The Spanish Academic Libraries Network (REBIUN)

This article presents the evolution of the Spanish Academic Libraries Network (REBIUN), an association integrated into CRUE (Spanish University Presidents Conference). REBIUN represents and supports all Spanish academic and research libraries, and the organisation has recently drafted and approved a new Strategic Plan for 2003-2006 revising its mission and future vision.

MERCEDES GUIJARRO
Librarian, University of Alicante

The Spanish Academic Libraries Network (REBIUN, *Red Espa ola de Bibliotecas Universitarias*) was created in 1988, in the context of the development of the University Autonomy Law and the new University Statutes. The need for a stable association for academic and research library co-operation emerged as a response from a group of academic library managers for interchanging information, experiences and resources. The most important activities during those first years were the creation of a shared catalogue and an interlibrary loan protocol.

In the early years only a few libraries were members of REBIUN, but by the middle of the 1990's all Spanish academic libraries and the largest Spanish research libraries were members of the network. In 1997 REBIUN was integrated into the Spanish University Presidents Conference (CRUE, *Conferencia de Rectores de Universidades Espa olas*), as a specialised Committee and it had to adapt its organisation and statutes to the CRUE specifications. The President of REBIUN is a rector elected by the CRUE Assembly. Other members of the Permanent Committee of REBIUN are five library directors that the General Assembly elects for two years, the General Secretary of CRUE and one university manager.

Since 1997, the Permanent Committee and several Working Groups of REBIUN have been working on different projects, developing many activities and writing documents, reports and recommendations, many of which are available from the CRUE website: http://www.crue.org.

The most important activities are:

development of the online union catalogue *REBIUN En línea*. This is the biggest bibliographic catalogue in Spain with more than 12,000,000 record titles. It has a Z39.50 server and allows interlibrary loan services between libraries

publication of the *Academic and Research Libraries Statistics Yearbook*, from 1994 until 2001

interlibrary loan activities

organisation of seminars, conferences, workshops and exhibitions. Of particular note was the important exhibition of selected antique collections from Spanish university libraries that took place in the University of Santiago in the year 2000 with the title: *Ex-libris universitatis: el patrimonio de las Bibliotecas Universitarias Espa olas*

publications such as the *Rules and Guidelines for Academic and Research Libraries* (1997)

Manual of Academic Library Evaluation and other documents for helping to standardize and measure the quality of academic library services

setting up of Working Groups on Bibliographic Heritage Preservation, Collection Management, Electronic Collections, Interlibrary Loan Procedures, etc.

As a result of this continuous work, REBIUN has become a symbol of the Spanish libraries modernisation movement and it has also obtained general recognition as the authority for representing Spanish academic libraries.

In parallel to the activities of REBIUN, Spanish academic and research libraries have developed significantly during the last few years. Many have automated and/or migrated to new automated

systems; new buildings or renovation of old ones have been completed; more staff and more qualified librarians have been employed; new information technology systems and computer terminals have been installed; and, more recently, all type of electronic resource collections – databases, e-journals, etc. have been acquired.

In spite of REBIUN's success as a Spanish example of academic co-operation, after fourteen years of life, it was recently agreed to revise the organisation, to identify new goals and activities for the future, and to change the direction of activities to adapt them to the present context of the Spanish academic and research systems and the information technologies. In 2001, the REBIUN Annual Assembly (held at the University of Alicante) designated a Commission for develop-ing a survey and writing a draft Strategic Plan. This was discussed and approved by the General Assembly in May (University of Valladolid) and ratified in November (Polytechnic University of Madrid) of 2002.

The Strategic Plan for 2003-2006 renews the mission and vision of the future of REBIUN and organises strategic and operational aims into five major strategic lines:

> To promote a new model of the academic and research library as an active and essential part of a learning and research resources system

> To promote the development of Information and Communication Technologies in libraries and to support their implementation and maintenance

> To offer to the users a range of electronic information resources, collaborating with other regional library consortia

> To increase the level of professional training for librarians

> To define an organisational model for REBIUN.

Each strategic line has several strategic aims with operational and concrete goals. The complete Strategic Plan document is accessible from the following web address: *http://www.crue.org/rebiun-plan2003-2006.htm.*

As a result of the organisational changes, the Working Groups are replaced by five groups responsible for developing each strategic line. The co-ordinator of each group is a member of the REBIUN Permanent Committee and responsible for the programmed activities by the Assembly. In order to develop more efficient and quicker performances, REBIUN will also have, for the first time, a small permanent staff to develop and support its activities.

The development of this Strategic Plan will reinforce not only the position of REBIUN in the Spanish universities arena, but also the position of the library members in their own universities and in Spanish society in general.

Mercedes Guijarro, Librarian, University of Alicante, Spain.
E-mail: m.guijarro@ua.es