstrategy. govt.nz/upload/Documents/Digital%20Strategy%202.0%20FINAL.pdf).

James Mullins from the Purdue University Libraries, USA, presented the leading American initiatives to develop a digital "e-science" infrastructure. One can think of e-science as a global co-operation for the utilisation of computing capacity, academic primary data, the provision of standards and tools for co-operative research quite simply on the basis of rapid data networks.

Mullins remarked that like in many other places, there are, in fact, many individual initiatives going on in the USA, but structurally no national, binding strategy. In a country of unlimited potential, he reported, there are immense possibilities for research and project funding too: state bodies and commissions, private foundations, companies, wealthy individuals or not-for-profit organisations each with their own funding criteria, target groups and focus. Though, he says, none of this simplifies the complexity of co-ordinated, structured development. Libraries, he continued, are called on all the more so to head the development of comprehensive plans for infrastructure designed to underpin research activities. This is where the Association for Research Libraries (ARL) got onboard, compiling recommendations (www.arl.org/bm ~ doc/ ARL_EScience_final.pdf) in a joint task force on library support for e-science that are now recognised as trend-setting by leading funding institutions. James Mullins is a member of this commission, enabling him to give a first-hand account. The task force, he affirmed, encourages libraries to provide more information about trends in science and research than they had done in the past, and in good time – be it in relation to content or methods, the special properties of virtual organisations or the specific aspects of the management of primary data – in order to be able to develop and provide support in a professional and timely fashion. The ARL task force, he says, stresses the importance of co-operation on equal terms between representatives in science and librarianship: an endeavour that in the USA too is not necessarily

straightforward, though possible. On this topic, Mullins mentioned a time when he himself was approached by academics after they failed to settle an issue in their own internal discussions on the management of primary data. The amicable, half-joking dialogue "You librarians definitely have the solution we've been looking for!" – "Of course, but we're not quite 100 percent sure what you are asking" gave rise, he claimed, to a fruitful co-operation between researchers and librarians alike that not only took academics' understanding of the complexities of librarians' duties to new heights in the long term, but the librarians' understanding of the point of view and methods of researchers too. It is assumed that the influence of the above-mentioned ARL recommendations also contributed towards the setting up of the "Sustainable Digital Data Preservation and Access Network Partners" support programme by the National Science Foundation of the USA 2007 that over the next five years and with a budget of 20 million US dollars (14 million euro) will support projects for development of management structures, technologies and organisations for the management of current and future data streams: a challenge for the effective co-operation of libraries, archives, academia and industry on the path to a national digital strategy, even if an informal one.

Just as Mephisto did with Faust in the classic German legend, the day's speakers took the lecture hall on a journey through the smaller, then larger world, and back again. Talks from local, national and global perspectives followed and expanded on one another. Marinus Swanepoel from the University of Lethbridge, Canada, provided an overview of digitalisation strategies and initiatives worldwide during his talk. The topic of digitalisation has become a popular issue, he said. Scanners are affordable and high-performance archiving software is available in open source, he continued, making the path towards open access and preservation a viable option for smaller libraries too. When it comes to projects of a larger scale, however, the realities are somewhat different, Swanepoel reports. Mass digitalisation is also seldom financed by larger libraries from their own budget resources alone. Google Book Search (http://books. google.com/intl/en/googlebooks/about.html), Open Content Alliance (www. opencontentalliance.org/index.html), Universal Digital Library (www.ulib.org/ ULIBAboutUs.htm#visionBkMark), Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org/wiki/ Main_Page) and others aspire to digitalise nothing less than everything published since Adam. It is hoped that every interested reader will have a suitable internet connection by then and that migration to new technologies necessary for maintaining access is properly administered. Swanepoel's remarks referred to a study carried out by the School of Information Management and Systems at the University of California at Berkeley, which, in 1999, investigated the number of publications released up to that point worldwide (www2.sims.berkeley.edu/research/projects/how-much-info/). Since that time, the findings of the "How much Information" project have been updated online (www2.sims.berkeley.edu/research/projects/how-much-info-2003/). Peter Lyman, Hal Varian and their employees estimate that by 1999, some 65 million book titles had been published, 750 billion photos had been taken, 300,000 films had been shot, 1,864 billion letters had been sent and 348,600 journals had been released. According to Swanepoel, the entire worldwide production of information had totalled 800 megabytes per person in 2002 alone; a figure equivalent to around ten meters of continuously laid out books. The challenge from the point of view of Lyman, Varian and the group – to avoid drowning in this ocean of data – lies in the provision of

suitable software tools and in forging significant improvements in information competency at all levels. Librarians in particular are again included in this obligation. There is a declining trend regarding future digitalisation needs, Swanepoel reported. He stated that in 1999, more than 93 percent of publications were also produced in digital format. Despite this fact, he says, great pains will be necessary to cope with retro-digitalization in as finite a time as possible, which, of course, will need to be financed.

Swanepoel moved his talk on to address the mega projects Google Book Search and Open Content Alliance. Google's objective, it is reported, is to organise the world's information and make it generally accessible and usable (www.google.com/intl/en/corporate/). Google chalked up revenues for the entire 2007 financial year of around 16.6 billion US dollars (11.6 billion euro), a figure 60 percent up on 2006, giving the company ample funds to carry on with the Google Library project, the content of which will, of course, only be accessible to users of the Google Book Search engine. Google will include collections from well-known libraries around the world free of charge. According to Swanepoel, if Google's aspirations were to be realised, 32 million books would eventually be available in digital format based on the volume of WorldCat; a feat with an estimated price tag of 800 million US dollars (146 million euro).

The Open Content Alliance (OCA) is sort of a competitor to Google Book Search, he says. Digital versions created by the company since its formation in 2005 have become part of the Internet Archive Initiative (www.archive.org/about/about.php). This initiative, in turn, had set itself the goal of creating a single library available to all people that provided a record of all the content ever to have appeared to the public online, choosing first to focus on the collection of web pages. The texts and multimedia content digitalised through the Open Content Alliance supplements this collection well. Both profit-seeking and not-for-profit companies alike as well as state institutions are affiliated with the OCA. More than a hundred names appear on the list of contributing organisations, including Yahoo!, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Microsoft Network, Hewlett Packard, Adobe Systems, the Xerox Corporation, the British Library and the National Library of Australia. Such contributors are involved in the digitalisation of collections, services for the alliance, the provision of infrastructure or fund raising. In contrast to other initiatives, digitalisation activities carried out by the OCA do not infringe on the rights of copyright owners of digitalised works. The OCA consortium does not scan books itself, but rather co-ordinates access to the digitalised content provided by contributing libraries, via the Internet Archive. Participating bodies place particular emphasis on copyright-free works.

To illustrate this point further, Swanepoel highlighted the similarly copious aspirations of the Memory of the World initiative (http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID = 1538&URL_DO = DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION = 201.html), a programme set up in 1992 by UNESCO "to preserve the documental heritage of the human race" to "guard against collective amnesia". The programme promotes the digitalisation and preservation of valuable archives and inventories, manuscripts, musical scores, unique copies and image, audio and film documentation. National and regional UNESCO commissions select the works to be digitalised and preserved. The entire catalogue currently comprises 160 collections from around the world, including a compilation of Arabic manuscripts and books from Tanzania, records from the South African state legal proceedings against Nelson Mandela, archives of the Dutch East

India Company, a Gutenberg Bible, the Bayeux Tapestry and extracts from the minutes of the French national assembly held in 1789. The list of prominent projects raised in Marinus Swanepoel's talk could be continued to fill many more pages without boring the interested reader eager to hear more. Swanepoel also named the following as representatives:

- The World Digital Library (www.worlddigitallibrary.org/project/english/about/) (WDL) was launched by the Library of Congress and receives support from UNESCO, Google, the IFLA and a number of national and state libraries. A prototype of the WDL portal (www.worlddigitallibrary.org/project/english/ prototype.html) was presented at the UNESCO General Conference in 2007 and can be viewed online in a video presentation. The focal point of the project is the digitalisation of valuable and rare collections and to make these widely available online.

- The European Digital Library (www.edlproject.eu/about.php) (EDL) consolidates and co-ordinates the digitalisation projects of European national libraries, receiving most of its funding from the European Commission. The EDL also compiles recommendations for digital libraries and provides a search portal (http://search.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/en/index.html) in every European language.

- The China Digital Library Project (CDL) was officially established in April 2004 by the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of China with the involvement of 12 separate ministries and is set to make every single Chinese printed work available in digital format within six years. 1.42 billion yuan (96.7 million euro) has been made available to fund the digitalisation of the documents as well as development of the supporting IT infrastructure. According to Swanepoel's research, in 2005 the CDL contained some 450 million images, 12,000 journals, 1.2 million books and 600 newspapers.

The process of digitalising works produced in both Latin and non-Latin alphabets is often met with difficulty for initiatives in Asia and first requires the development of high-performance software. Six projects of this nature are currently on the go in Korea, which by March 2008 – according to Swanepoel – had managed to digitalise more than 23,000 books, 186,000 journal articles from governmental origins and 918,000 articles originally published before 1945.

Marinus Swanepoel revealed a multi-layered schematic for the global digitalisation landscape to his audience. Many initiatives are part of a globally co-ordinated programme, others remain isolated despite their significance; America, Europe, New Zealand and Australia are making immense headway, while others – with the exception of Japan, Korea and China – are struggling to keep pace with expectations.

Irma Pasanen from the Helsinki University of Technology (TKK) Library in Finland used the occasion to comment on the National Information Society Strategy 2007-2015 and the role of university libraries in Finnish librarianship in view of the action plan's agenda. The plan, she reported, should see Finland rise to become an attractive international service economy by 2015 and one which really puts the emphasis of the individual. Pasanen continued, remarking that the national information strategy will maintain its focus on internationalisation and raising efficiency. In this undertaking, university libraries will work together within their network – the Council for Finnish

University Libraries – to develop standards for core processes in libraries and quality guidelines for services. Co-operation on the national information strategy is of vital importance to all, she stated. Pasanen highlighted an ambitious project currently being implemented by the Ministry of Education to illustrate this point. The integration of three universities in the greater Helsinki metropolitan area into an "innovation university" should give rise to a first-class educational establishment, attracting students from across the world. The move will see the libraries of the three universities (Helsinki University of Technology, Helsinki School of Economics and the University of Arts and Design) integrated and enhanced to produce a world leading research library; indeed a centre of information in a class of its own. However, according to Pasanen, the associated harmonization of services should not be taken lightly, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to address the specific requirements of academics. Reacting flexibly and quickly to individual requests has to be a key capability of university libraries in a globalised world, Pasanen goes on to remark. The new university is set to open in August 2009.

2. "Research discovery" – research on the network

If academics in the past sometimes had to work on the same problems without suitable ways to share ideas – Newton and Leibnitz, for instance, both worked on the development of infinitesimal calculus at the same time – then it goes without saying that modern researchers communicate with one another by telephone, e-mail or video conferencing, almost without a time delay. It is also increasingly necessary for those involved to share large quantities of data or even computing capacity throughout the entire research process or for individuals to work on documentation or data analyses in parallel. Extensive use of a globally networked electronic infrastructure to support research processes is commonly associated with the concepts of e-research, e-science and grid-computing, and a global network of this nature is currently emerging from a multitude of individual initiatives, some of which were presented on the second day of the convention.

Rhys Francis from the Australian eResearch Infrastructure Council took a look at the e-research initiatives of the Australian government in his plenary address "eResearch – from research by the knowledge poor to research by the knowledge rich". The National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) (http://ncris. innovation.gov.au/) concept envisages the creation of a national research infrastructure and is set to pledge more than 540 million Australian dollars (308 million euro) to the cause between 2005 and 2011. The basis for the NCRIS roadmap is the growing relevance for a stable research infrastructure to underpin innovation alongside the simultaneously increasing need for co-operation in research activities and escalating costs associated with research funding. The e-research network will initially be confined to specific areas of research (geosciences, ecosystems, bioengineering) of great significance to the nation: bio-molecular research, bio-informatics, neutron scattering, radio-technology, nanotechnology, clinical research and public health or radio astronomy, to name but a few. Within these areas, data management is set to be scrutinised and expertise in grid-computing built on. Access systems are to be provided and software tools developed. In doing so, the initiators of this mammoth project attach just as much importance to the utilisation and funding of individuals

involved – be they project employees or beneficiary researchers – as establishing seamless interaction between network components and defined standards.

Many a year has passed since e-science-support in libraries was purely science fiction. At the very least this is true of the Purdue University in the USA, where librarians Michael Fosmire and Chris Miller together with James Ogg from the Earth & Atmospheric Sciences Faculty held a geo-informatics course. Fosmire and Miller described to convention participants a scenario carried out by the students at Purdue: A large quantity of benzene has spilled out onto the campus. The colourless liquid is highly flammable, poisonous and carcinogenic and must be removed entirely from the surface and soil without delay, taking into consideration necessary safety measures. This presents the issue and one which directly concerns librarian competence as well. Information, he reports, is found about the profile of the ground water flow, data collected concerning the topography of the campus via geo-information systems and data concerning the liquid spilled on site ascertained via GPS. Data management techniques are then used and affected areas isolated as accurately as possible. It is thus all about data collection, analysis, preparation, evaluation and visualisation, i.e. topics that all present interfaces between librarianship and science.

If librarians want to provide optimal support for research and teaching, they must be open to dialogue and specialist co-operation like Fosmire, Miller and Ogg. In the cyberspace era, the conveyance of expert knowledge can no longer be confined to OPAC statements or the presentation of search strategies for specialist databases, but must be directly geared towards scientific questions and their implementation. Accordingly, the need now is greater than ever for those librarians entrusted with this area of responsibility to abandon the ivory tower in their daily librarian duties, acquire specialist competency regarding the methodology and trends of individual academic disciplines, and actively join efforts to enhance further library-oriented technologies and tools. Conveyance and implementation of information competence in terms of e-research support in the way demonstrated by Fosmire and Miller is absolutely the task of libraries; the task of hiring additional personnel necessary at many locations for this rests with the skills and powers of persuasion of library management.

3. "Learning discovery" – e-learning, Web 2.0

The final day of the conference was dedicated to the topic of "Learning discovery". This covered computer-supported learning and teaching as well as the in-depth and highly topical field of Web 2.0, i.e. making use of the internet's potential, synchronised interaction and communication.

Joan Lipincott from the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI), Washington, took us behind the scenes into the online-based world of the internet generation, the "NetGen", young people already at university or soon to move onto higher education, who, he says, from the outset of childhood, have learned to use computers and multimedia as if by instinct. Another designation true to the mark is "Google generation": When it comes to looking for information, many opt for single-line search engines, turning to online library portals less frequently, or abstaining from the library entirely. Members of the NetGen are as much at home in the virtual world as they are in the real one, using podcasts and RSS feeds, contributing to blogs and wikis, are avid data authors in Facebook or assume virtual identities in Second Life. Most would rather do without TV and radio than the internet.

How can libraries come to terms with the internet-conditioned learning methods of these students and exploit this avenue to support them in their studies? Joan Lipincott identified trends in the learning support of students and presented a number of examples in her address in response to this question and to support those in the audience in their duties to "recruit" future library users wherever they may be. Her references included a teaching video produced and uploaded to YouTube by students (www.youtube.com/watch?v = GVxJJ2DBPiQ), in which a group of students perform a rap about the symptoms of heart disease. It is important, she said, to stimulate the creativity of the students and provide opportunities for multimedia group work to be included in the course of study. Libraries should provide suitable infrastructure to support this.

Modern students are more restless, require flexibility for anything and everything and use notebooks, PDAs, iPods, MP3 players and other technical gadgets to support their mobility. This, according to Lipincott, has prompted the library at the North Carolina State University to develop a version of OPAC to support access via mobile phones. Joan Lipincott proposed that libraries loan notebooks to students on demand and integrate interactive modules such as simulations, games and surveys during meetings on information competence. Lipincott affirms that group work modules are an important component of the learning process and that even extending this to including virtual worlds has its worth. Students believe that they should be involved, in line with Web 2.0, in the organisation of courses offered to them and that they be encouraged to create their own content.

The address of Thecla Ettema from the Delft University of Technology library likewise touched on the topic of new ways to convey information. The library at the University, she remarked, has developed "TULIB", their new homepage, providing tag cloud searching powered by the Collexis search engine to navigate through the library's web site. She commented that if you enter a search term into the search field or select a term from a preset tag cloud, a new tag cloud will be generated from the display of search results from the web site's index, which can then be used for further research if required. If the researcher selects a search result, she added, an additional tag cloud is displayed on the sidebar, which points to links relevant to the search topic from the social bookmarking service "del.icio.us". The response to the web site has been very positive. It was important to those responsible that the students and teachers concerned were brought onboard during development of the web service as early as possible to ensure their needs could be addressed purposefully. A competition to name the service, in which more than 120 students took part, also certainly contributed to the web site's profile.

Other speakers reported on their library's activities in Second Life, pages on Facebook and similar manifestations of the social web. The fact that it is difficult to gauge whether or not such activities by libraries are achieving the desired attention from users was emphasised time and again. It can be considered a success, for instance, if users add the Second Life address of the library to their favourites list. Though there is the risk that the appearance of a library in a social web context could be seen as attempts to curry favour. Then, she says, the positive intention produces the opposite effect.

Insights and prospects

Digitalisation, open access, Web 2.0: The speakers of the 29th IATUL conference provided insight into their workings and visions and conference participants shared

experiences from their own libraries. Field reports are often characterised by the motto "we didn't know what would happen, but we gave it a try anyway" and, pleasantly enough, sometimes too a grinning "a great deal we wouldn't do today, or if we did, would do it completely differently" to finish. Best practice in pure culture. Beyond the thoroughly interesting and inspiring talks, the organisers also provided many opportunities for conference participants to get chatting. Sometimes, chance remarks about services in the libraries of colleagues only just introduced could give way to new inspiration and encouragement for an individual's own work.

The excellent social programme offered an insight into the country of New Zealand and the Maori culture. This, for instance, included a welcome ceremony in a marae (Maori meeting hall), exhibition by a Haka (traditional Maori war dance) and a visit to Waitangi. In 1840, in Waitangi, the birthplace of modern New Zealand, representatives of the Maori tribes accepted the sovereignty of the British Crown and in return received acknowledgement of their own rights to land and property.

The next IATUL conference will take place in June 2009 in Leuven, Belgium, with the motto "Just for you: Quality through Innovation" (http://wbib.kuleuven.be/iatul2009/).

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