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Introduction

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The seventh Libraries Without Walls conference, held as is the custom at Molivos on the Aegean island of Lesvos, demonstrated that ‘anytime, anywhere’ delivery of library services has become the norm. Only 12 years after the first Libraries Without Walls conference in 1995, when remote delivery of services was a niche interest in the profession, it is the library within its walls which is in danger of becoming the minority concern. Of course that library remains of vital importance, both for the preservation of information resources of all types and as the base from which to deliver an ever-wider range of services, but its centrality is under challenge. Speakers and delegates from many countries and from both the academic and the public library sectors came together to discuss recent developments and to try to map out future directions.

Our keynote speaker, Professor Christine L. Borgman of the University of California at Los Angeles, drew attention to the increasing need for libraries to consider their role in facilitating and supporting the use of research data, enabling scholars from disciplines as disparate as history and nuclear engineering to handle the ‘data deluge’ that increasingly characterizes leading-edge research. However, as yet only a few fields recognize the publication of data as a scholarly contribution in the same way as that of papers, books, etc. The immaturity of data curation is illustrated by a lack of coherence between the essential components of the infrastructure needed for long-term sustainability. In this developing scenario the roles of libraries, and indeed of other actors, are unclear. Many scholars would prefer to trust their precious data collections to colleagues with the necessary disciplinary knowledge rather than to generalist librarians. Librarians therefore need to promote the relevance of their existing expertise, while at the same time

recognizing that they too are faced with a new set of challenges – they will need to change and adapt if they are to become significant players in the data curation field.

Bo Öhrström, of Denmark's Electronic Research Library (DEFF), has presented at previous Libraries Without Walls conferences and used this opportunity to demonstrate how national infrastructures for research information are evolving. Central to these changes has been the espousal of open access, with important international collaboration being realized in Europe through the Knowledge Exchange partnership. The following paper signalled a change in emphasis. The Libraries Without Walls conferences have always been concerned to explore library service development across the world, and Pauline Ngimwa contributed a fascinating insight into the problems associated with delivering digital library services to distance learners in Africa. Innovative use of satellite technology, together with carefully planned use of local digital storage, has enabled the African Virtual University to deliver services to a hugely dispersed student population. Much remains to be done, but Pauline has cogently described a viable way forward.

After these opening and scene-setting papers, Graham Pryor returned to the topic of research data and questioned whether academic institutions and their libraries were taking seriously the need for custodianship of the rich research data they produce. Furthermore, because so much of this data is produced through publicly funded research, it is in essence a public good – and needs to be treated as such. Project StORe (Source-to-Output Repositories) illustrates the work being undertaken to provide the essential middleware to enable bidirectional links to be created between research papers and the source data on which they are based. The reluctance of users to engage with curation services and processes presents real challenges, and StORe is attempting to bridge this gap by supporting researchers' desire to collaborate while protecting their interests in relation to data ownership. Quite apart from the technical difficulties, there is a huge challenge to achieve a major cultural shift in researchers' attitudes to data.

Margaret Markland, Jayne Burgess, Sarah Taylor and Helen Standish continued this theme with a paper on the cultural problems of achieving acceptance of institutional repositories. The evaluation of the UK's major initiative in this area, SHERPA (Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access), identified the key inhibitors to repository use, reinforcing the need to encourage a change in higher education culture while recognizing the legitimate concerns of researchers. Broadening the theme of cultural change assisted by new technologies, Jane Secker and Gwyneth Price described experimental use of Web 2.0 technologies to enhance the use of library services for distance learners.

Information literacy has become a dominant theme in librarianship in recent years and it was no surprise that this was a major concern of presenters. Bob Glass and Jill Griffiths, Cath Hunt and Maggie Smart, and Sirje Virkus all focused on the

issues surrounding this topic, illustrating both new ways in which information literacy tuition can be delivered and the inherent problems in securing its place in the mainstream. Virpi Palmgren, Kirsi Heino and Jouni Nevalainen showed how concept mapping tools can be used for structuring information search.

A recurring theme in the literature is the centrality of learning to libraries' roles and purposes. Rob Davies and Geoff Butters reflected on the policy framework within Europe and showed that considerable challenges lie ahead in the areas of learning management, the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to support learning, and the identification and testing of learning outcomes. In supporting such work, Kara Jones and Kate Robinson discussed the role of collaboration and specifically the use of recommendation and review to build communities and conversations, thus incorporating user-generated content into library services. Nancy Graham rounded off this theme by looking at the potential for the incorporation of reusable learning objects into information literacy courses.

Turning to issues of content, Rania Siatri, Emmanouel Garoufallou, Ioannis Trohopoulos and Panos Balatsoukas drew on experience of digitizing cultural heritage resources, using the example of VeriaGrid, to explore the critical issue of usability. Their conclusion was that new usability frameworks with direct applicability to this kind of resource are needed. Jill Griffiths then took up this challenge in a paper presenting the use of 'Quality Attributes' to determine not just usability but also impact.

The third day of the conference began by returning the focus to developing countries, with papers by Sangeeta Kaul from India and Kamani Perera from Sri Lanka. Both presenters showed how the challenge of working in countries where ICT infrastructures are only just emerging can be overcome by innovation and ingenuity, not least through collaboration and co-operation. DELNET in India, for example, already has well over a thousand member libraries, yet the government aims to expand networking to 25,000 libraries in the near future! The proceedings also contain a contributed paper from Anusha Wijayaratne, who was prevented from attending the conference in person because of visa problems. Anusha reflects on why developing countries need to embrace new technologies, on the challenges of training library staff and on the need to familiarize users with services which may be taken for granted in the developed world.

Shifting the emphasis to remote delivery, Susan Robbins described how the libraries at the University of Western Sydney in Australia had developed a single receipt and response point for all incoming queries, termed Information Central, and outlined the steps taken to evaluate its effectiveness. Moira Bent, Marie Scopes and Karen Senior turned the spotlight on international students, demonstrating that where students move from one country to another to study they inevitably face language and cultural barriers and very often find that the

library experience is very different from that which they were used to at home. In an increasingly competitive global market for students, UK libraries are trying to make a concerted effort to address these problems.

An unusual workshop concluded the third day's morning session and is reported in the proceedings in a paper by the presenters, Gill Needham and Kay Johnson. This presentation was concerned with the question of professional ethics, specifically in the context of providing library services to distance learners. Ten ethical guidelines were presented, and delegates – having engaged in lively discussion – were given considerable food for thought in relation to their own service delivery.

The final session provided an opportunity to consider how services can be made truly inclusive, with a paper from Jenny Craven and Jill Griffiths reporting on an initiative to involve users in the assessment of accessibility. Using an iterative process, these studies helped to refine technical and service development in the European Internet Accessibility Observatory (EIAO) project.

The conference concluded with reflections on managing change in a complex, ICT-rich environment. Caroline Williams, Executive Director of Intute (formerly the Resource Discovery Network, RDN), shared lessons learned from the need to achieve rapid and deep-seated change in a national service with myriad stakeholders. One of her conclusions, that we 'are still learning as we look to our future', might stand as a fitting summary of the conference as a whole.

Libraries Without Walls conferences deliberately present a wide variety of perspectives and the 2007 event was typical. The view of library service delivery is not uniform across the world and we all learn from each others' successes – and our mistakes. Those from the academic sector learn from the experience of public libraries, and vice versa. It is hoped that this volume will give a flavour of the debate at the conference, and perhaps encourage readers to attend the next – where the lively discussions will be enhanced by the beauty of the location!