

Crimea '98

Libraries and associations in the transient world

by Lester J. Pourciau

The fifth anniversary of the international conference Crimea '98, "Libraries and Associations in the Transient World: New Technologies and New Forms of Cooperation," was held June 6-14 in Sudak, Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine. Growing almost tenfold since the first Crimea conference in 1994, registration for this year's event was more than 1,000 and represented people from 30 countries.

As has been the case with each of the previous Crimea conferences, the primary organizer was the Russian National Public Library for Science and Technology. Co-organizers were the Ministries of Culture of the Russian Federation and of Culture and Arts of Ukraine; the Kiev Mohyla Academy; the Ministry of Culture of the autonomous Republic of Crimea; the Russian State Library; the Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow; the University of Memphis in the United States; the International Library, Information, and Analytical Center (ILIAC); the Book Chamber of Ukraine; and the Ukrainian Library Association. Yakov L. Shraiber, first deputy director of the Russian National Public Library for Science and Technology, served as executive chair of the International Organizing Committee and I was deputy chair.

Participating in the opening plenary sessions were Leo Voogt, IFLA secretary general;

James Billington, librarian of Congress; and Ekaterina Genieva, president of the Open Society Institute-Russia and director general of the Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow.

Traditional and digital library needed

Billington spoke about "The Historic Library and the Information Age," describing the digital efforts of the Library of Congress and adopting a very rational and balanced position between endorsement of the traditional library and the forthcoming digital society.

Andrei Zemskov, director of the Russian National Public Library for Science and Technology and, by original training, a plasma physicist, spoke of scientific and technical libraries and the Russian approach to what everyone wants to predict as the information society.

He characterized the situation in Russia as having sufficient computers and networking to move deliberately toward the information society, but he spoke somewhat skeptically about officials who speak about "... information security as opposed to information transparency."

Ekaterina Genieva described programs of the Soros Foundation for the Advancement of Science, Culture, and Education in Russia.

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Welcoming sign in English, Russian, and Ukrainian.

About the author

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for electronic reserves systems, home delivery of monographic and other "hard-copy" materials, and remote (probably Web-based) library use instruction.

We will be installing wireless networking in the library and elsewhere on my campus. With more and more students, faculty, and staff using laptops instead of specially-configured and hard-wired public PCs, we will need a common interface. That interface will likely remain the Web. We will spend less time configuring machines and more time designing user interfaces/front ends.

There will be less focus on the acquisition and servicing of technology—whether that technology is in the library, on a faculty/staff member's desktop, or in a computer lab. More important will be fostering the effective use of that technology to improve research, learning, and service; to streamline administrative processes; to reduce costs; and to increase revenue. A great deal of attention will be given to process reengineering. In the library, this will mean reconceiving library technical processes and helping users redesign tried-and-true but now obsolescent research methodologies.

Finally, I expect to spend a greater portion of my time on the values of higher education, discussing all, protecting some, discarding others. (I see this as an extension of the important dialogue ACRL began last year.) Progressively more confused by our fast-changing world, we in higher education will check this headlong progress against our ethical bedrock, asking some important questions along the way. "Who are we? What do we stand for? What are we trying to accomplish?"

In planning services and systems, it will be in part my responsibility to ensure that new services and systems take advantage of technological advances without betraying our core values.—*Mark Cain*

Your opinion is sought

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An IFLA update

Leo Voogt provided plenary attendees with an overview of recent developments within IFLA, characterizing them as indicative of a strong period of growth and serious investment in information technology. He pointed out that one of IFLA's cornerstones has been, and remains, the volunteer effort of many experts and specialists from around the world.

While he applauded the growth and development of information technology within the context of IFLA's activities, he made a point of stating that "efforts must be fed by electronic communication, but cannot flourish without personal communication."

For this to occur, he argued for a strong need for IFLA to continue to rely on personal networks, networks that can be established and maintained during IFLA's general conference, and, he added, during important regional events like the Crimea conference.

The global perspective

Phyllis Spies, vice president, Sales and In-

ternational OCLC, presented "OCLC and Member Libraries: Architects of the Global Library." Using a PowerPoint presentation, Spies described the viewpoints of various persons from different countries throughout the world.

Her presentation explored two points: one, the key trends in the global information marketplace and, two, a brief characterization of OCLC's strategic international directions in light of these global trends. She spoke about the information revolution, comparing and contrasting it to the industrial revolution, pointing out that "technology's effects on us today are different from those of the industrial revolution. They are more democratic, more personal; more subtle and profound."

Crimea '98 was indeed an interesting and rewarding experience. It has become the dominant conference throughout central and Eastern Europe and annually provides an excellent forum and context for large numbers of librarians throughout the region to intermingle, to network, to exchange views and experiences, and to profit from one another. ■