Development and Stabilization of Resources in the Agricultural Library Information System of Slovenia

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1 Organization of library-information system in Slovenia

1.1 Agricultural libraries and information centres

Most agricultural information resources are held at the seven department libraries of the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana. (Agronomy, Biology, Food Science and Technology, Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources, Landscape Architecture, Wood Science and Technology, and the Zootechnical Department). The Biotechnical Faculty maintains also a central library (Central Biotechnical Library) which is organized conjointly with the Slovenian National AGRIS Centre. This library represents the coordinating body of the Slovenian agricultural library-information system and also a basis for international cooperation.

Selected information sources are also kept at the library of the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia and at the library of the Veterinary Faculty. Electronic and other agricultural information resources are located also at the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Maribor and at the University Library of Maribor. The Faculty of Agriculture in Maribor, however, is much smaller than the Biotechnical Faculty of Ljubljana, which remains the central agricultural research and education institution of Slovenia. Some agriculture-related information resources are to be found also at the National and University Library and at the Central Technological Library.

1.2 Other institutions in support of library-information

⇒ University computer centers: University of Ljubljana Computing Centre assists an extensive and complex network of research institutions which are scattered on different locations in Ljubljana. The Centre has been developing and extensive wide area computer network METULJ (butterfly) with the aim to serve University needs. The University of Maribor Computer Centre maintains a Local Area Network that serves the needs of the University of Maribor.

⇒ Academic Research NEtwork of Slovenia (ARNES): ARNES provides network services to Universities, other higher education institutions and government research institutions in Slovenia. It has been developed as the national communication backbone. The objective is to promote and enhance national and international cooperation with respect to scientific research.

⇒ Cooperative Online Bibliographic Information System and Services (COBISS): Cobiss has been developed by the IZUM (Institute for Information Sciences) and has been Slovenian bibliographic utility since 1988. It has served as a basis for shared cataloguing and maintenance of national bibliographic database. The system provides for online communication between local computer systems, and the host computer system. It offers various applications such as COBIB, INFORS, and several databases, produced by Slovenian institutions, and assists end-users in Slovenia in accessing many foreign databases. The COBIB serves as an online union

1 Author's self archive
bibliographic/catalogue database based on all-Slovenian shared cataloguing INFORS (Information System of INFORmation Resources in Slovenia) contains information on information resources, available in or accessible from Slovenia.

2 Information activities since the sixth Roundtable

2.1 Domestic activities

All of Slovenian agriculture libraries have by 1997 started to actively participate in the COBISS system. Data on agriculture-related, and of course all other records in Slovenia can therefore be accessed from any of the libraries that participate in the system. Slovenian agricultural bibliographic resources have become generally accessible also via the WWW.

Libraries maintain coordinated input that is based on the principles of shared cataloguing so all the data are entered only once. System has become a basis for assessment of scientific and professional productivity of Slovenian authors by the Slovenian Ministry of Science and Technology since all the documents produced by our researchers need to be bibliographically available as citations via this system. For the last two years, however, many other activities have taken place in the libraries and information centres, such as end-user education or publication of papers and organizing network access to selected information sources.

New network applications have been organized within the Local Area Network as well as within the scope of cooperation with some other libraries. Network licences have been acquired for a few selected databases with a limited number of entry posts that require a password. This network has been, however, locally available only to the libraries of the Agronomy, and Food Science and Technology Department, and the Central Biotechnical Library along with the AGRIS Centre. There remains the need of extending the services to some other departments. The problem is technical in nature.

The networking activities that the National and University Library and at the Central Technological Library are composed mainly of setting up a University Wide Area Network in order to make databases generally accessible to a large number of users from the University of Ljubljana. The access is effected by a special application ULTRANET or via the WWW, and is made possible only by the use of passwords that are allocated by the two above libraries, and then locally delivered by the Central Biotechnical Library. This enables the end-user to accede such invaluable databases as the Science Citation Index or the Index to Scientific and Technical Proceedings. A number of full-text databases are being considered for acquisition.

The heads of libraries and information centres hold regular meetings in order to review the most favourable acquisition possibilities such as a setting up of a consortium. This involves certain organizational problems as it is difficult to estimate the exact financial share of each institution in question. Moreover, the library administrators seldom carry sufficient decision making authority within their respective institutions so they are often left with the cumbersome tasks of persuading faculty deans or department heads of the needs for a significant change in acquisition policy.

⇒ Instructions for writing of student papers: The information specialists of the respective libraries of the Biotechnical Faculty have been recently conducting regular encounters in order to prepare extended instructions for writing of treatises such as B.Sc., M.Sc. and Ph.D. theses, based on international standards. This instructions will represent the standard for the Faculty.
⇒ **User training and education:** Student education is conducted as a regular faculty course of informatics and documentation. Practical exercises also take place in the libraries and reading rooms. Students learn how to use the latest electronic information resources and how to find and retrieve data. They also get familiar with the basics of the theory of information retrieval. Special emphasis is placed on the use of controlled vocabulary.

⇒ **Publication of papers:** Papers written by information officers are published in agriculture-related journals and proceedings, Slovenian library and documentation journals and proceedings, and also in foreign publications.

⇒ **Indexes to agricultural journals:** Indexes to selected Slovenian agricultural journals are generated by information officers of the Biotechnical Faculty. The indexes are based on international indexing systems and facilitate information retrieval in journals.

### 2.2 International activities

⇒ **Meetings and training:** Representatives from Slovenia have actively participated at three international agriculture-related library-information meetings such as the Sixth U.S./Central & Eastern European Agricultural Library Roundtable in Tucson, USA in March/April 1997, USAIN/IAALD Joint Conference in Tucson, April 1997, the Fourth Technical Consultation of AGRIS and CARIS Participating Centres in Rome, Italy in June 1998, and Agro Web CEE Workshop in Godollo, Hungary in April 1999. The meetings provided insight into the recent development in the area of information storage, retrieval and communication with respect to agriculture. They served as a valuable opportunity for our information officers to review and upgrade methods of organization of information. They have been also of utmost importance as an occasion of meeting professional colleagues from all over the world and have hence been stimulating in a professional and personal sense alike.

⇒ **Exchange program and international bibliographic availability:** Slovenian agriculture-related libraries have maintained an intensive exchange and cooperation program with libraries and information services worldwide. Slovenian journals and proceedings have been sent to major libraries such as National Agricultural Library (NAL) in the United States or FAO library. Selected journals and proceedings have been sent to international information indexing services, such as CABI, in order to be bibliographically synthesized in be made internationally accessible via databases. As a consequence of cooperation with NAL many documents have been included into the ISIS catalogue and have thus been made internationally even more accessible via the NAL's WWW utilities.

⇒ **AGRIS input:** A comprehensive and systematic input has continued in the AGRIS database which has thus become a very informative source of agriculture-related documents published in Slovenia. Input has averaged some 500 records per year, and has included only those records that have been on a published level supplied with an English abstract and title. This has been set as a condition by the Slovenian National AGRIS Centre. It has become important for researchers that their published papers be included by at least one international indexing service so they are motivated to supply the papers with English data what may in turn increase quality of some papers and thus increase a possibility of international feedback.

### 3 Stabilization of human resources and conclusions

Activities in the agricultural libraries in Slovenia have thus increased in the period of the last two years. Some questions, such as a maintenance of the national bibliography in the field of
agriculture, have been settled by the final emergence of the comprehensive all-Slovenian bibliography COBIB that includes not only agriculture but also all other research areas in Slovenia.

In the present the problems of stabilizing human resources in the libraries in Slovenia are not very acute. However, significant differences exist between the libraries in different sectors. Public libraries, such as municipal libraries for example, enjoy better financial conditions in terms of wages. These libraries are financed by the Ministry of Culture. Research and education libraries, on the other hand, receive most of their funds from the Ministry of Science and Technology, and Ministry of Education and Sport. Wages are accorded mostly by the later. Also, the wages of library and information staff at the University are somehow conditioned by the wages of researchers and professors which are supposed to be higher than those of the librarians and information professionals. Current attempts exist to at least recognize scientific degrees of library and information staff and to give such professionals a better chance for promotion. The situation of wages remains somehow demotivating for University information professionals which frequently possess more versatile skills than public librarians since they have to serve a more demanding scientific community, which, in turn, occasionally shuns the efforts of research libraries.

The libraries and information centres in Slovenia have recently not seen much reduction in staff. The numbers of library and information professionals were reduced to the limits in the past. The existing work force has to do its best in maintaining the existing services while simultaneously introducing new utilities.