

An IFLA Management & Marketing Section Project: The *MatPromo* Database

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Abstract

The *MatPromo* database was created in October 2002 as a project of IFLA's Management & Marketing Section. The objective of the project consists of creating a database of images of objects and documents designed for promoting all kinds of libraries in any country. The images are described and are accessible through a user-friendly interface for searching internationally.

The aim of the database is to facilitate ideas for promotional campaigns of library services. The database is hosted on the project server of the University of Barcelona's Department of Library and Information Science (<http://bidoc.ub.es/pub/matpromo>) and a link to it is made available from the web of IFLA's Management & Marketing Section (<http://www.ifla.org/VII/s34/>). This article attempts to introduce *MatPromo* and explain its technical characteristics, content, and usefulness for librarians around the world.

Introduction

MatPromo is the name given to the online image database of library promotional materials that is currently being developed as a project of IFLA's Management & Marketing Section, agreed upon at the meeting of the Governing Board held in Glasgow in August 2002.¹ The immediate objective was to collect and describe images of objects of all types used by libraries of all types from any country in their promotional and dissemination activities, whether campaigns or isolated activities. The database offers a user-friendly interface for internationally based searches. The ultimate aim was to help librarians with ideas for promoting their centres and services, in keeping with one of the Section's objectives: to provide support for professionals in carrying out their management and marketing activities. Another aim was to increase the usefulness of the Section's web page and, at the same time, the number of visitors to it. It is worth remembering that the promotion of libraries, as an aspect of marketing, also contributes to disseminating their image and, therefore, to gaining social and financial support.

1. Design of the *MatPromo* project within the framework of IFLA

Over the years, through publications, seminars and awards such as the “IFLA/3M International Marketing Award”,² IFLA’s Management & Marketing Section has contributed to library development by stimulating the use of organisational techniques in libraries. In August 2002,³ during a satellite meeting conducted in Glasgow, several brainstorming sessions were held to come up with ideas to encourage marketing initiatives within the participants’ organisations. One of the groups addressed the Management & Marketing Section itself and, among other proposals, suggested that more content be added to the web page to aid librarians around the world in management and marketing activities. Such an effort would also result in a greater number of visits to this web site.

Among the proposals was one for the creation of a database to gather and describe images of objects created by libraries for promotional purposes. Promotional initiatives generate much ephemeral material that is easily lost or else it is not well known and, therefore, little advantage is taken of it. Therefore, it was felt that it would be of value to gather images of promotional objects used in all types of libraries, anywhere in the world, and to structure this material so as to make it available through IFLA’s web site to librarians around the world.

The idea was very well received by all the participants and, in particular, by the members of the Section’s Standing Committee who suggested that it be proposed as a project to IFLA’s management in the subsequent congress to be held later in the month. The outline of the project incorporated elements previously worked on under the Spanish project, Observatorio de la Imagen de las Bibliotecas (OIB),⁴ [Observatory of the Image of Libraries], as well as adopting this project’s collection of promotional images and draft database design.

From the start the still-unnamed project, as presented to IFLA, had the overall aim of creating and maintaining a database of images of library marketing and promotional tools of any type and from anywhere. Such a database would be made available to all visitors to the Management & Marketing Section’s web page.

As such, various specific objectives were pursued:

- First of all, the intention was to make available a broad series of images of items used internationally for:
 - promotional campaigns for centres or networks as well as those aimed at attitudes and behaviour within centres (posters, bookmarks, postcards, etc.);
 - tools for the library’s corporate communication and image (logos, membership cards, flyers, claim notes, etc.);
 - the full range of library merchandising objects;
 - images of libraries and books (book metamorphosis, etc.)
- Secondly, the idea was to structure these images in accordance with their characteristics, to describe them according to previously defined

parameters, and to create a search strategy through fields that would help librarians in retrieving the images and also with descriptions of them.

- Thirdly, it was felt that the web should provide librarians with a “how-to-do-it” on creating promotional materials. This tool was envisioned as a theoretic complement to the practical focus of the database.
- Finally, and in addition to the obvious utility that the database would offer to anyone interested in promoting their library, another aim was to increase the number of visits to the Section’s web page, and thus raise its profile and present it to an ever- expanding community.

In order to carry out the project we settled on the following steps:

1. Redesign the aforementioned database prepared for the OIB project and adapt it to an international context. Once accomplished, all content from the database’s fields should be translated into English, chosen as the official language of the project given the financing from IFLA and the need for international exploitation.
2. Classify the existing materials and digitise those that were not already in digital format: again we found many Spanish objects already digitised by Gómez-Hernández and Saorín (2001), as well as a significant batch of images of logos and membership cards that were to be incorporated into the project.
3. Load the images into the database and prepare as complete a description as possible in each case, considering that depending on the country and the languages used, some data might be missing.
4. Clarify possible copyright problems that could prevent exhibiting some of the material on IFLA’s web site.
5. Mount the database onto the web. IFLA accepted the proposal for the database to be housed on the project server of the Department of Library and Information Science of the University of Barcelona. At the same time a link would be made from the web page of the Management & Marketing Section.
6. Prepare a brief help guide in English on how to prepare library promotional material.
7. Load the guide onto the web after review by several experts.

At the same time this ambitious project entailed a series of other tasks that needed to be undertaken, for which funding was requested from IFLA. The budget was calculated in such a way as to reserve an important part of the funds for designing and adapting the database, and another part for the digitisation of the documents (undertaken in-house for the smaller sized material and by an image digitisation company for large formats). The total amount requested was 4,000 €.

It was agreed that once financed, the project would begin at the earliest in January. The timeframe foreseen was:

- Pilot phase:
 - 1st report on the organisation and start of work in the Section's winter meeting (Barcelona, February 2003),
 - 2nd report and pilot search in the database with approximately 300 images during the annual IFLA congress in Berlin (August 2003)
- Project completion and transfer of the database to IFLA:
 - 3rd report on the state of the loading procedure and open searching of the database during the Section's winter meeting (Budapest, March 2004),
 - Final report on the transfer and, if technically feasible, the loading of images onto IFLANet during IFLA's annual congress in Buenos Aires (August 2004).

In August 2002, IFLA's Board awarded 1,600 € for the project. Subsequently, the number of items to be digitised had to be reduced to a quarter of the originally projected amount. The funding was not obtained until well into 2003 which caused the digitisation of large format images to be reduced even further, since the cost of the service company was somewhat more expensive than at first calculated. Therefore, at present, we now have a fully developed and operational database, but with only 80 records loaded to date.

3. Project development

The project team was made up of:

- Àngels Massísimo, of the University of Barcelona (member of the Section's Standing Committee), as project co-ordinator;
- Marielle de Miribel, of the University Paris-X (member of the Section's Standing Committee);
- José Antonio Gómez-Hernández, of the University of Murcia (Spain) and ANABAD Murcia; and
- Tomás Saorín, at that time the librarian and webmaster at the Regional Library of Murcia (Spain), Department of Culture.

It was agreed, in principle, to co-ordinate the project from Barcelona and implement it in the project server of the Library and Information Science Department of the University of Barcelona. Àngels Massísimo, as co-ordinator, began by obtaining the needed support from the Department and gathering new collaborators to contribute technological know-how to the project's progress. Two professors from the Department —Jorge Franganillo and Josep-Manuel Rodríguez-Gairín— joined with the initial team, together with Sergi Chávez, a student from the same Department who assisted in database maintenance tasks. These participants took charge of the design and maintenance of the database, the design of the web and search interface and technical assistance, respectively. With

the team formed, Àngels Massísimo took on the responsibility for redesigning the database —adapting the content of the fields for the new international focus and the subsequent translation into English. Once this work was completed through collaboration between the groups in Barcelona and Murcia, the efforts centred on the selection, description and comments of the images that were loaded into the database. José Antonio Gómez-Hernández and Tomás Saorín contributed some 300 previously digitised images from Spain, with their relevant descriptions. Àngels Massísimo has now taken charge of the final selection of images to be introduced and of the description of the new images. Throughout the project, the timing of the foreseen phases has been met without delay.

4. Content of the database

The promotional materials digitised in *MatPromo* consist of a heterogeneous mix of images: posters, bags, pins, fans, coasters, cups, T-shirts and other objects. The criteria followed for including material reflects the dissemination efforts that were carried out internationally. As such, at present the database contains promotional objects coming from Spain, Great Britain, United States, South Africa, etc. There also is a great amount of Spanish material digitised, but not yet loaded, in order to maintain the international balance in the database contents.

The database will receive more contributions and will be increasingly enriched with material from many other countries. To this end there will be campaigns for collecting material via *IFLA Express* during IFLA's annual congress. The database interface also offers the possibility to load your images onto. It is hoped that these efforts will attract new objects to the database, whose content will evolve into a representative sampling of the large universe of library promotional materials, which can be adapted, free of border constraints, to different realities. The aim is to generate ideas for promoting libraries and their services, as well as to lead to increased library use as a result of these promotional activities.

The interest in the *MatPromo* project will undoubtedly persist for a long time. In fact, its objectives —both general and specific— are still valid, as recognised during the meeting of IFLA's Management and Marketing Section held in Budapest (February 2004), as well as by the executive secretariat of IFLA.

One valid criticism, recognised by the team, is the fact that the project is limited to a very specific area and there is a need, perhaps, to broaden the scope to include other types of content.

5. Features of the database

The *MatPromo* database is implemented in PHP and MySQL. This combination was chosen because:

1. PHP is a free programming language and MySQL is a database management system available under a GPL license (that is, free for non-profit applications) and thus there was no direct charge for the implementation.

2. The two components are current models and, as such, there is a broad repertory of resources for developing applications (free documentation, free scripts, etc.).

3. PHP and MySQL are models conceived for one another and thus have specific functions for reciprocal communication.

The database is structured on a record model that contains 17 fields, whose 15 are searchable: Title, Campaign, Slogan(s), Subject, Role, Date, Institution, Scope, Place, Summary description, Graphic description, Type of document, Physical description, Spread, File, and two internal fields that are not searchable. These latter fields serve for managing the thumbnails that are used as previews on the result page. Administrative tasks are handled through *phpMyAdmin*, a tool that allows the data and structure to be maintained through a navigator.

The basic principles of graphic design were applied to the layout of the *MatPromo* and it thus offers an organised, user-friendly, and functional interface. The visible spaces is organised into separate blocks, with uniform controls that help the user find the information needed and understand the functional conceptual model of *MatPromo*. In order to facilitate the activation of common actions, frequently used controls such as menus, search forms and navigational buttons are readily visible and easy to use. The information is distributed consistently and predictably in specific, uniform screen models so that the user can quickly locate the controls and information, independently of the context.

In order to speed up image downloads, the interface design economises on elements that do not contain relevant information and uses colour as a supplement for weighted information and for highlighting what is most significant. Since the screen is limited, as is the user's ability to grasp visual information, the economy of the design extends to other elements of the web. (*Google's* great popularity is owed, in part, to this concept of functional simplicity.) *MatPromo's* design leaves out superfluous elements, does not overload the page, and seeks eloquence through simplicity, thus following the accepted wisdom that the best interface is the one that remains unnoticeable.

In order for information contained in *MatPromo* to be easily retrieved, intuitive navigation tools are provided: a tabbed menu allows access to sections of the web as described below:

The Simple search offers 2 modes through different search forms. The first, Field search, allows searching on any of 15 searchable fields as the access point. As an aid for locating key words, this form has an Index function that facilitates the insertion of search terms into the selected field, from an inverted index appearing in a pop-up window. The second mode, Keyword search, can efficiently execute global searches: without the need to specify search fields, the system recovers the

records that contain the term introduced in any of the 14 searchable fields (except for the Date field). In both search modes, the user can sort the results, either by date or alphabetically.

The Advanced search offers a form for searching by a Field search, with the added possibility of Boolean combinations and results limited according to place (local, provincial, regional, national or international) or document type (object, poster, pin...).

Finally, the Contact page invites the user to communicate with the *MatPromo* team for contributing comments or suggestions, as well as for reporting any errors found. It also admits help requests on how to use the database. Communication between the user and *MatPromo* is not limited to issues regarding searching, but also includes instructions on how to contribute new items to the database through a tool available in the “Contribute” section. This feature allows librarians to add new material, with an appropriate description, through an assisted form.

References

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¹ IFLA. Management & Marketing Section. *Newsletter* 12, February 2003. <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s34/pubs/feb-03.pdf>. [Consulted: 26 August 2004].

² This international prize, awarded this year for the third time, attempts to highlight the best marketing activities from all types of libraries in any country, regardless of budget.

³ IFLA. Management & Marketing Section. *Newsletter* 12 (February 2003), p. 4. <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s34/pubs/feb-03.pdf>. [Consulted: 17 October 2004].

⁴ The “Observatorio de la Imagen de las Bibliotecas” was a project presented by 2 professors —Dr. José Antonio Gómez-Hernández and Dr. Tomás Saorín— of the University of Murcia to the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture with the aim of gathering and describing images of promotional objects from Spanish libraries. Some of the images that served for the initial project were published in the book, *La información y las bibliotecas en la cultura de masas* (GÓMEZ-HERNÁNDEZ and SAORÍN, 2001).