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Oslo Harbour

Newsletter
to European Health Librarians

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Dear colleagues,

I always like the issue after the EAHIL workshop or conference, as there is always so much to say. Therefore, I do not have to think too hard about what to write in my Editorial!

What a splendid conference it was and such a unique chance to be there together under the one roof. The LOC did a wonderful job with Elisabeth Husem as Chair as did the Programme Committee under Eva Alopaeus. The Hotel staff were helpful and charming and the Continuing Education Courses, the Scientific and Social Programmes were all a great success. The EAHIL *Echo* succeeded in printing 4 issues under the direction of Eve Hollis, with

Shane Godbolt, Signe Emilie Romuld and myself. One of my lasting memories will be of the sun setting on the Oslo Fjord on the warm, balmy Friday evening, eating fresh Norwegian shrimps and strawberries.

No matter how many people were asked, not a single person had any adverse comments about the Oslo workshop. What a great endorsement for any event! EAHIL Echo 4, 2003

However there was also a lot of business done at this workshop too. The EAHIL Board and Council met, and reports of these written by Linda Lisgarten are published in this Newsletter. One of the unique features of this Council meeting was the idea of holding Focus Groups in order that the Board *might find out more of what our members from different geographical regions think are the most important "burning issues" that we as an association, should be focusing on.* I was privileged to participate in this new format and was very impressed. Once we were in each of our Focus Groups everyone felt able to talk freely. In my group, which comprised roughly Central & Eastern Europe we actually ran out of time: we were so involved in our discussion of possible future EAHIL strategies to tackle current professional issues! The outcome of these discussions is summarized in the Association news section. Eve Alopaeus also used this focus group strategy in organizing the *Walk & Talk sessions* on the Friday afternoon and everyone voted this as one of the most successful interactive events of the conference. The reports of these *Walk & Talk sessions*, written by the appointed facilitators, make interesting reading.

I am sure you all have experienced meetings where the same people talk, where no one is willing to put themselves to the forefront in a large crowd, NOT because they do not want to BUT in fact they do not have the confidence to do so. One factor is that EAHIL only hold meetings once or twice a year so it can be difficult to get to really know one another. These interactive meetings for me were one of the foremost pointers to a new future for EAHIL members.

"Can a Professional Society exist without a printed newsletter or journal?" I was asked

At a time when EAHIL is beginning to lose members, I wonder if, before initiating radical changes such as a virtual newsletter or even a virtual association, we should try instead to reorganize finances and give more opportunities to members

to participate, have their say, to feel that they can be a contributing member in whatever way possible. Please read Tony's article carefully and I ask everyone to write in opinions for the deadline of the next Newsletter which is October 10th 2003.

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Magic from the North

EAHIL workshops have always had a more intimate atmosphere than the bigger conferences. To maximize the opportunity for networking among the conference delegates, Elisabeth Husem and her local organizing committee had chosen to have an all-inclusive conference, with accommodation and conference at the same hotel on the Oslo fjord. It turned out to have been an inspired choice!

The conference started late afternoon on Wednesday 25th June with a swish reception including sparkling wine and canapés at the magnificent Oslo City Hall, followed by a visit to my own library, The Library of Medicine and Health Sciences at the Rikshospitalet, with yet more refreshments and a Norwegian buffet. After that is was networking all the way- plus a few delightful surprises! These included the excellent and talented “boy band” *Rolls Royce – A Sound Investment*, who provided brilliant entertainment at the opening ceremony; and at the closing ceremony we all enjoyed a wonderful precursor video of next year’s conference in Santander, followed by a light lunch accompanied by light music from a live quartet.

Midsummer up here in the north is always magic. A midsummer tradition in Norway is to spend the fair nights of June on the sea. On Friday evening we were all invited to enjoy the long, fair night in an old sailing ship on the Oslo fjord, enjoying a typical meal of shrimps (literally bucketfuls of them!), strawberries and wine. The local organizing committee had promised to give us a very special experience of a *warm*, fair night. The fairy tale came true. Not only the weather (which was beautiful) but also the atmosphere was extremely warm!

Of course an EAHIL workshop also comes with a wide range of continuing education courses and a full scientific programme. The papers reflected excellently the main theme of the conference “Cross Boundaries – Join Forces”. In addition, the Walk and Talk sessions took place on a lovely afternoon and everyone enjoyed the opportunity to discuss topical issues with small groups of colleagues. Throughout the workshop, the lively and informative *EAHIL Echo* kept us all informed of what was going on – another excellent effort from the top-class editorial team! If you could not attend, do not despair, the proceedings will be published on the conference webpage with a link from EAHIL web (www.eahil.org).

As the workshop took place in Oslo, my own town, I was able to closely follow the enthusiastic and hard work of Elisabeth Husem and her Local Organizing Committee and Eva Alopeaus and her Programme Committee. They truly surpassed themselves in doing everything possible to guarantee an outstanding workshop. On behalf of all of us who enjoyed ourselves immensely at the Oslo workshop I express our heart-felt thanks to “Queen” Elizabeth and all the organizers for their very successful efforts.

Future of EAHIL

At the Oslo workshop we also had a Board meeting and a Council meeting. At the Council meeting we took the first step towards developing new strategies for EAHIL by running a special Focus Groups session with EAHIL Councillors. The results were interesting and very useful. A summary is published in this Newsletter under the Reports from the Board and Council section. The Focus Group input will be one of many inputs used to shape the future of EAHIL. The next step will be a questionnaire survey of all EAHIL members on what they think are the important issues for EAHIL. The future of EAHIL will also be a high-priority topic at the General Assembly at the **9th EAHIL Conference in Santander, Spain, September 2004.**

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Towards a Virtual EAHIL

Should EAHIL become a virtual organisation? Should we develop the web site to take the place of the traditional secretariat, abolishing the annual subscription and serving everyone who works in European health libraries and information services? Would a virtual organisation be a better organisation? Could it survive financially? Would EAHIL's current range of activities expand, contract or stay much as they are now. Do we have the brains, the courage, the skills and the commitment to make it work? For the past two years, the EAHIL Board has been considering and

developing the idea, following on from Arne Jakobsson's observation that our subscription system is effectively circular: the money we spend collecting and managing subscriptions is almost equal to the income from those subscriptions. Even with the Euro, the real beneficiary of all this hard work is the international banking system.

We have now reached the point where it is time to involve the whole of the membership in the discussion, and the purpose of this article is to set out what the Board sees as the important issues, and to ask all members to contribute their ideas and opinions to the discussion.

What Do We Mean By Virtual EAHIL?

1. EAHIL becomes a web-based organisation with no fixed office or paid secretariat.
2. The membership subscription is abolished and that any professional information person working in a health or medical library or information service can apply for membership via the web site without cost.
3. All EAHIL processes (elections, etc) become electronic.
4. EAHIL's main source of funding would be the small levy on conference and workshop fees.
5. The *Newsletter* would become a 100% electronic journal, freely available.
6. EAHIL would otherwise function much as now.

Do We Need to Change?

In many ways, EAHIL is in a very healthy condition, with good financial reserves. The Association provides the focus for valuable professional work by members, and Council in particular is a livelier and more productive body than for many years. There is more enthusiasm than ever before to take on the job of organising conferences and workshops, which are well attended and of a good scientific standard.

But not everything is positive. Membership has been in slow decline over a number of years, and income is further threatened by changes in publishing which are steadily reducing the number of commercial advertisers and sponsors available to us. Our

secretariat in Utrecht is an efficient organisation, but it still absorbs a great deal of the elected officers' time.

Would It Work?

This is really two questions. Is it financially viable? Have we got the resources to make it happen?

Finances: With the help of other Board members, I have drafted a realistic no-subscription budget which balances annual expenditure and income at 5,600 (our 2003 budget balances at 45,200). A copy of this will soon be put up on the EAHIL web site so I won't say more here than that it seems to be realistic and sustainable. If you have any questions email me at tmcsean@bma.org.uk. So the answer to the financial question is a cautious "Yes".

Practicalities: This is a more varied and complex issue. There is no doubt that the new way of working would place a heavier and more routine burden on volunteers and will need more members to become actively involved. The important tasks will include: validating the qualifications/experience of prospective new members; developing and maintaining a web membership database where members can maintain their own membership record; additional work to produce an attractive web *Newsletter*; a system for dealing with routine correspondence, paper and electronic; financial management. In addition, EAHIL will need assured access to web facilities and software — which we hope can be donated by one of Europe's larger health libraries.

Conclusion

EAHIL Board and Council have still not discussed this matter to the point where a decision can be made, but there is a feeling that Virtual EAHIL is a sufficiently promising idea to be worked through properly. There are four strong arguments for developing the idea into a proper proposal:

1. We cannot just carry on as we are. If the slow but steady decline in membership continues, EAHIL will have exhausted its financial reserves in 5-7 years. A lot of effort has gone into trying to reverse the drop in numbers, but so far to little effect.
2. It seems stupid to be working hard to collect subscriptions if the income is matched, or nearly matched, by the cost of collection.
3. Abolishing the annual subscription would hugely increase the numbers of members, making EAHIL a more effective and influential organisation.
4. The change would most benefit those who at present find it most difficult to find the •50 individual or •120 institute subscription, and who are likely to benefit most from membership.

The Board will be discussing this in detail at our January meeting, please let us know your opinions in time for them to be heard at this discussion.

Tony McSeán
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Report of the EAHIL General Assembly in Oslo

A General Assembly meeting was held at 5.30pm on June 26th 2003, during the Oslo Workshop. As expected, the meeting was not quorate, and so the minutes of the last meeting held in Cologne on September 19th 2002 were held over for validation and matters arising until the next General Assembly meeting to be held during the Santander Conference in 2004, which was fully expected to be quorate, and where members would have several important matters to decide.

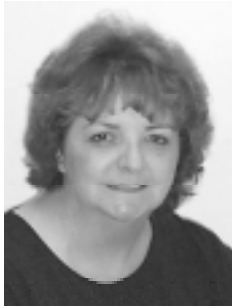
However, there were approximately 25 members present, and they took the opportunity to hear an oral report from the President, Arne Jakobsson, who thanked them very much for attending and for their interest in EAHIL and its future direction.

He gave a short oral report, outlining the main issues that had been discussed by the Board and the Council, including the on-going debate about "virtual EAHIL" and ideas for developing a web-based membership database. The Treasurer, Tony McSeán, gave a short report of the current and projected future financial situation, highlighting some of the ideas for reducing administration costs and reducing expenditure on the Newsletter. Members present then took the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the issues

that had been mentioned. Closing the meeting, Arne expressed the hope that all members would continue to be active in the important debate about the future shape of EAHIL, and encouraged them to contribute to the EAHIL discussion lists and to let Council and Board members know of their thoughts and opinions.

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Report of the Meeting of the EAHIL Executive Board in Oslo



The Board meeting took place on 25th June 2003 at the Library of Medicine and Health Sciences, Rikshospitalet, Oslo, as part of the Nordic Baltic EAHIL Workshop in Oslo, Norway. Present from the Board were Arne Jakobsson (President), Tony McSean (Past President and Treasurer), Linda Lisgarten (Secretary), Miele Kretaviciene, and Suzanne Bakker. Sally Wood-Lamont and Liisa Salmi were also present by invitation. Apologies were received from Marta Viragos, Gabriella Poppi and Ulrich Korwitz.

The **minutes of the meeting** held on 7th February 2003 in Amsterdam were signed as a correct record of the proceedings. There were no matters arising not otherwise covered by the agenda.

Arne Jakobsson had previously circulated copies of his **President's Report** to Board and Council members, in which he emphasized that we urgently needed to find ways of attracting new members and retaining existing ones. The idea of a "virtual EAHIL" was being explored in depth and it was expected that any recommendations should be ready for the approval of the General Assembly in Santander in 2004. It was important that all EAHIL members were fully involved in these very important issues, which would affect the future of EAHIL. The proposed "Focus Groups" session, to be held with Council members that afternoon, would be a start towards getting input to shape our decision making. Other initiatives, such as questionnaires and surveys, were also planned. It was hoped that all EAHIL members would be pro-active in this regard.

Tony McSean apologised to Board members that it had not been possible to get up-to-date accurate figures for the **Treasurer's Report**, due to staffing difficulties at the Secretariat. However, from the figures that he had obtained, an important feature was that it appeared that 70 memberships had not yet been renewed for 2003. Although this would not be the final figure, because some renewals were still expected to arrive, it was nevertheless a worrying statistic which unfortunately matched the trend of the past few years. It was clear that we could not go on like this for more than a very few years without

becoming financially unviable. Thus we must take some action – Tony emphasized that in his view, leaving things as they are was not an option. We must explore all avenues, including radical ways of proceeding, whilst preserving and developing all that is good about EAHIL and making whatever economies we can in the short term to facilitate future growth. We must investigate all ways of increasing both our membership and our influence. The "virtual EAHIL" idea was one such avenue and he would be saying more about this later.

Reporting on matters concerning the **EAHIL Secretariat**, Suzanne Bakker explained that as a member of the Secretariat's bureau staff had left suddenly, they had been shortstaffed and had not been able to undertake much work for EAHIL recently. However, they were interviewing with the intention of filling the vacant post in the near future.

Sally Wood-Lamont gave an update on plans for future issues of the **Newsletter**, which included a mixture of themed issues, profiles and "conference specials", plus all the usual features. Board members discussed the current high cost of printing the Newsletter, and Sally was asked to find out about the costs and practicalities of having the Newsletter printed in Romania in the future, on the basis that it would certainly be less expensive. There was also the question of the cost of distribution to bear in mind, especially as continuing sponsorship to meet these costs was uncertain. The question was raised as to whether the time was right to move towards an **electronic-only Newsletter**. After full discussion, Board members agreed that there could be

considerable financial savings in doing this, and that the resultant monies saved could certainly be put to good use for the benefit of EAHIL objectives (e.g. creating travel grants, bursaries, etc.). However, all agreed that the Newsletter is very much the “public face” of EAHIL and very important to us, so any change must be carefully thought out.

Regarding plans for **future EAHIL meetings**, Fanny Ribes Cot had sent the Board a written report on progress towards the **Santander Conference in 2004**. She had printed the Second Announcement and drafted a Call for Papers. She would liaise with Arne concerning a link to the Conference Web pages that she was setting up, and there would be a discussion list for IPC members. All appeared to be progressing well. There would be a meeting of the IPC in Santander in December 2003, which Arne also volunteered to attend on behalf of the Board. There was no update available regarding the **2005 Workshop in Palermo**. Tony McSean reported on progress towards the **ICML meeting in Brazil, 2005**. The location and dates had been fixed: Salvador, 19th-23rd September 2005. EAHIL was committed to having a small session at this event. Tony was confident that Board members would be able to cope with the organisation of this. Sally Wood-Lamont gave a progress report on planning for the **2006 Conference in Cluj-Napoca, Romania**. The



Arne our President and Elisabeth Husem, Chair of the Local Organising Committee

conference location had been decided and venues had been found for the Opening Ceremony and a Gala Dinner. Pre- and post- conference tours were planned to the painted monasteries of Moldavia and a Dracula tour of Transylvania. Board members were confident that the Cluj-Napoca Conference would prove very popular. With regard to the planned **Workshop in Poland in 2007**, Arne agreed to get in touch with the librarians who had made the proposal and find out what sort of help and support we could offer them.

With regard to the “**Virtual EAHIL**” proposal, Tony had put together a short paper showing possible income and outgoings if EAHIL ceased to be a “membership by subscription” organisation. This showed that in theory at least, the idea was a viable one and should be pursued. There were many issues to bear in mind: many possible benefits and some possible disadvantages, and it was important to get everyone thinking about the matter. It was hoped that Council Members would examine the pros and cons and give their opinions during the forthcoming Focus Groups session. The target would be to have a firm proposal to put before the General Assembly in Santander in 2004. The Board then looked in particular at the idea of having an **electronic membership database** which members could update for themselves, by use of a personal ID. This would save a lot of the administrative work and time currently associated with maintaining the membership database. Members decided to look into this straight away, as it was something that could be implemented whether or not EAHIL becomes totally “virtual” in the future. The idea would be to find a volunteer to develop the database and that we (EAHIL) would own it. Tony McSean agreed to look into this matter further.

Liisa Salmi gave an update on the progress of work towards a **professional certification scheme**. She was confident that she would be able to meet the target date for submitting her report. Board members thanked her very much for her work on this important matter.

Board members also briefly discussed ways in which **Eahil might help members in countries undergoing**

News from our Association

natural disasters, political upheaval or war. One suggestion was the possibility of sharing contingency planning techniques. It was agreed to look into these possibilities further. Unfortunately, due to shortage of time, Board members had to draw their discussions to a close, but they were confident that many if not all of the important issues would come up for discussion during the following Focus Groups sessions with Council Members. The next Board meeting will be in January 2004, exact dates and location to be confirmed later.

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Participants at the Oslo Workshop

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Report of the EAHIL Council Meeting in Oslo

Following on from the Board meeting, the EAHIL Council meeting was held on the afternoon of June 25th 2003. The President, Arne Jakobsson, welcomed Council members to the meeting, explaining that it would be different from previous Council meetings in that the majority of the available time was going to be given over for Focus Groups discussions. Therefore the formal agenda items were very brief, as follows: the minutes of the previous Council meeting held in Cologne on September 18th 2002 were signed as a correct record. There were no matters arising. The President had previously circulated copies of his Report. The Treasurer, Tony McSean, distributed copies of his short report, and drew Members' attention to the fact that to ensure the future success of EAHIL, we need to explore every avenue, including the "virtual EAHIL" concept, to increase our membership, influence and vitality. Finally, Suzanne Bakker, Secretariat Supervisor, formally thanked all Members who had been extremely helpful with the updating and correcting of the EAHIL Membership list. There being no other urgent business, the President moved on to introduce the concept of the Focus Groups session.

Arne explained that at the Board meeting in February this year, Board Members had decided that we should try to find out what EAHIL members from our different geographical regions think are the most important "burning issues" that we, as an association, should be focusing on. Our existing Aims and Objectives are listed on our web pages, but are they still relevant, and are they focused enough? Do members in the different areas of Europe have different perceptions of what EAHIL could and should be doing? Are there new issues that were not covered? What should our priorities be? The aim of the Focus Groups sessions was to make a positive start towards trying to answer some of these questions. Arne then asked Members to divide into three, roughly equal-

sized groups, comprising members from Northern Europe; Central Europe; and Southern & Western Europe. He asked them to discuss what they thought were the most important professional issues affecting them, attempt to rank them in order of importance, and then to suggest possible strategies and ways in which EAHIL as an association could help address these problems for the benefit of members. The three groups were to appoint a discussion facilitator from amongst their group, who would report back their findings to the whole meeting when it reconvened. Peter Morgan (UK Councillor) kindly agreed to summarise the results from the groups at the end of the session.

The three groups each had a lively and thought-provoking session! When the main issues and strategies were reported back, it was evident that there was much common ground, but also some differences in emphasis and suggested strategies. Broadly, the following areas were agreed to be important ones where EAHIL could and should be involved:

1. Facilitating Continuing Professional Development, e.g.
 - Professional certification
 - Knowledge transfer
 - Distance Learning
2. Professional advice and consultancy on consortia to improve access to information, e.g.
 - E-journals
 - National Bibliographies
 - Document delivery
 - Topical medical problems (e.g. SARS)



Participants at the Oslo Workshop

3. To set standards of professional competence, e.g.
 - Best Practice Guidelines
 - Protocols
4. Advocacy and Lobbying at the European and International Level

There was also broad agreement that in order to address these objectives, EAHIL should aim to **reduce administrative costs and overheads**. Suggestions included the introduction of an **online membership database** whereby members would be responsible for updating their personal details, and **reducing the costs of printing the Newsletter** by moving this operation to Romania, or going over to an **electronic version of the Newsletter**, which would save on distribution costs as well. All agreed that money saved could be better spent in facilitating our objectives. However, there were some reservations about moving to a totally “virtual EAHIL”, although everyone agreed that the matter should be explored in more depth.

Summarising the Focus Groups results, Peter Morgan drew attention to the fact that there was obviously a good deal of common ground and many ideas had been put forward. As we were probably never going to be rich enough to hire professional lobbyists, whatever ideas and objectives we come up with, we have to try to carry out ourselves. Everyone agreed that focusing on the European level was important – there were many issues (e.g. the Budapest Open access agreement) where EAHIL’s voice could and should make itself heard.

In conclusion, Arne thanked everyone for contributing in such a lively and useful way. It was impossible to



Sigrun Aasen, official photographer to the Oslo Workshop with some Delegates

over-emphasize how important it was for EAHIL that everyone was involved in shaping its future. There would be more opportunities to feed back ideas and opinions, including a questionnaire survey of all members. It might be extremely useful if Council members could organise local “focus groups” with wider groupings of librarians. It would be particularly useful to know why people chose NOT to join EAHIL, for instance. In the meantime, we had made a good start on the vitally important matter of deciding our future direction.

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NEWS FROM PHING Drug Networking at Your Finger Tips!

The EAHIL Pharmaceutical Information Group (PHING) has now launched its very own Email discussion list, EAHIL-P, with the tremendous help and support of the Karolinska Institute Library and the EAHIL President, Arne Jakobsson.

Since the announcement of the new list on EAHIL-L and at the Oslo Workshop, there has been a steady stream of subscribers and we aim to make the list a lively, friendly forum for the exchange and dissemination of practical information. The list is for **everyone with an interest in drug information**, no matter what field of medical librarianship or information provision you work in. To join you do not need to be a member of PHING, but this is free to all EAHIL members. To join PHING and EAHIL-P just send an email to Listserv@listserv.kib.ki.se with the Subject Line blank and then type in the message **Subscribe EAHIL-P** and then your **first name and your surname**.



PHING is arranging a whole series of events and projects for members including:

- A special issue of the EAHIL Newsletter to be devoted to pharmacy information – this is planned for Issue 66.
- A PHING stream at the next EAHIL conference in Santander, Spain – a special call for papers will be going out shortly.
- A social/workshop programme at Santander.
- Product demonstrations and pharmaceutical database evaluation work.

If you would like any more information on PHING please do get in contact with the Group Secretary:

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Health Information & Libraries Journal



EAHIL members who are *individual* members of our Association are entitled to subscribe to HILJ by credit card or giro transfer payment through EAHIL secretariat at the reduced rate of EUR 72 (for the year 2003).

Please send a message to: EAHIL-secr@nic.surfnet.nl (This offer is not valid for our members in the UK or in the USA).



News from MLA

It was a pleasure to attend the Nordic-Baltic EAHIL Workshop in Oslo at the end of June. All who participated will agree that it was a success in every way, thanks to the hard work of many EAHIL members who served on the Local Organizing Committee and the Programme Committee. Even the weather was perfect!

MLA held its 103rd Annual Meeting in San Diego, California with 2,412 members, exhibitors, and guests in attendance. More than 100 international members attended the International Reception. The weather was definitely not perfect!

During the course of the meeting, members discussed several key initiatives that have been addressed during the year, many of which I have reported in earlier columns. Highlights of association activities are described in the 2002-2003 Year In Review on MLANET.org. Most recently:

- In April, the revision of MLA's strategic plan was completed and incorporates feedback from the membership. The final plan, entitled, "MLA's Future: Issues, Challenges, Choices" is posted on MLANET.
- Publishing issues continue to be a major concern. An Open Forum at the 2003 Annual Meeting was held to provide input from members towards developing appropriate MLA strategies for participating in both short and long-term solutions to the crisis in scholarly communication. Later in July, MLANET will launch an expanded web site which will include handouts from the Open Forum in San Diego, strategies that were suggested at the Forum, links to several electronic scholarly publishing initiatives, as well as documents describing the work that MLA is doing with other library associations regarding publisher mergers.
- MLA has established a Health Information Literacy Task Force, charged with developing a working definition of "Health Information Literacy" to guide MLA's efforts, including its relationship to the general concepts of "information literacy" as developed by ARL and others. The Task Force will identify current and potential MLA activities to support improving health information literacy and identify and work with partners to coordinate and sustain these activities. Related to this, MLA will host a Health Literacy Satellite Teleconference September 10, 2003 "Reading Between the Lines: Focusing on Health Information Literacy." The teleconference will give participants an

overview of health literacy, what it is and how it is measured; describe opportunities for librarians, and explore potential partnerships and funding for projects.

At the conclusion of the San Diego meeting, Patricia Thibodeau, Director of the Duke University Medical Center Library was installed as MLA's 2003/04 President. Some of President Thibodeau's priorities for the association and profession include:

- Strengthening our value at the global level through diverse partnership and international initiatives to strengthen access to health information and the quality of care across the world;
- Demonstrating to health care and institutional leaders our value to the health care community and the public; and
- Building our community to ensure our enduring value through recruitment and retention of today's and tomorrow's librarians and leaders.

Much of the association's news and activities is available without membership on the MLANET website at <http://mlanet.org>. In addition, the full-text of the *Journal of the Medical Library Association* (formerly the *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*) is available free in PubMed Central at <http://pubmedcentral.gov> from 1999 to the April 2003 issue.

Eve-Marie Lacroix
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Bioethical information: some initiatives developed by the Italian National Institute of Health

The Italian National Institute of Health (ISS) has been involved in bioethical issues related to scientific research during the latter years. These emerging research issues, such as genetic techniques, organ transplantation, biotechnologies and genetically modified organisms applications, require increasing consideration of ethical implications related to biology and medicine developments.

In February 1999, an internal Ethical Committee was established, in order to concretely answer the need of evaluating bioethical problems raised by the research programs carried on at our Institute. The Committee, which has its own website at the URL <http://www.comitatoetico.iss.it/> pursues a consultant activity, required by national and international bodies sponsoring research projects. Moreover, the Committee acts as a reference centre for the diffusion of bioethical principles and of education activities on this matter.

As far as the information field is concerned, the Institute launched in 2001 a research project called “*Collection and dissemination of bioethical information through an integrated electronic system*” with the purpose of creating an Internet resource devoted to bioethical information. This website, called SIBIL (Sistema Integrato per la Bioetica In Linea – Integrated Online System for Bioethics) is at present being developed, and will soon be available in the framework of the ISS Web site www.iss.it. SIBIL has been designed with the purpose of giving a complete and updated overview of the Italian information and education initiatives on bioethical issues. It will improve access to bioethical information and it will help its dissemination at a national and international level. It will also be a tool for the coordination of data deriving from different informative sources. It is addressed to researchers, health personnel, teachers and students and to the layman as well. SIBIL will include all kind of bioethical-related information, such as links to relevant Italian and international informative resources, information on forthcoming conferences and on education opportunities, news and articles appearing in Italian newspapers etc.

A key element of the SIBIL initiative is the homonymous database, which is already accessible at

the URL www.bioetica.iss.it. SIBIL is a bibliographic database, collecting and indexing all the bioethical literature produced in Italy since 1995. It includes references and some abstracts of monographs, journal articles, ethical committees opinions (especially those from the National Bioethics Committee), statutes, ethical guidelines, grey literature, all Italian laws (most of them in full-text) and some international legislation in this field. It also catalogues and indexes relevant electronic resources. The database, which at present numbers around 3,600 records, shows also the location in Italian libraries of the documents retrieved. The indexing is based on a thesaurus developed on the model of the Bioethics Thesaurus of the Georgetown University’s Kennedy Institute of Ethics. In order to obtain a suitable instrument for describing documents’ contents, the original English version of the thesaurus was integrated with subject headings better fitting the domain of bioethics, within the Italian context of public health issues. The Italian Bioethics Thesaurus (TIB) includes over 1600 descriptors, updated on a regular basis. Moreover, the implementation of an English version, as well as the full editing of the scope notes, has been planned.



Elisabette Poltronieri and Maurella Della Seta

Future developments of the SIBIL project will consider the inclusion of the SIBIL database within European networks. For this purpose contacts have been established with DRZE, German Reference Centre for Ethics in the Life Sciences, www.drze.de, a leading institution in this field.

In order to present to the scientific community the results of the SIBIL project, the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS) organised on March 28 2003 the workshop "Ethical considerations and scientific research. Production and spreading of informative resources".

A survey on the Italian documentation centres linked to bioethical institutions was carried out, within the ISS SIBIL project framework, and presented during the meeting. The survey was aimed at planning the development of a national network for the collection of bibliographic data, the exchange of publications and the implementation of a document delivery service. Moreover, Internet resources at a national and international level (websites of governmental and non-governmental institutions, databases, academic courses and other initiatives) were illustrated, as located through the most common Internet browsers, and properly selected according to the quality criteria adopted worldwide for the evaluation of health-related websites.

The SIBIL database, produced by the ISS, was also presented during the meeting, as a useful support to health professionals involved in the wide area of bioethical research within public health.

Document searching on the ISS database on bioethics was illustrated, by the help of search examples, particularly formulated for a scientific audience. Its user-friendly interface, allowing users to easily retrieve documents, locate them, and access other resources of interest, was highlighted.

Although mainly devoted to the presentation of the above mentioned ISS research project, the debate focused also on the experiences and projects of information management systems related to bioethics, both national and international .

For instance, the Italian National Institute of Health participates in a European Project concerning the ethics of public health: the EuroPHEN (European Public Health Ethics Network) project, presented on the occasion of the workshop.

EuroPHEN <<http://www.shef.ac.uk/~scharr/public/research/ethics/europhen/>> is a network of twenty partners from across Europe and North America, funded for 3 years from March 2003 by the European Commission's 5th Framework Programme. It will compare and contrast approaches to public health and policy priorities within different countries, perform ethical analysis of issues within public health practice and conduct empirical research on public attitudes to the balance between private and public interest. A survey carried out in the context of this project, showed that the problem of balancing private and public interest is a basic issue in public health ethics. Moreover, one of the priority areas of interest for ethical analysis is data protection. Within this framework, international policy is affected by differences in cultural norms between what is ethically appropriate and what is not, and the object of research concerns public attitudes to the balance between private and public interest. Research conducted in UK demonstrates that citizens allow their personal health information being used to improve health care provision and that just a minority wishes to restrict access in order to protect privacy.

Among other issues the debate focused on the ethics of scientific evaluation, and particularly on the economic aspects, such as the strict relationship between funds provided for research and the gross domestic product and on the development of guidelines for the evaluation of scientific research. In conclusion, a Round Table was organised on the state-of-the-art of the existing Italian information systems and on the perspectives of implementing new initiatives in the field.

Among them, the objectives and characteristics of a database created at the "Istituto di teorie e tecniche dell'informazione giuridica" of the Italian National Research Council (CNR) in Florence were described. This database is named BIG (Bibliographia sulla Interruzione della Gravidanza: Bibliography on

pregnancy termination) and it stores a large collection of bibliographical documents on the right to life and the voluntary termination of pregnancy. It is available at the URL <<http://www.idg.fi.cnr.it/banche/big/big.htm>> Within CNR (the Italian National Research Council), the activity of a Study Committee on Bioethics was highlighted. It was conceived to support scientific research and professional education by monitoring information resources related to bioethics. Moreover, the Committee acts as a national focal point for the study of ethical issues arising in the biomedical field and deeply affecting scientific policy. The activities of the Committee are in depth described at the URL <<http://www.ceris.to.cnr.it/Bioetica.html>>. Other invited speakers from the University of Roma "La Sapienza", the Catholic University of Rome and the Pontifical Athenaeum "Regina Apostolorum", as experts of information management and electronic publishing, focused the debate on the results of their activities, devoted to collecting and sharing bibliographic data on bioethics and implementing editorial policy through advanced technologies.

A special issue of the Annali dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità, the official journal of ISS, <<http://www.iss.it/publ/anna/index.html>> entirely devoted to bioethical issues, is underway and will be published at the beginning of 2004.

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Editorial Sector Documentation Sector
Italian National Institute of Health

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ADVERTENTIE



Evidence-based nursing and libraries: do we find what we are searching for?

A couple of years ago we started to receive a new type of question at the reference desk. The clients were nurses and nursing students asking for help in writing a systematic review as part of their theses or essays, or asking us to find an evidence-based nursing (EBN) study for them to be reviewed at their classes or at clinical work.

We were familiar with systematic reviews and evidence-based research in medicine (EBM) since we had been carrying out searches for practice guidelines, for systematic reviews and for technology assessment reports. Comparisons between different fields is not very fruitful, but since EBM was something we knew and were familiar with, we did it anyway.

We understood that something new was emerging in nursing but why had we no prior information about it?

What I am going to now talk about is not evidence-based librarianship but rather experience-based opinions. Uttering opinions does not require too deep knowledge of a field and it is therefore very easy to express strongly.

How is evidence produced?

The nurses' questions assured us that we had to find out exactly what is meant by evidence in research and how it is produced. The most important facet is to evaluate the research methods and operational processes and furthermore, the statistical handling of data. In addition, the impact of the research, the safety and efficiency of interventions and the finances involved must be included in this evaluation and moreover, the social, legal and political issues have to be taken into account as ethical issues have always been essential in health care. In essence, it means the evaluation of the usability of research results and keeping in mind all aspects, it is not an easy task.

This led us to ponder over EBM. Medicine is a good example of applied sciences where research is seldom based on theories. To make a complicated procedure simple, especially in clinical medical research, a certain medication is given to a group of patients and then observation is made how the medication affects

them. In the best cases, a control group is involved for comparison. No wonder Dr. Cochrane became worried and started looking for evidence in the 1970s and created a worldwide collaboration in creating systematic reviews! Now in medicine, the evaluating groups are formed of highly advanced specialists and they assess research within a strict criteria consensus. The evaluation usually takes at least two years to complete, often even more. The results of these assessments are systematic reviews, practice guidelines and technology assessment reports. These results are mostly quantitative, since qualitative reviews and reports are far more difficult to produce. Attempts have been made in this field also, though, but so far no generally accepted criteria have been created, and this is quite understandable, since the task is very difficult.

What about evidence in nursing then? As an academic field, nursing research heavily leans on strong theories, mostly taken from philosophy. Sometimes this even biases the interpretation of the results in the sense that the researcher's innovative ideas may be blanked out by remaining too close to the theory. The whole starting point of nursing is much more qualitative than that of medicine: the patient, a human being, and the way of thinking in nursing is more patient-centered than in medicine. Strong hierarchies prevail in both disciplines and in daily duties, but nursing accepts knowledge also through common experience whereas in medicine there is an authority telling the truth. Quality assurance has been a way of producing evidence in nursing for some time already, so this idea in itself is already well known.

Problems of evidence in nursing

Now it seems that nursing has adopted the terms

evidence-based research and systematic reviews from medicine without further thought. At present, evidence in nursing seems to mean that research has been carried out on a topic, with no further evaluation of the quality of the research. Sometimes we even see the term **empirical** used as a synonym for evidence-based. The main problem seems to lie therein that there are no agreed criteria for concepts in evidence-based research in nursing. What does nursing science mean with a **systematic review** – is it just a literature review for which the database searches have been carried out systematically? Nursing students do not seem to have enough guidance in tackling the problem of critical appraisal skills in their studies – maybe the teachers have not clarified for themselves the new concepts.

As to clinical nurses who are now required to review evidence-based research reports at their meetings, it seems unreasonable that they can do it just out of the blue. What are their critical appraisal skills? Where have they suddenly acquired these appraisal skills? Clinical nurses have their hands full with patients day in and day out. Do they have time for continuing education? Is the work of their departments organised in a way, which allows them to train themselves in new, more or less, abstract skills? However, this is not only their problem: there is opposition in the physicians to the requirement of evidence-based practice. Before implementation of evidence-based practice in nursing, clear rules should be established: who is qualified to evaluate research, the degree of evidence and how the clinical nurses are educated for this new thinking and new mode of quality control.

Quite a substantial body of research in EBN already exists, but the problem seems to be the normal twofold one: how to bridge the gap from academia to practical life and how to change nursing processes at the clinics and departments.

What about librarians?

Much of what has been said of nursing also concerns librarians. We do know the basics: we are familiar with databases, their structures and coverages and thesauri; we know the search software and know how the best results are achieved in different databases.

But do we know how evidence is indexed? Do we know what the requirement of evidence includes? Do we have enough knowledge of research methods? Do we know enough about the fields our clientele works in? Further education within our profession is necessary to know which publication types really denote evidence in various databases and what they mean. Does **randomized controlled trial, practice guideline** or **multicenter study**, respectively, mean the same thing in each database? Do we really know the meaning of evidence-denoting thesaurus terms: are **double-blind method** or use of **placebo** identical within all thesauri? What does **evidence-based nursing** or **evidence-based medicine** really mean? Do we always do a semantic analysis of the terms we use? This concerns doubly librarians in other language areas than English: it is not enough that we know the English term, we also have to know if it corresponds to the concept in our own language and health care system.

The large international databases do help us. They have ready-made filters, such as **research** in Cinahl or **systematic reviews** in PubMed. We are not, however, completely happy with these filters, because often it takes a long time to find out what they really mean. Generally speaking, PubMed is reliable and consistent in indexing evidence-based medicine, although it is hard for a librarian first to find out what is meant by the different terms. However, the scope notes in PubMed give very good guidance – but to adopt the English term to national usages in each country's own health care system poses some difficulties. In defining systematic reviews, PubMed takes a much broader view than the Cochrane Collaboration definition, and evidence-based medicine refers to clinical practice only. NLM and its MeSH section are now working hard to "open" themselves to the other parts of the world intellectually. As to Cinahl, it is much more unreliable in its usage of evidence-denoting terms and its indexing is sometimes annoyingly inconsistent. Some articles are thoroughly indexed with evidence-denoting terms, but the subject matter itself may be almost forgotten and indexed with too few terms. In other cases, the article is just given the research term and nothing more detailed. The scope notes in Cinahl are far from helpful: we sometimes get the impression

that the terms/concepts are not clear to the indexers and database producers. Cinahl seems to be concentrating on technical gimmicks now, instead of doing the basic work properly. When asked who does their indexing and according to which criteria, the answers is: specialists. Specialists on what? The impression is that they are not specialists in indexing, so maybe they are specialists in nursing.

National dabatases in the Nordic and Baltic countries

Of the Nordic countries, Sweden has the most developed national health sciences database and thesaurus. They have Svemed+ and the Swedish MeSH. Denmark, Iceland and Norway do not have national health sciences databases nor thesauri; however health sciences literature is included in national general databases. Finland has a national health sciences database called Medic and FinMeSH is just getting its final touch. In Finland a nursing thesaurus is also under way to be used in indexing the future nursing database. Estonia has a national database in health sciences and a thesaurus is being prepared. Latvia also has a database and the greater part of MeSH has been translated into Latvian. In Lithuania a database does exist, but it does not cover the whole country, and a Lithuanian MeSH has been produced.

When we have our national databases and thesauri produced and completed, the situation is quite good. This does not, however, solve the problem of finding evidence-based research or systematic reviews in our respective countries. Only when we also have the evidence-denoting indexing terms and publication types are we better off, but we have also to use them when indexing and understand their meaning, because the old truth of information systems is that we do not find anything that has not been put in.

As to the original question if we find evidence-based nursing research when searching, the answer is no and yes. **No**, we do not find evidence-based research results very easily and **yes**, we do find them if we take so much time that it is almost out of the question with one's present workload. It is hardly ever enough to read the title, and most times the abstract must be read if it exists, and in worst cases, it is best to read the

whole article. This is not necessarily the librarian's job, but it helps the nurses and nursing students very much.

The present paper raises two serious challenges to health sciences librarians. First of all, we have to look at our national databases with "evidence-based eyes": it is our task to see to that we have national databases and national thesauri with evidence-denoting terms and publication types and that we also use them when indexing and understand what they mean.

The second question is why do we not know when something new emerges in a field? This challenge has to do with our professional education, which should have more flexibility in offering possibilities to specialise in a field's information production and publishing processes and ways of thinking and behaviour of our clients. We also ought to have easy access to and more systematised ways of establishing close cooperation within the field in question, with subject matter practitioners or teachers. Lastly, of course, it is up to ourselves as professionals, to follow carefully what is going on in health sciences world-wide

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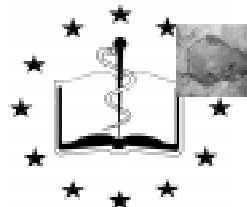
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Santander, Spain, September 20-25, 2004

9th European Conference of Medical and Information Libraries



CALL FOR PAPERS

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

On behalf of the Local Organising and Scientific Committees, it is my pleasure to cordially invite you to join us in Santander, for the 9th Conference of the European Association of Health Information Libraries EAHIL. It is a honour for us to welcome our International Colleagues to the Cantabria Country, an autonomous region of Spain, located along the Northern coast at the Cantabrico sea. This region is well known for its beautiful green hilly landscape, the friendliness of its people and the excellence of its gastronomy.

The scientific programme will follow the traditional structure. There will be plenary, parallel, and poster sessions on the important scientific fields and state of the art topics. To increase knowledge and understanding in specific fields, continuing education courses (CEC) will be held before the conference.

Attend EAHIL 2004 in Santander, to soak up knowledge and the Spanish sun. The Conference offers a wide range of educational opportunities, while Santander boast attractions to delight the senses.

Please, mark these dates, September 20-25, 2004 in your calendar and make plans to come to Santander alone or with your family for the EAHIL 9th conference, to present your work, and share knowledge and experiences with other European Medical Librarians. We will make a great effort to offer you a highly attractive scientific programme and an enjoyable social atmosphere to make your stay with us an unforgettable experience.

The EAHIL biannual Conference is a great place to learn about the varied areas of specialization in the health information profession, attending the CEC, the conferences and parallel sections. The EAHIL sections and special groups help generate contents for Santander EAHIL 2004. Dates, times, and more information about the programme planned for this conference can be found at. Copy this URL in your browser : <https://ibio.humv.es/biblioteca/eahil/> for the most up-to-date information.

We look forward to meeting you in Santander in 2004,

Maria Francisca Ribes Cot

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION: deadline October 31, 2003

If you are interested in making a presentation either or a poster display, you should submit an abstract. Please, prepare your abstract on the topics listed below for presentation at the Conference.

Authors are requested to submit abstracts (200-400 words) before OCTOBER, 31, 2003 via the

Conference website: <https://ibio.humv.es/biblioteca/eahil> or by e-mail to the chair of the International Programme Committee: bibrbcm@humv.es or by IBM compatible diskette with two printed copies to the Secretariat or the Chair of the Organizing Programme Committee: Maria Francisca Ribes Cot. Biblioteca-Hospital Universitario Marqués de Valdecilla. Pabellón 16-2º. Avda. Valdecilla s/n. 39008 Santander-Spain. A number of abstracts will be selected for oral presentation. You are invited to indicate your preferences, but the International Programme Committee reserves the right to make the final decision. Authors will be notified whether their abstract has been accepted or not by January 31, 2004. The final programme will be published on internet in advance of this meeting. It will also be published in the abstract book, which will be available only at the Conference.

For further information about the call for papers or the Conference, please see the Conference Website (<https://ibio.humv.es/biblioteca/eahil/>)

The preliminary programme and the announcement for the Conference including registration forms will be sent to all EAHIL members by mail in August of 2003, and will be at the Internet at the Conference Webpage.

SUBJECTS EAHIL 2004 / MAIN TOPICS

THE FUTURE OF MEDICAL LIBRARIES/HOSPITAL LIBRARIES

- Buildings
- Staff new roles
- New relations with users
- Staff management: new trends
- Strategic Planning for Hospital Libraries

HYBRID AND DIGITAL LIBRARIES

- Portals
- Organizing collections: meta-engines
- Intranets
- Access and digital devices
- Knowledge management
- Libraries inside a more complex structure/IAIMS and medical informatics
- Archives: Traditional & Electronic
- License negotiation of electronic sources

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS AND EVALUATION

- Open archives
- Copyright issues
- Role of librarians and e-publishing
- Evaluation of publications

INFORMATION AND PEOPLE

- User instruction - Distance education
- Digital reference
- Health and communication: patients, physicians and librarians
- Benchmarking library services
- Quality information: How to search it, how to define it
- Evidence based medicine: role of librarians

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

- History of Medicine
- Medical Libraries History

ADVERTENTIE

THANK YOU ALL

The Nordic-Baltic-EAHIL Workshop “Cross Boundaries - Join Forces” in Oslo is over. Thanks to many joint forces it all went well, and the local organizing committee wants to thank every one who contributed to making the workshop a success. Speakers, course holders, sponsors, the programme committee, and our libraries - the list of helpers is long. Most of all we would like to take the 136 delegates from 27 countries who joined forces in Oslo 25-28 June. It was all of you who made the party! We are especially grateful to those who delivered the good weather and to the editorial group of ECHO, who produced a fresh workshop newsletter every day!

Thanks to joined forces from Norwegian libraries, one Swedish library, EAHIL, SMH (the Norwegian’s medical library group) and the EAHIL Oslo-Fund, we managed to give grants to 19 participants from the Baltic countries and from St Petersburg. Some had all expenses covered, incl. travel expenses; others received the conference fee, incl. hotel and workshop, and one was given some “travel support” (Poland).

We hope to see all of you soon again!

Elisabeth Husem
Local Organizing Committee



Continuing Education Courses

When we sat down to discuss the membership of the programme committee for the Oslo workshop, one of the first questions was whether to have representatives from all of Europe or not. We decided on a small committee with representatives from the host country, Norway, two Baltic countries and the UK, plus the Swedish chair. The UK representative, Tony McSean, wisely recommended that we keep it that way. He also said that a bias towards the region where a conference or workshop was held was normal.

The process of identifying the courses that we thought would be right for our delegates was rather intuitive. But there were also practical considerations such as the number of rooms we had available at the hotel. The local organizers wanted the workshop fee to be reasonable, so it was important to keep the costs down. We had to decide whether it would be worthwhile to have courses at other venues or not. Another important factor in compiling the course selection was to make sure that the interests of everyone – from beginners to old-timers – were catered for.

We had a generous course offer from NLM that we unfortunately had to decline. The subject did not quite

The whole principle of our EAHIL conferences and workshops depends on our mutual willingness to share professional ideas, information and knowledge on a low budget basis.

Eva Alopaeus

fit with the theme of the workshop and it also needed a full day which our programme did not allow. Another generous offer came from Shane Godbolt (UK) who approached the programme committee at the EAHIL Conference in Cologne with a selection of courses that she would be willing to give in Oslo.

From Shane Godbolt’s selection we chose **Collaboration versus competition** – a course we thought would fit very well with the theme of the workshop and also would attract our more experienced colleagues. Shane, at that time, worked with the London Library and Information Development Unit (UK). She came to Oslo and gave her course at her own expense.

Highlight on... the Oslo Workshop

Searching the evidence: training the trainer was an easy choice. A combination of teaching how to teach and evidence based medicine had to be a winner. We also had local competence with good training skills. Irene Wijk and Lena Nordheim are dynamic trainers from the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs in Oslo, Norway, and were experienced in teaching international groups.

Successful project management: Importance of communication skills and teamwork. The idea to have a course on project management originated from Velta Poznaka, the programme committee member from Latvia. Patricia Flor, one of the programme committee members from Norway, had recently been on a study tour to the Czech Republic and recommended Jarmila Potomkova from the Palacky University in Olomouc. When asked, Jarmila also generously volunteered to lead the course and come to Oslo at her own expense.

I attended the CEC on Successful Project Management and found it very useful for my own project on training medical informatics students, advanced literature searching skills.

First-Timer at an EAHIL Workshop

Faridi van Etten-Jamaludian

Academic Medical Centre
The Netherlands

PubMed and other NLM resources – a hands on course. Initially we thought that there would be no need for yet another PubMed course. It was not long before we started getting signals that a programme of courses without PubMed would not be right, so we decided to include the course and see what happened. The signals were right and the course proved to be popular with the delegates. Astrid Müller from the Library of Medicine and Health Sciences in Oslo was



on the programme committee and let herself be talked into teaching the course. Astrid also had prior experience in teaching an international group

Managing e-journals: a do it yourself approach.

Managing e-journals is something most of us struggle with these days. Anne-Gry Skonnord from the Library of Medicine and Health Sciences in Oslo came highly recommended from her boss Arne Jakobsson who also suggested that we give that course.

Over 60 people attended our five courses in Oslo. None of the courses had to be cancelled and the response that we got was positive. There was a lot of local expertise in Oslo, so we did not have to 'cross the river to fetch water' (as we say in Sweden) and get all the course leaders from elsewhere –this was both practical and economical. But we also seized the opportunity to accept generous offers from colleagues who were willing to share their knowledge.

Eva Alopaeus (Sweden)

eva.alopaeus@gsv.gu.se

Chair, Programme Committee



*One of the most successful aspects of the Oslo Workshop was the original idea of Focus Groups. Here Eva Alopaeus tells us the background of the very successful international networking **Walk & Talk** sessions on the Friday afternoon.*

Why did we Walk & Talk?

The theme of the workshop was Cross Boundaries – Join Forces. It was a joint effort between the Nordic and Baltic associations and EAHIL. The International Programme Committee worked very closely with the local organizers to fulfill their vision of an intimate workshop with a limit of 150

delegates, who would stay together and learn together – making new friends, mingling and networking across language barriers. Right from the start we knew we were planning a workshop and not a small conference. But it soon dawned on us that planning a programme for a conference was easier than planning a workshop. A workshop, we realized, is more interactive than a conference and how were we supposed to make 150 people interact during the scientific programme?

The local Norwegian organizing committee wanted a setting that would encourage all the delegates to network. It was decided to go for the ‘everything under one roof’ concept with the same hotel providing all the accommodation and workshop facilities. The hotel they selected had an excellent location in a park, with the fjord and beach nearby. It lent itself to the Scandinavian tradition of taking a walk in the fresh air to clear the mind and to generate ideas.

Slowly, these various ingredients – the desire to interact, network and learn, plus the inviting surroundings – emerged and a ‘Walk & Talk’ session seemed like a good way to put them all together.

All that was needed was something to talk about. The programme committee came up with these ‘hot topics’:

- Which Medline? The pros and cons of PubMed and commercial user interfaces
- Electronic services: how can we promote them to our users?
- Library mergers: a good thing or a bad thing?
- Consumer health information: what is it and should a medical library provide it?
- Journal subscriptions: both the printed and electronic versions, or just the electronic?
- Learning centres, intranets and other projects: how can libraries and IT Departments improve their collaboration?
- The library in the organisational structure: does it matter where you ‘sit’?

- Good staff or good holdings: which is more important in a library?
- Professional associations: what should members put in and get out?
- Acquisition: How do we know that we have the right books and journals in our library?
- Document delivery: a job for libraries or for business?
- User education: does it work?

How did we walk & talk?

Each delegate was encouraged to choose a subject for the walk & talk session by filling in a form and handing it in the evening before. The session organizers met later on and arranged the participants in groups of 5 or 6. In the end we had ten subjects and sixteen groups, which meant that we needed more facilitators. The organizers contacted several people among the workshop participants who willingly volunteered to lead a discussion group. The role of the facilitator was to initiate the discussion and encourage the participants to share their ideas and experiences.

The facilitators took their groups for a walk in the park, to the beach or just wandered around and then sat down to talk. Most of them reported that they had had interesting discussions and that the concept as such had worked well – the participants had taken the opportunity to network and they had come up with new ideas.

Eva Alopaeus (Sweden)
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Chair, Programme Committee

Highlight on... the Oslo Workshop

Walk and talk: 12A User education: does it work?

The walk and talk session proved to be a great success. We were blessed with perfect summer weather on Friday which meant that the groups could wander around the park and down to the fjord. I was the facilitator for one of the three groups discussing user education. The group consisted of librarians from two Norwegian university colleges with health care faculties, one from a medical research library in the Czech Republic and one from a university medical library in Germany.

Inspired by the lecture given by Anne-Marie Haraldstad earlier the same day on information literacy, we all agreed that curriculum integration was the key to successful user education. However, the hurdles to curriculum integration are often on a sociological plane rather than an educational plane - the difference in social standing between the professor of medicine and the librarian is often too great in some countries for the library to be heard. Teaching methods also influence the



Persons in the picture: Hanne Dybvik, Norway; Adela Jarolimkova, Czech Republic; Heike Wienholz, Germany

students' use of the library. Problem-based learning and project work lead to greater use of the library and to a greater need for information skills than traditional teaching methods.

We came to no conclusion in our discussion nor to any answer to the question, but we had a pleasant talk about our libraries and our library education methods. We also got to know each other a little, which was one of the main aims of the walk and talk session.

Patricia Flor
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Walk & Talk Group 12B: User education - does our teaching have any effect?

Participants: Andreas Savva, Cyprus; Anne-Marie Haraldstad, Norway; Magdalena Sverige; Lise Christensen, Denmark; Dieuwke Brand-de Heer, The Netherlands; Liisa Salmi, Finland

User education is a major part of health sciences libraries' work at present. We all do it and we all give serious attention to the fact that we do not really know if our teaching has any influence on the students.

The greatest problem seems to be that library and information retrieval skills (LIRS) are difficult to integrate with subject teaching. This has succeeded at the Oslo University Health Sciences Library where Anne-Marie Haraldsen with her team has worked out an extensive program with the subject teachers. There are four librarians with at least some education in teaching who deal with the students. Other libraries represented in the group do not have these resources.

We also discussed the fact that most librarians teaching have no education in teaching. We criticise physicians and nurses doing their searches without any formal competence, but we ourselves happily teach mostly



without any formal competence! This is a problem and something should be done.

Each of the group members told of their own experiences as teachers and we stated formal education does not help if you are not interested in teaching - some are born with a natural teaching ability.

There are quite a few articles on various teaching programmes, but we do not have really evidence-based research on the effects of LIRS teaching. Claus Poulsen from Roskilde, Denmark has carried out a study on problem-based teaching in LIRS and found out that it is the teachers pedagogical competence that has positive influence on the students' LIRS abilities and not necessarily the time spent on teaching (<http://www.rub.ruc.dk/godin/slutrapport.pdf>).

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And further comments from Lise Cristensen on this subject:

It is true that we criticise many doctors and nurses for doing their literature searches without “any formal competence”: however we cannot really compare this to our teaching without formal competence. Doctors and nurses who are teaching at the universities or nurses’ training colleges also very often do this without having any formal training in adult teaching at all (which is often the reason for complaints from the students!). But hopefully doctors and nurses know something about the background of their PROFESSION - which is knowledge of medicine, treating and nursing the patients etc.

Likewise, hopefully, we as medical librarians know something about the background for our PROFESSION - which among other things is knowledge of information retrieval, evaluation of the information etc.

We think it is essential that those health care professionals become “information literate” and that we

should teach them. As librarians we must try - to get formal competence in teaching adults - to base our teaching on the “best evidence” by keeping abreast of the literature on the topic:

- to evaluate our teaching and change the way we teach accordingly as a never ending process
- to find ways how to evaluate the long-time effect of our teaching (not easy!)
- to do this evaluation in a formal way as a part of research that can be published and shared with our colleagues
- to “spread the message” (about the importance of “information literacy” for life long learning in journals etc. read by our target groups including hospital administrators, politicians etc.)

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Walk & Talk Session 9: Professional Associations: What Should Members Put In And Get Out?

Though we had a very big subject, ours was a very small group: Eve Hollis, Suzanne Bakker, Valerie Ferguson and myself as facilitator. We wandered down to the bay of the fjord on a glorious sunny afternoon and found a table and chairs overlooking the sunbathers and swimmers, interspersed with other Walk & Talk groups.

Our strategy was simple: we would have two headings. *What should a Professional Association Offer* and *What Should a Member Contribute to a Professional Association*. There had been a lot of talk at the EAHIL Council Member Focus Groups regarding this exact subject, so in fact this summary also reflects their views but not necessarily the order of importance.

What Should a Professional Association Offer?

1. Continuing Professional Development: Certification and Accreditation
2. Setting standards of professional competence
3. International lobbying and advocacy on behalf of all members
4. Continuing education - mentoring
5. Expertise and state-of-the-art knowledge through pooling and sharing medical information sources
6. Professional advice & consultancy
7. Moral support on an international level
8. Scholarship & travel grants
9. Linking, cultivating and sponsoring

The first line of attack on our problems then is cooperation. And don't make things too ambitious-make things work among yourselves before you plan on an interplanetary scale *Bishop, BMLA 38 1950 296-311*

What Should a Member Contribute?

1. Sharing of expertise and experience
2. Attend and contribute at conferences and workshops
3. Contribute to the in-house publication
4. Actively recruit new members in one's own country
5. Advocate the importance of one's own professional association
6. Enthusiastic commitment

As a group we can progress. To change the world on your own is only a fantasy: as a group it can be a distinct possibility! Walk & Talk Group 9

Sally Wood-Lamont
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Highlight on... the Oslo Workshop

WALK AND TALK

On the 26th of June 2003, by a warm sunny afternoon, five librarians accepted to walk side by side along the Oslo fjord, sharing opinions and professional experience. It was one of the first «Walk and Talk» sessions organized by EAHIL in the context of its annual meeting.

Different subjects had been submitted for discussion, not all of them attracted the requested minimum number of participants. Two groups were so small they decided to merge and discuss two issues instead of one. These were apparently not related to each other. The first one addressed the question of localization : *The library in the organisational structure : does it matter where it is ?* The second one investigated the possible collaborations between the libraries and the institutional IT departments: *Learning centres, intranets and other projects: how can libraries and IT Departments improve their collaboration?* But soon, the walking ladies realized that both topics could easily be connected due to the central role played nowadays by information technology in a medical library.

As soon as they had introduced themselves, the librarians raised the essential question of funding. Where does the money come from? Among the five represented libraries, none had the same status. The budgets varied a lot, in size and origin, with some libraries funded exclusively either by the university or by the local hospital, the luckiest ones receiving support from both sides. Then the chat moved easily from finances to the sensitive question of rationalization. All around Europe, merging libraries is widely considered by the decision makers as the miracle solution in order to save money. It seems so obvious for those who have not experienced the fundamental importance of human interactions in the difficult process of information seeking. At the question “*Does it matter where it is ?*”, the unanimous answer always is “*Of course, it does !*” We have to maintain proximity services in order to support the busy clinicians, the beginners, the overloaded students and the anxious patients. We must have a place where we can meet easily, a place for listening, paying attention, encountering the users needs. Interactions with the users is essential for us to make decisions and to develop the library collections. And how do we interact ? By talking



Pirjo Rajakiili, Finland, Anna Schlosser, Switzerland, Françoise Pasleau, Belgium, Kari Berg, Norway.

to them on their working sites or in the library, by asking the teachers and the students for advises, by mail surveys and analysis of usage reports.

If proximity services can be maintained, the merging of libraries can be positive since it allows to save time and efforts by centralizing the tedious management tasks and by joining forces. In some cases, however, it brings the new problem of managing a sudden enlarged team. Experiences were shared with again, an unanimous recognition of the importance of human relationships between the library staff. Some directors spend a lot of their time listening to their staff and organizing informal and personal meeting with every member at regular intervals.

The walk ended by discussing another sensitive matter : the possible (impossible?) collaboration with the IT departments. Again, all libraries were different. But they all recognize the need for information technology for administration, for organizing access to all kinds of medical resources and for teaching. The luckiest ones have IT people amongst their staff members. Some others are more or less successful in collaborating with their institutional IT department while the remaining prefer to turn to external consultants. But all have experienced difficulties in interacting with IT technicians, not sufficiently aware of their specific needs or lacking the necessary willingness.

The five ladies felt it was about time for a little rest under the trees in the seringa perfume or for a quick jump in cool water. This very interesting day ended smoothly with a delightful cruise in pure nature and the experience of warm, boundaries crossing friendship.

Françoise Pasleau
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Oslo by Night

SS Johanna, a traditional sailing boat built on the 19th Century took all EAHIL delegates for a trip on the Oslo fjord. Even while we were still in the harbour, we observed the most extreme examples of a *floating economy*: from the luxury P & O liner to a simple floating mobile home. Everywhere we looked there were jetties with every kind of boat.



Tony McSean, Treasurer and Eva Alopaeus, Chair of the Programme Committee

It was obvious that the fjord is the main link to the world and the rest of the world's seas and economies. Nowadays there are also many leisure opportunities on

and around the fjord. *All the natives were very friendly, waving and smiling at us (Quote from Arne)*

The scenery there, as we cruised that evening, was breathtaking, made especially memorable by the wonderful Mediterranean-like weather. After an hour, we anchored and were served, literally, buckets of fresh Norwegian shrimps. I noticed that two kinds of librarians emerged: those who prepared their bread, peeled ALL their shrimps and made appetizing open Scandinavian sandwiches. Others ate their shrimps individually, dipping them in mayonnaise with alternative bites of bread. An opportunity for an anthropological study could be on board!

Around ten o'clock, accompanied by the late setting sun, we returned to Oslo harbour where many continued the Oslo-by-night experience by strolling around the Aker Brygge.

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** Ian Mowat Memorial Fund Bursaries **

The Ian Mowat Memorial Fund was established to commemorate Ian Mowat (1946-2002), Librarian to the University of Edinburgh. Ian had a keen interest in the development of libraries and librarianship across the world, especially in Eastern Europe. He also had a deep commitment to career development for librarians.

The Fund now has two bursaries to offer library staff from Eastern Europe to develop their careers, through a two week placement at Edinburgh University Library during the autumn of 2003. The placements are not salaried, but the Fund will cover all travel, accommodation and living expenses.

Applications are invited from Eastern European librarians who are already working and who wish to develop their careers through experiencing library work in the UK. Applicants should submit a supporting statement and CV in English, with the names of two referees. The Board of the Ian Mowat Memorial Fund will select the successful applicants. The Board decision will be final.

The placement programmes for the two successful candidates will be based on their supporting statements. To find out more about Edinburgh University Library please visit our web site, Library Online, at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/>

Applications should be submitted to Sheila Gove, Secretary to the Acting Librarian, Edinburgh University Library, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LJ, Scotland, UK. Closing date for applications is August 15th.





Design - Visual Information Provision: the Case of Usability of Library Websites. Part 2 - Resources

Libraries are complicated products - like computers. Though computers are ubiquitous they still have not become mass products like coffee machines or vacuum cleaners. The key to a tool becoming a mass product is that its usage is self evident. You do not deal with the product itself - you simply use it for the

I spend a minimum of three hours in front of a computer and have done so for many years, and I still find it very frustrating at times. ... Why do computers ... have to be so needlessly complicated? ...
N.Negroponte

purpose intended. There is no need of special instruction - 80-90% of people will understand it. However PCs are not self evident: PCs are information machines and information as a meta-object is not easy to visualize. The art of making products mass-able is design. *In the end design matters because it determines weather a tool will ever get used* (A.Head, 1999).

And what about libraries? Though they talk all the time about their users, their limited budgets and the problems of being recognized in their societies... they are highly explainable systems! So they are not mass products with all the consequences. And libraries on computers - on the web...? One reason for this difficult situation could be that librarians only manage and store their holdings and do not read their books or at least the wrong ones. Interestingly the most important sources to get a solid idea on design and usability and its foundations are printed in books rather than online for interesting reasons worth considering.

Online you may find a wealth of condensed tips and summaries but the most important test on usability is **in print**.

Between the design issue and its specialty usability, there is another very important issue: this is the so-called human-computer-interaction (HCI) that is heavily based on thoughts of human cognitive functions and abilities.

So when looking on the issue of usability the major terms to use in our magician terminology might be: design / human-computer-interaction or interface / cognit\$ / visualization / usability or ergonom\$ / - in conjunction with the tools, protocols, mediums and devices of interest or intended to enhance. Moreover, the resources on the issue of web-usability on which this column is naturally focused may be separated into two specialities or subjects.

One is dedicated to the path sketched above and is a bit more dedicated to people's understanding of design as a visual/graphical issue. But there is a second highly important issue that deals with the production and creating of text within this environment. While the flood of gifs and jpps put a high burden on the capacity of our phone lines, the web is still and overall a textual-system. So the text-design and usability issue is this second section of resources to deal with. There is a small but recognized group of core- webbers and net purists that see the focus and highest potentials for the web mainly in the textual field.

Resources:

In whatever stage of awareness you are, it is still worthwhile for library webmasters to get at least a little knowledge on the Vannevar Bush's Memex published in the Atlantic monthly in 1945 and the man who implemented first some of these ideas and inventor of the mouse-device, Dr.Douglas Engelbart. Vannevar Bush in: *The Atlantic Monthly*; July, 1945; *As We May Think*; Volume 176, No. 1; pgs 101-108 <http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/flashbks/computer/bushf.htm>

On Douglas Engelbart see under <http://www.bootstrap.org/engelbart/index.jsp>; <http://kk.engr.ucsb.edu/culler/engelbart.html> It is also good, but not essential to know about Marshall MacLuhan. It might be more valuable to know about Ted Nelsons who in my humble opinion is not only the creator of the term hypertext but also the hype of ideas of the net: <http://www.invisiblerevolution.net> and <http://ted.hyperland.com>

Highly recommendable are the texts of Jef Raskin the coordinator of the Apple MacIntosh Interface Project. In his text on the intelligent interface he shows very animatedly, the problems in the mentioned field of human computer interaction and demonstrates the issues to answer when developing interfaces to solve information oriented tasks including how people in general approach these using their cognitive capabilities.

Jef Raskin: *The Humane Interface: New Directions for Designing Interactive Systems*

Publisher: Addison-Wesley Pub Co; 1st edition (March 29, 2000) ISBN: 0201379376
(German Translation: *Das intelligente Interface. Neue Ansätze für die Entwicklung intelligenter Benutzerschnittstellen*. Addison-Wesley 2001 ISBN:3-8273-1796-7

The most cited person today in the field of web usability is Jacob Nielsen who introduced the usability issues at Sun Microsystems. Though he has introduced a wealth of interesting methods and approaches and is a recommended source for all aspects of usability, I'd like to recommend his account on hypertext and Internet which gives a solid overview on the development of hypertext and hypertext-systems and includes a rich and valuable commented bibliography on the whole issue of hypertext foundations development. In my humble opinion the ponderosity of his *Success of Simplicity* has nothing to do with simplicity: *Multimedia and Hypertext: The Internet and Beyond* Academic Press; Reprint edition (February 1995) ISBN: 0125184085 (German Translation: *Multimedia, Hypertext und Internet. Grundlagen und Praxis des elektronischen Publizierens*. Vieweg 1996 ISBN: 3-528-05525-1)

Also another interesting book by Jacob Nielsen: *Designing Web Usability : The Practice of Simplicity* Publisher: New Riders Publishing; 1st edition 1999. 432 p. ISBN 156205810X

Finally, Jakob Nielsen offers a free alert box for tips on usability regularly emailed direct to you
Subscription and archive may be found under <http://www.useit.com/alertbox>

There you may find the shortened versions or if you are interested in delving deeper into an issue you are offered a lengthy report at a small charge: www.nngroup.com/reports

There are two smaller volumes worthy of reading in order to tackle the issue of usability through simplicity. Allison Heads' *Design Wise - A guide for evaluating the interface design of information resources*. Information Today 0-910965-31-5 196 p. is written from the point of an information manager to an information management audience. She gives a well written and task oriented approach to the issue of design of information offers, featuring also many well-known names.

The Book of Steve Krug has become widely known through its outstanding title. His *Common Sense Approach to Web Usability* shows the paths to and hidden trip stones to websites fulfilling his proclamation *don't make me think*. New Riders 2000. 195 p. I would also recommend: Jonathan and Lisa Price: *Hot text - web writing that works* New Riders 2002 ISBN 0-7357-1151-8 506 p

Finally I would like to point interested people to a book where my personal opinion is split but it does shed an interesting light on the discussed issue: Steven Johnson:- *Interface Culture: How New Technology Transforms the Way We Create and Communicate*. Basic Books; (October 6, 1999) ISBN: 0465036805 264 p. German Translation: Klett Cotta 1999. ISBN: 3-608-91980-5. 288 p.)

We should not forget that in every language there are well-documented sources for usability or ergonomics

France: <http://www.stcsig.org/usability/resources/resources-french.html>

Italy <http://www.hyperlabs.net/ergonomia> and <http://www.askandfind.it/ergonomia.html>

Spanish: <http://www.ergonomia.cl>

AND there is also a set of standards dealing with these issues: DIN ISO 13407 *User oriented design of interactive system*.
<http://www.iso.ch/iso/en/CatalogueDetailPage>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar containing <http://www.nngroup.com/reports/sitemaps/>. The page header features the NN/g logo and the text 'Nielsen Norman Group' and 'Strategies to enhance the user experience'. A navigation menu includes 'Home', 'People', 'Services', 'Publications', 'Events', and 'About NN/g'. The main content area displays a report titled 'Site Map Usability: 28 design guidelines based on usability studies with 105 pages PDF format'. Below the title, it says 'Download your copy of the report right now (from eSellerate): Single-user license: \$56 Site license: \$126 (allows you to make unlimited copies within your company)'. A note at the bottom states 'No shipping/handling fees will be added: it's a download.'

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