California Digital Libraries Discussion Group

Trends in digital libraries and scholarly communication
among European Academic Research Libraries

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1. Introduction

It is certainly a hard to try and summarize trends and new projects in the European context: some help comes from my new job as head of the Bologna University digital library project, which enabled me to be attend many events last year, and this made me more aware of the great changes underway.
The roots of change date back to the end of the last millennium, and required hard work, passion and good cooperation: and, from the beginning, the evolution of digital libraries, the innovation in e-publishing and the success of the OAI would not have been possible without a strong global cooperation without any distinction between American and European contributions.

2. Trends

As results of the joints efforts of national and European learned societies, libraries and librarians, researchers, initiatives like SPARC, research institutions, universities and governments, by the end of the 2003 year unprecedented events unfolded:
-   the British Parliament set up an inquiry into science journals licences by the Science and Technology Committee in order to examine current trends in e-publishing, mainly prices and conditions for a more open access to knowledge[1];
-   the Publisher ALPSP declares publicly to be in favour of different economic models for open access to scientific information[2];
-   open access journals increased in number, quality and readers, as documented by the Lund University directory [3];

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[1] http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/science_and_technology_committee/scitech111203a.cfm

[2] http://www.alpsp.org/news/openaccpositionstatementoct03.pdf

[3] www.doaj.org

- many European Universities started a large number of projects dealing with digitisation, institutional repositories and support disciplinary open archives
- through the 5th and the 6th Framework Programmes the European Community funded projects to enhance the quality e-content made available in European countries;
- even in Europe, there are very poor countries that will be helped by the HINARI Project (group 1: Albania and the Ukraine; group 2: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia)
- the October 2003 Berlin Conference launched the Declaration which matched the Sciences and the Humanities toward open access to knowledge.

Changes are more evident in some countries and slower in others, but remarkably a very strong initiative has been undertaken by SPARC Europe, by the Open Archives Forum to allow all institutions to participate in new projects.

The awareness has spread not only among the traditional librarians conferences and associations, but also among a larger and heterogeneous group of scientists, researchers, information professionals, university managers…

We have witnessed rough discussions opposing commercial publishers and Open Archives leaders; we have heard an important representative of a learned societies' publisher like Sally Morris acknowledge that the learned societies may decide to reduce profit from their journals to improve their circulation. Even in Italy where the funding choices of the current government have greatly cut Universities budgets, some of them have invested in digital libraries projects and invested relevant funds for innovation and new services.

Therefore, the most important trends are:
- large and increasing diffusion and number of open access journals (now more than listed in www.doaj.org);
- stakeholders' deeper awareness about the importance of open access to knowledge, both in the humanities and science domains
- more institutional and disciplinary Open Archives, and more content in them[4]
- new open attitudes about open access business model by some publishers
- larger national and institutional investments in digitisation projects.

3. A long list of conferences and meetings…

Before talking about what happened in 2003, I would like to recall that the Budapest Manifesto[5] was drafted in Europe and also one of the most important open source tools for self archiving: eprints software - was developed in Southampton. I would also like to mention the OAI Workshops organised by the CERN Library in Geneva – some truly and essential meetings for the latest developments on Open Archives.

I am not going to quote all meetings – impossible ! – nor just the ones I went to. But it is relevant to understand that during the past year in Europe a large number of people met not only to talk about projects but also to say: "we have made our choices and we wish to move in this direction".

In January 2003 the CNRS and the French Ministry for the Research and the New Technology organized the lively conference "Libre accès à l'information scientifique et technique"[6], where many

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[4] Along the eprints directory (http://software.eprints.org/archives.php) there are 48 eprints archives in the following European countries: Belgium (1), Croatia (1), France (7), Germany (5), Hungaria (3) , Ireland (2), Italy (8), Portugal (1), Slovenia (1), Sweden (4), UK (15).
[5] http://www.soros.org/openaccess/
[6] http://www.inist.fr/oa/spip/sem2003.html: this site contains the live records of the speeches not just the papers

participants from Europe (and also US and Canada) gave their contribution to a very frank discussion about the hot themes like new economic models for journals and intellectual propriety.

At the end of March in Berlin the OA Forum organized a Workshop[7] devoted to Multimedia Networked Resources, where tutorials where provided and an important overview of Open Archives Multimedia projects under way was offered .

On the 20th of May the CILEA consortium organised a meeting in Milan to launch its project AEPIC (Academic Electronic Publishing Infrastructures – CILEA) devoted to Universities.

At the end of May the international research centre in Trieste called SISSA gathered a small number of speakers of excellence to discuss Open Archives and Peer Review[8]. I had the opportunity to attend (the workshop was reserved for internal young researchers and therefore there where no more than 20 participants) and witness the relevant innovation in the authors' behaviour since the stable availability - in physics- of the Open Archive Arχiv.

In June 2003 the LIBER Conference was held in Rome where Sally Morris offered very interesting information on the author and publisher questionnaires, and the first glimpses of a new attitude toward different economic models for scholar journals became apparent (in the corridors Frederic Friend confessed the "very hard and collective work" done by SPARC Europe to reach success !).

Unfortunately most of the IFLA World Conference (Berlin, August) did not concern our topic, but much more the European Conference of Digital Libraries (Trondheim, August)[9] not only in terms of the scientific contents of papers and poster session, but also thanks to the panel discussions and round tables, where, once again SPARC Europe and Elsevier argued in elegant way. Some distinguished speakers challenged on the topic " Digital ? Libraries ? all these question-marks"[10]; and other very expert speakers discussed about metadata and how much they are worth: the concluding remark of this panel: metadata are too long and too expensive but what are the alternatives.
I am going to close this list with the very important Berlin conference "Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities"[11]: the participation of many scientists and researchers, not just librarians and publishers, produced a joint declaration that is a big step forward for cooperation in an open access frame.

   4.The European Community choices and projects

This paper would not be complete without a short insight into the EC role in funding projects. Since the 5th Framework Programme the EC focus has quite changed. During 2002-2003 years many relevant projects for the digital libraries (and digitisation projects) where funded: just to cite some of them, DELOS, ERPANET, EULER, FIGARO, LIBECOM, D-LIB Center[12], CULTIVATE…

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[7] http://www.oaforum.org/workshops/berl_invitation.php

[8]The programme and some speakers' ppt presentations (in English) at http://www.sissa.it/~marco/ws.html. My report (sorry ! In Italian) in: http://eprints.rclis.org/archive/00000236/01/sissa.pdf

[9] http://www.ecdl2003.org/

[11] http://www.zim.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/

[12] http://opendlib.iei.pi.cnr.it/home.html

By the end of 2003 the results of the survey " Indicators for European digital content for the global networks"[13] were seriously taken in account and by consequence the Commission goal has been to finance mainly the projects based on joint venture commercial-public organizations, and oriented to original European econtent production. For instance, the important proposal of the DML-EU – a European digital library for mathematics – has been rejected and not funded. The official list of the 6th Framework Programme it is not still available, but the choices are already quite clear.

Very relevant in the European area are the following projects:
- GALLICA, which is financed by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France
- NUMDAM, financed by the French CNRS about old mathematics manuscripts digitisation
- SCHOLNET, which is a truly European project financed by ERCIM and INRIA (France), GMD (Germany), FORTH (Greece), SICS (Sweden), CNR (Italy) and University of Masaryk (Czhech Republik) about a multimedial infrastructure for digital libraries
- DIEPER, financed by the European Community and based in Gottingen, for periodicals digitisation (ended in 2001: but the Gottingen Center has launched other projects).

The most important project for digital libraries in Europe at the moment is **MINERVA**, related to methodological and management contents:
- benchmarking/guidelines/best practice
- digitised contents directories
- common/multilingual platforms

6. Italy: circumstances, projects and some remarks

Finally, I wish to speak about some aspects of the Italian situation, in which I am very deeply involved.

Despite the lack of funding and overall attention by the present government to the research and cultural projects, a lot of work has been done compared to some other countries of the southern Europe:
- first of all, the Library and Information Profession Eprints Server, E-LIS, which is the result of an international collaboration is based in Italy; E-LIS is managed by an Italian colleague, Antonella De Robbio, to whom I am very grateful to for her help and collaboration, also for this paper. This Server was opened two years ago and has collected more than 300 papers from all over the world
- the Italian Government – that is the Ministry for the Cultural Heritage – participates to the MINERVA Project funded by the 5th Framework Programme at EC level and by the national governments; Italy is funding the digitisation of ancient manuscripts and books of music, and now periodicals published before the 1861.
- the CILEA Consortium and Computer Center has launched the AEPIC Project[14] for e-publishing, institutional repositories and archiving services for teaching materials
- in Italy SISSA and Udine University participate in the TORII project[15] (with the City University of London, the Université Joseph Fourier of Grenoble, CERN – Geneva and IOP – Bristol UK) for personalization and social filtering of information by researchers.
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The situation is very difficult in Universities because of the Ministry of Education's policy: since the present government came into office no more funds have been given to the Public Universities

[13] http://www.cordis.lu/econtent/studies/stud_mobile.htm
[14] cfr. the english version of the CILEA Open Archivi Platform:
http://eprints.rclis.org/archive/00000518/01/OA_platform_project_plan_eng_1_3.pdf
[15] http://torii.sissa.it/torii/AuthenticateUser/VerifyFirstAccess.jsp?pageToLoad=/index.jsp

– the majority of all Universities – to employ new administrative and academic staff, and researchers: this decision applies to all the Public Sector and Public Institutions, and there have been cuts to research funding as well. The only available funding has been spent on new tools and infrastructure for Academic teaching. Academic Libraries therefore suffer from budgets cuts and qualified human resources.

In this context it has been very difficult to get funds for digital libraries projects; most of the budget is more oriented to digitisation projects (in collaboration with the MINERVA projects) than to purpose built born digital libraries projects (epublishing, open archives, etc.).

To some extent the Bologna University is an exception because the Digital Library Project, called ALMA DL, which was started in 2001, has been funded for the years 2003-2004 with 800,000 euros. The Alma DL project is quite large because includes not only the eprints archives implementation (3 archives), a large digitisation project, services for Academic community (Information Literacy courses and tutorials, a collaborative Digital Reference service at town of Bologna level) but also all the network, hardware and backup infrastructure for permanent archiving and storage. At present all parts of the project have been started and some of them are near to completion - June 2004.

There are few other Universities supporting Open Archives Projects: the University of Trento (eprints), the University of Padua (eprints), the University of Parma (dspace) and the University of Triest for theses and dissertations (dspace).

As I know the Italian situation better than the overall European context, I wish to conclude this short review with some remarks about the current trends in this country.

In Italy there is a great emphasis on the digitisation projects, investments on collection development (e-journal licenses, acquisitions of books and databases) and on traditional library technologies (i.e. automated library systems). In my opinion little has been done in these past years about services for users, academic e-publishing and active-interactive communication services in the digital context (i.e. digital reference). This lack of attention to communication – and a major focus on technology – may keep the library world separate and not allowing it to integrate with the new and crucial interactive and collaborative academic functions like new research and e-learning. To serve the academic community it is not only necessary offer good catalogues, web sites and full text journals, but also to be able to listen and dialogue with the Researchers and the Professors, and be active partners in the new ventures of the Academic and Research community.