

# Imagine: Collection development in greek academic libraries in 2011

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## *Abstract*

Librarians are adapting the principles and practices of collection development to integrate new forms of publishing into the concept of library "collections". One essential challenge is to learn to choose wisely among formats when the same information is available in a variety of published forms. Selection considerations include evaluating the quality of the content, assessing the overall usability and value added features of each of the formats available, and analyzing the cost effectiveness of each option. This paper presents an overview of the emerging organizational models and analytical methods used to systematically select CDROM's and network accessible resources. Discussed are: 1. suggestions for staff training and organizational development to facilitate selection; 2. methods of assessing the total organizational impact of selection decisions; 3. selection criteria for evaluating digital resources; 4. considerations in negotiating terms and conditions of license agreements (such as password/security control, archival access, fixed fee pricing, limitations on downloading/printing); and 5. issues in consortial licensing of resources for academic libraries. In presenting current theory and practice of collection development in relation to digital resources, the specific emphasis is on selection of electronic journals and examples are drawn from the current e-journals marketplace.

*Keywords:* collection development, selection, electronic journals, license agreements, consortial licensing

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I'd like to begin by expressing my thanks to the organizing committee for the invitation to speak at this Seventh Conference of Greek Academic Librarians. I had the privilege of speaking at the First Conference in Ioannina, which was filled with great hope and promise. Now I see that promise fulfilled in the discussions and papers here in Volos. It is a great pleasure to return to Volos, where I spent 5 months in 1992 as a Fulbright fellow preparing a plan for the development of the University of Thessaly library. I am gratified to see the progress the library has made under Dr. Calpsopolous and his staff, and to sense at first hand the forward-looking spirit of the library at the University of Thessaly.

I have been asked to speak about collection development for the digital library. Collection development is the systematic and intentional development of collections by librarians to meet current and future needs of the communities served by the library. Currently systematic collection development is hardly practiced in Greece. To be blunt, and perhaps to generalize unfairly, collections are largely built by professors to serve their personal needs.

The challenge of collection development in the digital age is to select not only quality publications, but to select choose among a growing array of publication formats. Today many resources are available in print, CDROM, on the Web and/or in microform. Each publication may be available from several different vendors, using different interfaces and offering different prices, and different terms and conditions of use.

The goal is to build one intellectually cohesive collection, comprised of many different formats. This level of collection development is hardly practiced in the U.S. or in Europe, much less in Greece. Selection of digital publications is still largely opportunistic, serendipitous, and confused, reflecting the immature state of digital publishing. This is simply a phase we will go through on the way to developing an intellectually cohesive and substantive digital library. I believe libraries will regain their equilibrium and resume their primary functions: selecting, acquiring, and organizing a high quality, balanced representation of the literature of disciplines. Compiling a record of human knowledge which is selected without bias, carefully representing all points of view, and made accessible to all citizens, regardless of their ability to pay, and regardless of the current popularity or unpopularity of their area of inquiry. Libraries are for the ages, not just for the present moment. In perform-

ing this mission libraries are prime guarantors of academic and intellectual freedom in society and in the academy. They are an essential equalizing agent in a democratic society.

So what can I say about collection development which will be of help to you today? Before coming to Volos for the conference I had prepared a talk outlining specific practical strategies for adapting the principles and practices of collection development to building the digital library of the year 2000. After two days of listening to the proceedings here, I have thrown away that speech. Collection development in Greece, Europe, and the U.S. will not be very different in 2000 than it is now, at the end of 1998. Considering state of collection development in Greek libraries, this can be depressing topic.

However, as I have listened over the past two days and considered how far Greek academic libraries have come in the past six years, since the first Conference, I found reason to be very optimistic about the long range prospects for Greek academic libraries. I believe there are times when it more useful to look at where we are going over a 10-15 year period than it is to talk about what we will do over the next year or two. After two days of talking about the problems of today, I sense that this is such a time for collection development. Therefore, I have discarded my original talk and will present instead a vision of collection development in Greek academic libraries in the year 2011.

So now, I ask you to sit back, close your eyes, and, in the words of John Lennon, *imagine*. Imagine what you will have accomplished when you attend the 20th conference of Greek Academic Libraries in 2011. I will describe ten conditions which will prevail at that time and which will define the progress made in collection development in support of higher education in Greece.

**1. Online national union catalog will exist.**

A national online union catalog for Greece will have been a reality for nearly a decade. It will contain over two million records, allowing us to know what is held in each others libraries and thus providing the basis for coordinated collection development. It will make cataloging far more efficient by sharing records nationally and internationally, and will facilitate inter-library loan activity nationally and internationally.

**2. Consortium of Greek Academic Libraries will be 12 years old.** The fledgling organization founded at today's conference will be a robust

organization, effectively representing the interests of the existing 32 academic libraries in the nation and many others which will have joined. Activities will include programs along the lines of OhioLink, such as education and training, organizing the annual conference, and a variety of seminars and workshops. The Consortium will be linked with other European consortia and will have brought Greek libraries more firmly into the mainstream of European librarianship. The consortium will have negotiated many license agreements for members, based on principles like those developed by OhioLink, the California Digital Library, the Association of Research Libraries, and many European consortia. Each contract will have established sustainable precedents, thereby making it affordable for libraries to select and provide access to a substantial portion of the record of human knowledge.

### **3. Education and Training for Librarians**

The Ministry of Education will have found funds to retain the 400 librarians currently employed on EU funds. The Ministry will provide annual funding allocations for a vigorous program of continuing education and training for library staff throughout the nation, enabling them to keep up with changes in publishing and technology. In addition, the Ministry will have established a university program of study for the Masters of Library and Information Science, producing graduates who have backgrounds in an academic discipline at the undergraduate level and a MLIS. This will have helped to attract some of the brightest and most idealistic young people in Greece into this noble profession. The number of TEI and Masters level librarians will have swelled to over a 700.

**4. Professionalization of library administration** The trend towards professionalization of library administration will have gained great momentum. With more university-trained librarians and more continuing education for librarians, professors will begin to gain respect for the specialized knowledge of librarians. The Greek professorate will begin to realize that, like their colleagues in the rest of the world, they do not have the time or the knowledge to micromanage libraries and build library collections. The professorate will look around the world and observe that the great libraries were built by librarians who know how to utilize the subject expertise and political clout of scholars, not by scholars who pretended to be librarians. And thus the mutually important, essential roles of faculty and librarians will be clarified in Greece.

A new generation of academically trained collection development librarians will assume leadership in building coherent, balanced, nationally and internationally coordinated library collections.

### **5. Emergence of a national collection**

Librarians will intensify their outreach and liaison with academic departments, gaining in-depth knowledge of the curricula and research programs of the faculty. Through this and through work like the "course analysis" presented by our colleagues at the University of Macedonia, each library will have evolved a clear, concise statement of collection policy, and, again, building on the work of the University of Macedonia, each library will have completed the conspectus analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of their collections. This will provide a basis for coordinating collection development nationally, through a national collection development policy. This policy will be used to optimize expenditures on information resources in support of higher education in Greece. The Ministry will provide funding through the Consortium of Greek Academic Libraries for an excellent *core collection* of network accessible resources, including bibliographic files with links to the full text of thousands of electronic journals, and a wide selection of statistical data and spatial data or GIS. These will be delivered to the desktop of every faculty member and student through a national network.

Around this core collection, each university library will build, according to its university's programmatic strengths and priorities, specialized in-depth collections of print and electronic resources. These will be coordinated according to a national plan, which will ensure that the nation has in its collection national collection excellent resources in all fields of knowledge available to all citizens through a national network and system of document delivery. This high level of national cooperation and collaboration will optimize expenditures on information resources, securing the confidence of the Ministry of Education that its financial investments are worthwhile. This will result in the stabilization of library finance, with reliable annual allocations for acquisitions and library operations.

**6. Digital publications will be affordable to libraries** Due to the efforts of publishers, librarians, scholars and scientists, a significant portion of the knowledge base in most disciplines will have migrated to digital form. We will then have a better sense of what part of the record is available digitally, and best provided over the network,

and what part will remain in print and should be collected locally as part of a national collection plan.

While librarians will still complain about the cost of electronic journals, enormous strides will have been made in making these resources affordable to academia by a combination of:

- a. Scholars and librarians regaining control of the intellectual property rights of their publishing, diverting scholarly publishing out of the commercial sector and into the nonprofit sector; and
- b. Consortial negotiations by librarians in Greece and with their colleagues internationally, which will establish sustainable costs and terms and conditions of access.

### **7. Librarians will begin to assume a teaching role**

As Professor Vlahos mentioned, the university will be teaching young people that the library is the source of knowledge and information. Taking their cues from colleagues in the U.S. and Europe, librarians will begin to assume a teaching role in their universities, working with professors to introduce the skills and concept of information literacy into the curriculum. Here and there, librarians will begin to be accorded academic status (as opposed to full faculty status) in Greek universities, as they are in the U.S.

### **8. Greece will begin to work on a National Preservation Plan**

Based on a national collection policy, Greek librarians and scholars will turn their attention to the urgent task of developing a plan for preserving the nation's cultural heritage in the form of books, manuscripts, and electronic resources housed in libraries across the nation.

**9. Libraries will begin to be viewed as cultural centers** Libraries will come to be seen as more than just passive repositories of information resources and delivery mechanisms for desktop access to the electronic part of the record. As David Kohl said, they will increasingly be viewed as service organizations, assisting the academic community in utilizing the record of knowledge in pursuit of truth and learning. But they will become even more than service organizations. They will be seen as cultural institutions, essential pillars of democracy and guarantors of intellectual freedom for all citizens. The innovative work of the University of Thessaly in partnering with municipal libraries and school libraries will be emulated in other parts of Greece. In this and other ways university libraries will actively participate in the cultural development of their regions.

#### **10. The struggle for funding will continue**

I speculate that, at the 20th Conference of Greek Academic Librarians in 2011, Dr. Vlahos, be Minister of Education for the nation. He will attend the conference to announce that, due to their remarkable contribution to scholarship and to economic and cultural development in Greece, the Ministry is henceforth allocating 7% of its higher education budget to libraries. I also imagine that Mr. Tzekakis will immediately leap to his feet and respond with an eloquent argument as to why that is not nearly enough!

#### **Conclusion**

These are the elements of my vision for collection development for Greek academic libraries 13 years from now. Based on the amount of progress which has been made by academic libraries over the base 6 years, i.e. since the First Conference of Greek Academic Librarians, I believe this is not just a dream, but an achievable reality.

Why?

Because this is Greece, the birthplace of libraries, such as those of Alexandria and Pergamon, and so much of the world's cultural heritage. And because libraries are the most tangible, democratic, and idealistic institutions of the humanistic spirit which Greece has given the world. The library is the ultimate in cooperation and collective property, and it is appropriate that librarians and scholars should rally around the cause of cooperation in the development of a national library program. I envision librarians and scholars providing a model for the nation of cooperation, that most elusive of qualities in the Greek reality. But I believe this vision is achievable not just for sentimental, historical and philosophical reasons, but also for reasons of scale and opportunity. I have described the way libraries are headed in the rest of the world, and I feel confident Greece will move in the same direction.

Greece is a small nation with a relatively small number of universities. And it is in the very early stages of modernizing and professionalizing its library programs. This provides Greece with a significant advantage over larger nations, where library traditions are more entrenched and change can be more difficult. This is not to say that achieving this vision will be easy; quite the opposite. It will be a struggle. But one well worth the amazing effort you are all putting into it today, and will continue tomorrow. In the meantime, I hope this indulgence in a little imagining

of the future has been helpful and enjoyable. You have accomplished much since you began this annual meeting six years ago, and your momentum is inexorable.