

World Library Summit (24 – 26 April 2002 : Singapore)

Introduction

The National Library Board of Singapore together with the Ministry of Information, Communication and Arts, Singapore hosted the first World Library Summit from 24 to 26 April 2002 at Suntec City. There were two concurrent pre-conference seminars:- (i) Seminar on new millenium librarianship and information security which covered map collection management, design libraries, art databases, visual gateways to art, biometrics, information ethics, and network monitoring activities; and (ii) Seminar on academic libraries which dealt with the changing role of academic libraries, multilibrary catalogues, electronic database searching, and mobile services with several product presentations, such as Metalib, and ISI's Web of Knowledge.

The conference proper was attended by about 1000 information and knowledge related professionals from 19 countries. Forty papers were presented on the theme "Global knowledge renaissance". In line with this theme, the papers presented focused on three main concepts - knowledge augmentation, people connectivity & cultural entrepreneurship; and knowledge governance and collaboration

Overview of papers

The first keynote address was by Dr Douglas Carl Englebart, the director of Bootstrap Institute and Bootstrap Alliance and a well-known American inventor who pioneered several innovations in computers systems, such as the mouse, teleconferencing and hypermedia. Speaking on knowledge augmentation for the 21st century, he spoke on how the rate of technological innovation "has augmented basic human abilities, opened possibilities but has also threatened to tear [apart] our social fabric." In his paper "Improving our ability to improve", he proposed "investment in an improvement infrastructure that can result in sustained, radical innovation capable of changing computing and expanding the kinds of problems that we can address through computing".

The second keynote address was by Dr Charles F. Goldfarb, the 'father of markup languages', having invented the SGML language in 1974. In his presentation "Markup languages and knowledge retention", Dr. Goldfarb spoke on how, due to markup languages such as XML, we are

able to "computerise the capture of documents in rendered form, using a word processor that promises that what you see on the computer screen is exactly what you'll get on the printed page and we can automate card catalogues, but still can do little to interconnect the objects they describe. Even the World Wide Web's hyperlinking is of limited utility because it, too, is based on rendered objects - web pages - rather than on the ideas they contain."

Papers for the first plenary session on "New knowledge societies", were by the following:

- Dr. Lynne Brindley, chief executive of the British Library, who in a paper entitled "The application of knowledge and the evolution of society : the emerging role of the library in the knowledge society", first outlined the characteristics of the knowledge society and then detailed the United Kingdom's position on Internet connectivity and access. She then outlined the British Library's activities in repositioning the Library's role in support of research, education and lifelong learning, the knowledge economy, community development, development of information skills, citizenship and literacy and preserving cultural and intellectual heritage.
- Dr. Regan Moore from the San Diego Supercomputer Centre who examined "the levels of abstraction that are needed to create infrastructure independent representations for data, information, and knowledge," and outlined "a prototype of a persistent digital archive."
- Mr. Robert Cullen, president and chief executive officer of Thomson Learning International spoke on the position of libraries in the electronic world.

In the second plenary session on "Constructing National Knowledge Agendas", the speakers were the following:

- Dagmar Schmidmaier, State Librarian & Chief Executive, State Library of New South Wales outlined knowledge management (KM) initiatives at the State Library of New South Wales, Australia, such as the launch of a

quality improvement program in 1998 aimed at "extending their reach to new clients, to identify the best way to do things and to ensure resources were allocated to priority areas; and the 10-year plan, *Project 2001-2010* to highlight the value and contribution of the State Library in order to obtain support. To the speaker, knowledge management should be "part of a leadership agenda" and her paper explored this "through the concepts of vision, influence and passion".

- Renate Gömpel, Head, Office for Library Standards, Die Deutsche Bibliothek,, Germany spoke of the various activities to develop Germany as a knowledge nation. These were undertaken by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research, such as the BundOnline 2005 , Europe's largest e-government program and Die Deutsche Bibliothek (DDB), which, in its efforts to promote international cooperation, recently launched a project to link the name authority files of DDB and the Library of Congress

- Professor Ron Summers, Head of the Department of Information Science, Loughborough University, in his paper "Knowledge architecture developments in UK", spoke on the role of classification, thesauri, metadata and ontologies in recent developments in knowledge architecture and the use of XML as a core technology used by information professionals to add value and "thereby increase their worth in the knowledge creation supply chain."

The second sub-theme "People connectivity and cultural entrepreneurship" was delved into on the second day. Mr. Benson Puah, the chief executive officer of The Esplanade (Singapore's latest performing arts complex and library and information center), gave the keynote address on "People connectivity and cultural entrepreneurship in an era of convergence".

Following this keynote address, presentations for the plenary session on "Knowledge convergences" were made by the following:

- Mr. Lim Siam Kim, the chief executive officer of the National Heritage Board, Singapore, in his paper "Convergence of libraries, museum, archives and the arts" spoke of "Singapore's experience in transforming its public libraries from a traditional book lending facility into a world-class learning environment."

- Dr. Christopher Chia, Chief Executive, National Library Board, Singapore, spoke on the need for governments and libraries to collaborate in order to get its citizenry involved in knowledge exchange and creation. He shared Singapore's evolution of e-government and its role in the national knowledge agenda.

- Mr. Mark Garlinghouse, Director of Asian Sales, ISI Thomson Scientific, reviewed the explosion of research publication in the life sciences and the importance of access to this information in the research infrastructure.

- Dr. Dinesh K. Gupta, Associate Professor & Head, Department of Library & Information Science, Kota Open University was of the view that "the convergence between education and libraries as supported by technologies can impact significantly on the need for access and equity, cost-effectiveness and efficient systems of delivery of information and services".

There were parallel sessions in the afternoon on two broad fronts - social and intellectual agenda; and the learning agenda. Under the social and intellectual agenda, "the role of national libraries as preservers and promoters- and where necessary as rebuilders - of the norms which support universal human civilization" was explored by Mr. Christopher Nailer, Director, Advisory Services & Regional Economist, The Economist. Mr. R. Ramachandran, Deputy Chief Executive, National Library Board, Singapore, in his paper "Library as a Social and Intellectual Capital in the Knowledge Society", opined that based on KMCI Knowledge Life-Cycle (Knowledge Management Consortium International) methodology, libraries are "initiators and triggers of social and intellectual innovation, thereby creating market value beyond its social and education benefit". He also proposed the possible role libraries could play in developing the society's learning environment and knowledge infrastructure. Using examples from social audits, Professor Bob Usherwood, Professor of Librarianship, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield, described how qualitative research data could be used to demonstrate the value and impact that libraries, museums and other repositories of public knowledge have on society in "terms of personal development; social cohesion; community empowerment; local culture and identity; imagination and creativity; health and well being." Ms. Doreen Liu, Managing Director, World Scientific Publishing, noted that in the past 5 years the increase in the publishing

of academic journals in electronic format and the formation of library consortium world-wide had resulted in improved access to academic literature.

The learning agenda sessions dealt on human capital development, information professional education and copyright issues. Mr. Sam Lam, Senior Consultant, Towers Perrin, discussed various aspects of the work environment that would affect the performance of knowledge workers, such as leadership (a key component), organizational climate, culture & style, involvement, diversity and work/life balance issue. Lucy A. Tedd, Lecturer, Department of Information and Library Studies, University of Wales Aberystwyth, spoke on the "What? and How? of education and training courses for information professionals, including the developments of distance learning," citing case studies based on her experience in education and training programmes in Wales, Slovakia and the Asia-Pacific region. Quantum2, a professional development programme for the information professional was introduced by Liz Blankson-Hermans, Manager of Information Professional Development Programs in Europe, Dialog Corporation. Ms. Ann Shumelda Okerson, Associate University Librarian Collections Management & Development and Technical Services, Yale University Library suggested that thoughtful application of copyright principles to licensing practices by librarians would bring about mutual benefits to information creators and information users. An ASEAN perspective of copyright issues was provided by Ken Chia and Andy Leck from Baker & McKenzie. Wong & Leow who recently reported to CONSAL on key legal issues for libraries in ASEAN. They noted that because of differences in intellectual property rights laws, libraries in the ASEAN region would have to adopt different solutions to similar copyright problems when providing services to their users.

The keynote address for the final day was by Rinalia Abdul Rahim, Executive Director, Global Knowledge Partnership Secretariat, who spoke of knowledge sharing, instead of knowledge management, as being the core of the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) activities. "The emphasis in GKP is on networking and learning through facilitated global dialogue and sharing of information among its diverse trisectoral development stakeholders on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for development."

Plenary sessions on the last day covered issues from organizational perspectives. Corporate intelligence and how one could use clues from non-customers to reposition one's business was the theme of a paper by Dr. Edna Reid, Associate Professor, Nanyang Business School (NBS), Nanyang Technological University. Dr. Neo Boon Seng, Dean of NBS spoke on how innovation, information and communication strategies were critical in transforming Singapore's public library system under the National Library Board. Oracle's experience in globalizing its IT infrastructure and implementing a global content management solution, was shared by Mr. Peter Thomas, Director of Oracle9i Marketing, Asia Pacific. Technical and collection management issues relating to the Integration of heterogeneous resources, especially digital materials, was touched on by Mr. Cameron Esslemont, Director, Global Library Services Network. He also spoke on user related issues, such as the necessity of inbuilt translators in search engines and the role of portals. Two scientists from Knowledge Based Systems Inc., described structured methods for knowledge management.

Following this was a plenary session on evolving content exchange and retrieval standards, with speakers focusing on the Dublin Core (by Marit Olander of Helsinki University Library), Digital Object Identifiers (by Edward Ju, ENPIA, Korea) and SFX Context Sensitive Reference Linking (by Marc Daubauch, Corporate Vice President International Sales, Ex Libris).

The last concurrent sessions were on the following regional and national projects:

- The hybrid library at Glasgow University, by Mr. Chris Rusbridge, Director, Information Services, University of Glasgow.
- PERDANA: the Malaysian National Digital Library System, a cooperative project by libraries in Malaysia in partnership with the Multimedia Development Corporation and Telecom Malaysia, by Mrs. Zawiyah Baba, Director General, National Library of Malaysia.
- ArtPostAsia, a subject gateway which provides enhanced access and enriched contextualization for the art communities in Southeast Asia.

- Intercity Digital Library Initiative, whereby several libraries from the Asia-Pacific collaborate to share online catalogs, hold seminars and staff training programs, and acquire software and hardware for digital library service.
- The International Islamic Digital Library which is an international network of Islamic digital repositories, developed by the Malaysia's Multimedia Development Corporation.
- Nordic Digital Library initiative undertaken by Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

Library visits

Delegates had the opportunity to visit several libraries in Singapore which participated in the Singapore Library Festival. Two library "trails" were organized for delegate – one of which took the participants to Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research at the National University of Singapore with an interesting collection of more than half a million animal and plant specimens and books from Southeast Asia; Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Library (ISEAS) which has an extensive collection of over 490,000 multi-lingual and multi-format items on Southeast Asian applied social sciences; and the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Library which features, other than the usual academic collection, an impressive lifestyle library which has successfully drawn more students to use the library.

Conclusion

The papers were presented by a wide range of speakers, many of whom were not from the traditional library professional but from the knowledge, information technology and business fields, thus providing a much needed global perspective to librarians. This is important in order for librarians to be equipped with a sense of purpose and sensitivity to changes thereby remaining relevant in a profession that has been changed tremendously by info-communication technology.

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