



**European Bureau of Library, Information  
and Documentation Associations**

On the occasion of  
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## **Celebrating 25 years of Library Advocacy in Europe**

**Marian Koren**

### **A celebration is a wonderful opportunity to rethink.**

The 25th anniversary of EBLIDA and 15 years of NAPLE is an appropriate moment to reflect on Library Advocacy in Europe. I am very grateful to these organisations and to the Danish Library Association for inviting me to contribute to the theme. Rethinking is an act of sorting out the various experiences of the past, but also an act of bringing the essence out for thinking ahead. A celebration in this sense is both an end and a beginning, a milestone in the library adventure in Europe.

An adventure it is! I'm not going to give an overview of EBLIDA's history, as there is a written version by our Luxembourg colleague Jean-Marie Reding based on a French study by Lena Baude, available on the EBLIDA's website, and also distributed here as a brochure. Instead, I would like to focus on some of the recurrent themes and dilemmas in the work of EBLIDA and European library advocacy.

Back to the adventure! Who could have thought that a small number of library associations was able to set up an office especially for lobbying the library issues in Europe. And since then, most library associations in Europe have joined, as well as a number of institutions, national and academic libraries. Was this evident in 1992? No, not at all!

### **How did it start?**

For me, at that time secretary to the NBLC association management and head of the policy directorate, it started some years earlier with a telephone call from the CDR, the Central Music Library of Rotterdam, asking for support as they had come across upcoming European legislation which would be disastrous for the lending function of the library. They had already recruited a lawyer, Emanuella Giavarra, to dig into the details. As it appeared to be, the issues went beyond the scope of the CDR, and required the involvement of national library organisations.

At that time, Dutch organisations were forming a legal committee – which came under FOBID Netherlands Library Forum, as the Green Paper on copyright was prepared in Brussels, and other Library Associations in Europe had started to get together, first in Brighton to discuss further joint actions. While legal experts were making their first analysis, and preparing the library's positions, a working group was formed to prepare the set-up of a joint European library coalition, in view of increasing legislation coming from EU Brussels rather than from their state government. In the meantime, the Dutch Association NBLC facilitated the working group, and Emanuella started to work from the NBLC office, continuing her contacts in Brussels. Two elements remain from the work sessions we organised: the discussions on the scope of the coalition, and its name.

How to bridge the different stages of development of the library situation in the European countries, the differences in type of association, and the views in Europe? There were voices envisioning a European library association, promoting library policies and development, working on professional progress, with a European focus. Others were more convinced of the immediate need to form a joint force coping with the main threats, especially regarding basic library functions: lending materials, giving access to information. Looking around at the working sessions, NBLC director Rudy van der Velde concluded that, thinking of finances, only a small capacity could be afforded, and the most urgent issues would be the focus. Besides, IFLA was the professional organisation for library development.

As a side step, it is interesting to note that IFLA's evolving from a professional association towards a more advocacy oriented organisation only started a decade later. It was during the time of my term in the Governing Board, when I wrote 'A Green Light for IFLA<sup>1</sup>', with observations and recommendations for change. In fact it was also based on discussions with European colleagues, especially Danish Winnie Vitzansky, and also Kay Raseroka, IFLA's incoming President.

Back to Europe, imagine a group of tired European colleagues, at a dinner in the Hague after a long day of discussions: the scope was set, but what would it be called? The B in EBLIDA is important, because it is not the B of book or Bibliotek, but of Bureau. So, alternatives such as federation or association were avoided. The Bureau would be the engine of the library lobby. And in this way the umbrella organisation was formed: Ross Shimmon, UK Library Association, and Françoise Danset, Association des Bibliothèques de France, ABF were elected as first President and Vice-President. And rightly so, real EBLIDA umbrellas were distributed!

In fact, one can compare EBLIDA to the Washington office of the American Library Association, but with distinguished differences: in Europe a capacity limited to 1-2 persons, and no single association behind it. As is the case today, there is no single European library association backing up EBLIDA, nor is there a European chapter in IFLA.

### **Libraries and Europe**

Libraries were quite far away from Europe, at least the European Union, and the EU was quite far away from libraries in the seventies of the past millennium, a time in which libraries expanded their services and flourished. Some efforts were made in the 1980s. The first true approach was a connection through the Telematics for Libraries Programme 1990-1998, which brought new developments to the library sector at European level, with a focus on IT development. Mostly academic and national libraries participated as they had the means, capacity and the orientation for international cooperation. The next approach came in 1997, starting with the Morgan report, followed by an own initiative report by Mirja Rynnänen, *The Role of Libraries in the Modern Society*, giving the outline and requirements for a true library policy at European level. This was deemed necessary, especially as the Commission was working on a copyright directive and the 5th framework programme. This report was made to influence the internal work of the European Commission, who had promised to work on a Green Paper on the role of libraries in the information society. Although apparently almost finished, it was never published. No further library specialised programmes were funded. Rereading the EP-adopted Rynnänen report and its decisions addressing both the Commission and the member states, brings many current issues to the forefront: to mention a few:

- Libraries must be taken in account in national and EU information society strategies and in the respective budgets.
- The users position must be taken into account in the copyright directive process, the balance must be maintained - this was politically the most important decision in short run.
- The member states should take care of digitising their cultural heritage for future.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/publications/ifla-journal/ij-1-2003.pdf>

- There should be studies and concrete support for libraries in licensing matters, which are – will be the next big issue in library work.
- Problems of legal deposit in international and multinational materials, especially in electronic materials, should be solved.
- Free of charge use of public libraries, in the spirit of the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto.
- Free and easy access via libraries to material produced with the aid of tax revenues;
- A European Union focal point for libraries should be set up (tasks: coordination of library affairs and research, training); improvement of library statistics.

The report strongly stresses that library financing must be re-thought in the information society. Without new resources libraries are unable to do everything they are expected to do!

### **Rethinking EBLIDA**

Rethinking our achievements and the way forward, we can easily recognise some recurrent themes and also dilemmas regarding the development of fruitful library advocacy.

### **Representing the library sector**

A first recurrent question: how to address the fragmentation of the library sector? Referring to the keynote speech of this conference: are we still thinking in library *tribal* terms? Can we be satisfied when only a certain type of libraries benefits from EU funding, and the others only indirectly? EBLIDA has constantly made efforts to cover all countries in Europe, with sometimes more and sometimes less stress on the European Union, referring to the Council of Europe etc. The Declaration of Vienna was a call for an all-embracing European library policy. Other questions come up: How can there be necessary cooperation with other library associations, e.g. IFLA and LIBER; and how to cooperate with other sectors, e.g. archives and museums, or the wider culture sector, or the consumer or education /adult learning advocacy? The focus on (digital) heritage, open science, are other opportunities for EBLIDA as coalition partner. But it is dependent on its national members, not only the library associations, but also the role of national libraries is crucial.

EBLIDA has grown professionally, in the sense that its directors over the past 25 years have made clear that a legal, juridical analysis is not enough; it needs to be related to the strategic aims of both libraries and the EU. That's why the wording in the statements and official letters, and all the proposals are changing to bridge the professional and library management field and the EU decision making bodies. Think about the efforts to fit libraries in the EU view of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Europe 2020, Horizon 2020, A Digital Agenda for Europe, were discussed by EBLIDA and NAPLE together in 2010 in Brussels, attempting to integrate the further development of the public library sector into the current EU agenda, as the introduction from Jan Braeckman, Bibnet, states on repositioning public libraries.

The cooperation with Public Libraries 2020, can be seen as one of the later effects and follow ups.

### **Focus and view: copyright or more?**

From the start, EBLIDA has been challenged by its members and its European political context to face the dilemma of the focus on lobbying versus library development. Is it only copyright that counts or is there space for a broader view. Are we only running after the threats or also looking for development policy opportunities?

In the field of copyright, libraries would have been far less off, without the very early lobby activities in the field of public lending rights, in 1992, the year EBLIDA was founded, and later on in its actions on the right to e-read. The same goes to some extent for the EU directive on copyright related to databases.

A further area has been the question of orphan works and out of commerce works.

Access to information for all, has brought EBLIDA to the field of digital literacy and reading in the information society. We can also mention the ongoing actions regarding the Marrakesh Treaty, the

cross border regulations etc. Another area has been the threats coming from trade agreements, remember WTO, ACTA and TTIP.

A theme which will probably not quickly disappear from the agenda, but become increasingly important for libraries, are privacy-related issues. Both in the day to day on site and online services, the principles of anonymity, respecting users' privacy, non-discrimination and non-censorship are at stake. EBLIDA and other organisations are on the alert, as must be libraries and associations. Remember the various actions in support of Southern French libraries and librarians suffering from enforced censorship and more in the 90's.

EBLIDA has been very successful in raising awareness of copyright at European level. In the important forming stage, mid and eastern European countries were approaching the EU. EBLIDA held a number of programmes and trainings under the acronyms of ECUP<sup>2</sup>, CeCUP<sup>3</sup> and TECUP<sup>4</sup>, which were very well received. Sometimes I felt that colleagues in these countries, also at local level, knew more about copyright than their fellow librarians in the west.

More recently, looking at the Marrakesh implementation, one gets the feeling that all developing and upcoming countries/ democracies are sometimes better informed through EIFL. Some credit can go to EBLIDA, as EIFLs Theresa Hackett once served as EBLIDA director and got to know copyright lobby issues inside out.

### **European level and/or national level**

Do we now have the European Library organisation, the Bureau we wished for and will need in the future? The dilemma of where to take action at European and/or national level has puzzled the library sector for a long time. How to distinguish actions at European level and national policies? EBLIDA has taken big steps. For a number of years, we heard from the MEPs that libraries had to understand the EU processes and work on timely interventions. Now we can say that all members can follow these processes. They are well informed through the summaries and newsletters, but have also to deal with the other side: to work in parallel and in smooth cooperation at their own national level and with their MPs and MEPs. Some association directors may have thought that they had outsourced the European issues to EBLIDA, and may gradually understand the EBLIDA membership obliges to commitment, for the best results.

### **Lobby capacity**

Further development of libraries at European level can be done through more lobbying by EBLIDA, hiring lobbyists in Brussels (and as the case may be in Strasbourg or Geneva). It is interesting to note that EBLIDA had official status at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) earlier than IFLA. It means that on a worldwide scale it might be easier to find homogeneity and common issues for the European countries, which can also be closer to the decisions makers. This is what former EBLIDA president Britt Marie Häggstrom explained about EBLIDA's role in a wider setting. She was also pleased with the cooperation within the Council of Europe, resulting in a set of Guidelines for library legislation, very useful for upcoming democracies. And one ponders nowadays, these guidelines should be studied again, by what we could call 'down going democracies'.

The question is: are national library organisations prepared for a joint agenda? It might be that the new United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 offers a welcome opportunity for European/EBLIDA members to work in cooperation, collecting local and national examples of how libraries in the broader sense contribute to sustainable development goals.

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<sup>2</sup> European Copyright User Platform

<sup>3</sup> European Copyright User Platform extended to Eastern and Central Europe

<sup>4</sup> Testbed implementation of the European Copyright User Platform

EBLIDA faces endless tasks with a small budget. This hasn't changed. The question of how to spread knowledge among its members (capacity building) and at the same time be totally involved in the lobby scene is not easy to answer, yet it's a question that EBLIDA Director faces on a daily basis. Do I lobby myself or in cooperation with expensive lobbyists? Is that a dilemma or an impossible question?

### **Urgency and action**

There is an urgent need for reflection and action. In the Aarhus Declaration, just presented here, we recognise a number of these themes – partly already visible in the Rynnänen report – such as unhindered access, promotion of reading and critical skills, literacy, an update of library policies, a recognition of libraries, and, new, - the connection to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), the UN Agenda 2030. What is consistent is also the plea for modern copyright exceptions, and a new legal framework and following business models.

So there is plenty to do for EBLIDA, its members, and partners like NAPLE.

### **Let's go for umbrella actions:**

Returning to the first EBLIDA decade, I wrote in the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary guestbook: Congratulations! And in brackets: [Maybe time for a new umbrella?] It is a mysterious phrase. Was my/the EBLIDA umbrella, distributed at the beginning, worn out? (I donated this one to the EBLIDA archive).

Or did I mean in 2002 that a new sort of umbrella organisation was set up, to which I was committed as well: the set-up of NAPLE. Or did I mean that the EBLIDA organisation needed renovation and innovation?

Whatever I meant, we can see that EBLIDA is moving and changing. I'm happy to see not only familiar but also new faces at this conference. We can be grateful to both. Without the tireless and enduring work of many colleagues in Europe, and especially the EBLIDA office with the wide range of advocacy work by its successive directors, we wouldn't have reached 25 years! Citizens of Europe are counting on us. So let's celebrate the changes and move on to tomorrow's opportunities for libraries! It's umbrella time!