Editorial

This issue, which comes to you just before the UKSG 16th Annual Conference meeting at the University of Southampton, reflects the papers which were presented at the Second European Serials Conference which took place in the Autumn of 1992 at Noordwijkerhout in the Netherlands.

This was a most interesting event which drew together a large number of participants from throughout Europe and beyond. One of the most striking features of the Conference was the similarity in concerns and initiatives which delegates from the range of countries represented enunciated. Not enough money to keep pace with serials' inflation, how to maintain a sensible collection which reflects the needs of the user communities, to what extent are the promises of electronic publishing to be realised and what effects will that revolution have on the traditional information chain.

This last concern was presented in a novel light by **Cliff McKnight** of HUSAT who looked at the notion of the electronic journal from the user's point of view. His article, based on his Conference presentation, traces the development of various initiatives in electronic publishing over recent years and isolates some of the pros and cons of the medium.

The second major theme of the Conference was developments in document delivery — another potential way forward for libraries trying to service their clients on a tight budget. **David Wood** from the British Library Document Supply Centre discusses some of the more recent initiatives introduced at the BLDSC, stressing how the Centre's stated goal of doubling its business is expected to be achieved through flexibility of service and alliances with other information brokers amongst other things. His paper vividly reflects how even the most established and respected institutions are having to adapt to the ever-changing circumstances of their customers.

Moving into Eastern Europe we include a piece on the state of libraries in Hungary where recent changes have led to a rethink of library funding and a totally new environment in which libraries have to work. Perhaps surprisingly, and certainly happily, the picture does not seem to be total doom and gloom.

The effects of the changes in Eastern Europe also touch on another of our contributions — this one describing the development of library networks in Germany. With reunification funding is having to be diverted into the neglected infrastructure of libraries in the former East Germany and this will inevitably delay other planned developments. Still, the networking of libraries has proceeded apace and one of the interesting elements of this discussion is the effect of regional political structures on how libraries have been able to progress.

Taking an international view is **Suzanne Santiago** who talked to the Conference about the work of ISDS and its continued rapid expansion. Best known for the progress which has been made on the International Standard Serial Number, ISDS carries out a vital role of harmonisation and development. Sheer numbers alone indicate the quality of the work it is doing.

Staying on an international note, **Elise Hermann** treated the Conference to a succinct explanation of the continuing work of IFLA. Describing how the organisation is structured, Elise illustrates the many areas in which it is involved in developing international work.

CD-ROM networks may be worth their weight in gold but they do cause problems. Two pieces included in this issue show the sorts of difficulties which arise and how they can be tackled. Enormously helpful given the general lack of experience available on the implementation of these powerful tools.

Moving away from the Conference, the British Library for Development Studies has recently automated its periodicals management, changing from Kalamazoo record cards to modules of MINISIS. **Barbara Downey** shares her hard-won knowledge of the intricacies of such a changeover in a serials environment which is just about as complicated as one could ever encounter.

This March issue is the last in which I will be involved as Editor. A change of responsibility at MCB University Press means that I will not have the time to devote to *Serials* which it deserves. It has been a lot of fun putting these five issues together over the last eighteen months and has given me the opportunity to meet many interesting people and learn a lot about the leading edge of serials management. I wish my successor every success for future issues and would like to thank the UKSG Committee and everybody else who has supported me in this work for their help and contributions. I hope you find this March issue as interesting to read as I have to put together.

Jonathan Barker