



NEWS FROM OUR ASSOCIATION

The EAHIL 5th European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries in Coimbra, September 18-21, 1996 - our members write...

Letter from a Slovak member

M

Medical Librarianship from where to where!

Just a few weeks ago more than 450 medical librarians met in ancient Coimbra to share knowledge and experience.

European Conferences of Medical and Health Libraries are always an extraordinary event in everyday life and work. Such was also the 5th EAHIL Conference in Coimbra.

The scientific programme was rich and varied. While listening to more general and philosophical papers during plenary sessions, contributors dealt with the history of medicine and medical information, via professional education to networking and new trends in health information management in 18 parallel sessions.

There were also two special interest group sessions: pharmaceutical and veterinary. It was even difficult to choose an appropriate parallel session without missing interesting papers in other parallel sessions. That's why people were moving from one room to another (interrupting sometimes both speaker and audience).

It's hard to mention somebody individually or to say what was the most interesting. For everybody it was probably something different according to priorities and professional interests.

To express my personal feelings: I listened to a lot of very interesting papers. And even if the papers didn't attract me as a whole there was surely at least an idea, which forced me to think about matters. I do not have time to pay attention to this rapid life or motivated me for something new, applicable in my own conditions.

I consider this valuable motivation to be one of the most important aims of meeting colleagues from all over Europe/world. I'm sure it will result in new services provided in an effort to change, gradually, the librarian's role and position.

The poster presentation area with more than 30 posters was another source of both direct practical information and motivation. And, of course, exhibitors. It was possible to compare services of major world-wide library and information products vendors or just consult problems

of mutual co-operation or plan use of new services and products.

The continuing education programme has become an integrated part of the EAHIL Conference; a wide range of full day and half day courses gave the attendants an opportunity to improve their professional skills in medical literature indexing, navigating the Internet or evaluation methods.

Besides the EAHIL Newsletter, the General Assembly of EAHIL Members allowed the members and newcomers to get straight information about EAHIL's present activities, expenditure/ income budget, future aims, workshops and conferences, 1996 elections results, relations with similar organisations, etc.

The social and cultural programme created another opportunity to get acquainted with Portuguese folklore, dishes and habits, to meet colleagues and exchange experience in a very informal way, to develop new contacts and friendships.

The visits to ancient royal palaces and spa, to the old University of Coimbra and Coimbra Old Town have enriched our minds with messages of pure history.

The extraordinary rich and nice old Biblioteca Joanina impressed surely everybody. In that majestic place we could think about the role of the old and the new librarian, about changes and further developments and what this EAHIL 5th European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries was about.

I do thank the EAHIL Fund for enabling me to attend this Conference. I do also thank the Local Organising Committee and all international co-workers for preparation valuable professional and cultural programme. ■

Lubomira Soltésová

Univerzitná knižnica UPJS

Slovak Medical Library

P.J. Safarik University

Trieda SNP 1,

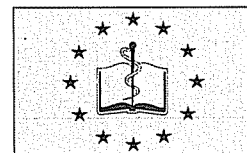
04011 Kosice

Slovak Republic

email : soltesov@kosice.upjs.sk



Coimbra Conference. Our Portuguese hosts



Letter from a Lithuanian Member



would not be able to attend to Conference by no means.

Coimbra is far away from Lithuania, our economic situation does not allow to cover travel and accommodation expenses and we did not dream of the participation at the conferences abroad at all.

The friendship that sprang up two years ago by the initiative of Norwegian medical librarians became closer in meantime. We had a possibility to participate at the 4th European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries in Oslo, the 4th Nordic Conference for Medical Libraries in Copenhagen thanks to the support of the Norwegian Library Association, Section SMH, and this year we were financially supported to attend Coimbra, the 5th European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries. That was a great present in a professional sense to me and my Colleagues. We appreciate it very much.

We are still living grave conditions. First of all suffer science, culture and libraries. Every year there are lots of changes in the libraries technologies, networking over the Internet and it is difficult for us to find the right way to do in the age of explosion of information.

The participation at these conferences is the only way for us to get the new information on medical Librarianship. It is always interesting to learn how our colleagues abroad are solving their problems, to get acquainted with their experience in order to avoid mistakes in our work. Lithuanian libraries are lagging behind, the majority of them have no access to the Internet.

This Conference was very useful to us, because lots of papers were dealing with the Internet problems. Our Library was connected to the Internet only this year. Medical librarians must be high skilled on Internet management in order to use effectively Internet resources and provide our readers with medical information. We have them - over 5600 persons. Our

patrons - doctors usually have not enough time to search for the information themselves and apply to information specialists to find information on their subjects.

Reports on Internet management were most useful for us, because we have no experience on this. Subjects we learnt that there are lots of services working on projects and aiming to gather and present indexed collections of Internet resources in medicine, healthcare, bioscience such as OMNI, Pharm Web, Galeno, European information network for the fields of ethics in medicine.

We have not heard about them before. It was interesting to hear described in details some Internet related tasks, the side-effects and drawbacks of being a medical librarian.

Document delivery services was another subject which we were interested in very much. There are only 2 large medical libraries in Lithuania which subscribe to Western medical periodicals: our library and Medical Library in Vilnius. Both libraries are in grave conditions. Every month we exchange new periodicals, but it does not solve the lack of journals.

We subscribe to databases on CD-ROM Medline, Current Contents and have the possibility to search at the 29 NLM databases over " Grateful Med ", but it is a real problem to us to supply our readers with full text articles.

We have about 5000 requests for journal articles every year which aren't in the library. It was very interesting to hear about the experience on electronic information and ordering like UnCover, SwetScan and electronic document delivery system like Adonis, Jason allowing e-mail delivery of articles directly to users via the Internet.

It was useful to get acquainted with new important projects on on-line document delivery system like RightPages, WebDoc and ISI's Electronic Library. Of course, we cannot use these new document delivery technologies at meantime because of the lack of money, but we must know what is going on in the world in order to use our means right when we'll be able to use them.

I was astonished seeing new Ovid Full text features, when users have opportunities to link from bibliographic information in Medline to the full text of the article and

using Ovid Z39.50 Client/Server architecture to link to the library holding.

Taking an opportunity, on behalf of our readers, I would like to express my gratitude to all Norwegian medical librarians, Aalborg Medical Library in Denmark, Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire de Lyon, Zentralbibliothek der Medizin, Köln, Bibliotek der Medizinische Hochschule, Hannover which help us by sending photocopies of articles for free to our Library. It is a great benefit to our Library, our scientists and teachers.

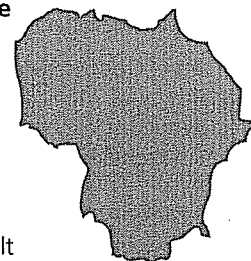
*The participation
at these conferences is
the only way for us to
get the new
information on medical
Librarianship.*

I would like to express my gratitude to the Norwegian Library Association, Section for Medicine and Health Sciences, personally to the EAHIL President, Elisabeth Husem, to Elisabeth Akre, Tove Gellein and other Norwegian medical librarians for the financial support for us to participate to the 5th European Conference of Medical Libraries and all-round help to our Library.

I am sure we'll be able to return the same kindness to you in the future. ■

Meile Kretaviliene

Director of the
Kaunas Medical
Academy Library
Mickevicius 7,
3683 Kaunas,
Lithuania
Fax: 127 220733
Email: meile@kma.lt





continuing education were issues that arose in many contexts. Perhaps electronic networks will make this more possible, since geographical distances and costs of travel make rapid communication by other means so difficult.

Everyone worked very hard, even if just by listening and trying to learn, as I did as SatelLife UK's representative. But on the Thursday night we had a party! Music, dancing and a buffet dinner in the open air at the WHO Club and everyone looking their best in a variety of colourful costumes. Irene Bertrand, from WHO in Geneva, the Dreyfus Health Foundation and SatelLife [USA] were all honoured for the work they had done for African librarians in their various ways, and each of the participants were given a memento

of their stay in Brazzaville in the shape of small wooden carving. Congratulations and many thanks must go to Lucilda Hunter and her team at Afro, who organized and arranged the conference so successfully and generously.

Afterthought

At the European Association of Health Information and Libraries at Coimbra just days before, two exhibition halls were filled with the wares from major producers of information products - at AHILA there was just one representative - from SilverPlatter.

References

(1) Aronson B, Bertrand I (1996) Missing information: some issues medical librarians should be thinking about as they bridge between

published information and delivery of health care. 5th European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries, Coimbra, Portugal. Abstracts. p. 19.

(2) Nkabinde T (1996) Interconnecting: how to break barriers to information provision. 5th Congress and General Assembly of the Association for Health Information and Libraries in Africa. 12pp. Paper distributed at the Congress.

**Non-Africans may become Associate Members of AHILA (i.e. without voting rights). The subscription is \$20 per annum for individuals and \$80 for institutional members. Bank certified cheques or Bank drafts should be sent with your name and address to Nance M'Jamtu-Sie, AHILA Treasurer, Medical Librarian, College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences, University of Sierra Leone, PMB Freetown, Sierra Leone.* ■

Jean G. Shaw

SatelLife UK, The Old Rectory, Shoscombe Bath BA2 8NB., United Kingdom

An American overview of our Coimbra Conference

As the Medical Library Association (MLA) representative to EAHIL, I attended the fruitful EAHIL Council Meeting. It was good to see friends and colleagues whom I have not seen since the Prague EAHIL, one year ago. The 5th European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries was held at the new hospital's congress centre on the North West section of town. The new hospital has 1700 beds and 1000 physicians on staff. It is one of the largest in Portugal. The official Meeting began in the afternoon. Greetings were expressed by Antonia Pereira da Silva, President of the Local Organising Committee, Elisabeth Husem, President of EAHIL, and me on behalf of MLA. A paper was delivered on the role of the National Union Catalogue in Portugal, and the exhibits opened. I gave my paper this morning and it was very well received. All the handouts I brought were taken, and several people signed up to join the job exchange database.

Other presentations of the day included:

- The Health of Nations by Carols Marias
- Strategic Planning for the Future by Tom Wilson
- and a paper on the formation of the Norwegian Medical Library Association

Several entire sessions were devoted to aspects of Internet and covered topics such as Omni and Galeno. Other groupings of papers addressed evidence-

based health care and total quality management. The conference included sessions on consumer health (notably Help for Health's own Robert Gann), as well as sessions on problem based learning, electronic document delivery, history of medicine, and many other timely and interesting topics. Lois Ann Colaiani provided a plenary session entitled "Professional development: a health information management strategy - keeping up-to-date on changes in resources." Manuela Prates (Portugal) also gave a plenary session entitled "Information teaching: beyond curriculum into life-long learning." Celia Zaher of Brazil gave a plenary session entitled "Highlights of health sciences information in America, Latina, and Caribbean."

The conference organised a visit to the old University of Coimbra which was established in 1537. We saw the beautiful University Chapel with its goldleafed 18th century organ, painted ceiling, 17th century tiles, and Manueline portal. The baroque University Library, next door to the University Chapel, is the architectural gem of the city. The exquisite library is composed of a trio of high-ceilinged rooms and walled by two-story tiers of lacquer-decorated book shelves. It contains more than a million volumes, from the 16th to 18th century. The library has marble inlaid floors. The library tables are of ebony and rosewood. Friday evening's Gala Dinner was given at a former royal palace - Palacio de S. Marcos. It included

Fado-Coimbra style. Fado is typical Portuguese music, and in Coimbra it is only sung by men who wear dark capes, most of whom are students from the University. Most of the Fado songs of Coimbra are love songs. (In contrast, Lisbon's Fado is only sung by women.)

The closing session of the conference was a surprise to us all. About 25 University (male) students dressed in the traditional university garb of the black cape came singing robustly into our auditorium. They were led into the auditorium by a handsome young student carrying a chamber pot with cow horns attached to it on the top of a long pole. They also played instruments: small tambourines, an accordion, flutes, a base fiddle, several small stringed instruments, and a few instruments I did not recognise at all. They entertained us, made us smile, and warmed our hearts.

As the conference ended, there was a feeling of affection for colleagues, and a certainty that all of us felt the special warmth and generosity of our wonderful Portuguese local arrangements team. The conference was a major success - both professionally and socially. ■

Donna Flake

*Coastal AHEC Library
2131 South 17th St.
PO Box 9025
Wilmington,
NC 28402 9025
USA*

