

Symposium
Fortieth Anniversary of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library :
Legacy of a Secretary-General

United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library, New York
1 March 2002

Afternoon session: **Panel "The changing role of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library – Bridging the information gap between developing and developed countries"**

Panel discussion (summary)

Sommereyns: Does any of the panellists wish to make a comment?

Dickstein: Regarding comments made by Professors Mangla and Kisiedu about the depository library system and the UN Information Centres (UNICs) and the UN depository libraries in their countries -- they have presented us with some information of which we were aware but, really, coming from the field, they have given us more details. In managing the depository library system, we have an elaborate superstructure. We let the depository librarians know very clearly what their obligations are: they are to keep their collections in good order and they are to make them open to the general public. To ensure that this occurs we have questionnaires, we have a series of visits, and we rely on the UNICs. And yet, we learn that perhaps we could do more. We could get more information. Part of this is financial. We don't have a budget to send out librarians on our own regularly. If depository libraries could collaborate among themselves in this regard, we would be very grateful. In response to one of Professor Mangla's comments, I would like to note that we in fact discourage librarians from cataloguing UN materials. We generally suggest they arrange the documents by UN document symbol and rely on the tools that we produce to provide access. We also are increasingly relying upon the depository libraries to be our conduit, in collaboration with the UNICs, for getting UN information out. Our latest questionnaire has in fact focused specifically on outreach -- what are the depository libraries doing to publicize their collections, to publicize UN information? We try to help by sending out e-mail news alerts a couple of times a week, alerting the depository librarians, often in their own language, to the existence of new sites on the web or new documents that have come out -- sometimes we send them the material as an attachment; sometimes we send links. And we have tried to encourage the UNICs to work with the depository libraries, to use them as extensions of themselves to organize programmes. Because libraries reach ordinary, unaffiliated individuals, they are an important conduit to civil society. Finally, I would like to note that in our inter-agency library meetings we have discussed how to get the libraries in the field to collaborate more with each other. In some countries there are UN Houses now, where a number of agencies are under one roof. Sometimes they manage to build one library (for example, Islamabad); sometimes each agency still wishes to maintain its own turf. This is one of the issues we have to address more.

Mangla: The main point I was trying to emphasize was availability and accessibility. The people who are managing these libraries, they don't have to come to New York for training in organizing document collections; you don't have to send trainers from New York to different parts of the world. Once in a while you may do that, but there are people already in the developing countries who have expertise in UN documents -- they can organize such training programmes; they can serve as consultants in the field.

India has 15 depository libraries, known fairly well by scholars and students, but not by others. They need to publicize these collections, let people know they exist. The country is large, so perhaps you need a few more depository libraries. The main depository library is not our national library, which is located in Calcutta. The main depository library is the parliamentary library and not easily accessible to people. Wouldn't it be possible to designate a second library? It could be a university, even a public library. The accessibility, the availability of these documents should be a major consideration. Much has been done. It can be further strengthened.

Kawamura: I'd like to make a point relating to costs for the digital library or library digitization development. The UN system has the great advantage of being a publisher as well as a library system. The purpose of the production of documents is to supply member countries with a record, agenda, resolutions, etc.; also sometimes commercial publications. If we change the whole printing process to electronic publication, or virtual meetings or conferences, including the listserv type of document delivery, the whole chain of documentation could be electronic. The next step for the Dag Hammarskjöld Library will be the handling of such electronic files. It will be able to collect and organize electronic files, which will obviate the very painstaking process of scanning documents. The distribution system, from the source, could be completely changed. That will dramatically cut costs. Also, during that process, we can ensure accessibility for people with print disabilities. Probably we need to think about multimedia publications to support the activities of the UN, to reach out to the grass roots civil society. If the UN wants to involve those who are not literate, we should reach out with some kind of multimedia with accessibility features, so there will be a breakthrough -- of the barrier of language. There are languages that do not have a written form. With multimedia we can reach out to those people. That will reduce the cost of the whole system of handling documentation.

Kisiedu: With regard to expanded or extended services that the DHL can provide, I would like to suggest two things. The first has to do with making the collection accessible to those who cannot read in the language in which the publications are provided. In many countries of sub-Saharan Africa, there are nuclear literature bureaux where translations from English are commissioned by Governments, and so on. In the same way that you collaborate with member countries in identifying depository libraries, you should make it official for Governments to commission the translation of the very popular UN documents, like the *Chronicle*. My second point is with regard to extending your activities more for the benefit of youth. Youth are a problem these days in every country. They are disaffected, disoriented, and therefore fall into all kinds of vices. Getting them involved in the UN, making them know what the Organization stands for, is

Audience (DHL): For those depository libraries that want to do their own cataloguing and classification of UN publications -- the DHL could provide them with the tools, the rules, guidelines, etc.

McKee: I agree it would be useful if we could stay together as a group and continue the dialog after today. What I want to pick up is a point Christine made about translation, multilingual activity and also young people. About 18 months ago, I was in Ramallah, talking to the chairman of the Palestinian writers' union. It was part of the alternate IFLA [International Federation of Library Associations] Jerusalem conference. We asked him what can we do as librarians to help the intellectual, cultural situation that he and his countrymen found themselves in. We were in his home with all his children running around. He said one problem we have is that we have no access to children's literature in our mother tongue, in Arabic. The reason is that we can't afford to pay the translation rights. When we look at intellectual property rights, and particularly translation rights,

