REPORT ON ACTVITIES IN CYPRUS

1997-98 USIA/ ALA LIBRARY FELLOWS PROGRAM

SUMMARY

This report covers the activities of ALA/USIA library fellow, Kenning Arlitsch, in Cyprus during the six months between September 25, 1997 and March 25, 1998. The establishment of a ten-member database consortium is discussed in detail Four SearchBank databases were purchased from Information Access Company and made available to the students, staff, and faculty of the ten institutions. The databases provide unlimited access to the full text of over 1,000 journals via the World-Wide-Web.

Training sessions, proposals, and tangential activities are also discussed, and recommendations for future development of Cypriot libraries are covered.

CYPRUS BACKGROUND

Cyprus history reads like a Who's Who of invaders and conquerors. Myceneaens, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Romans, Byzantines, French Lusignans, English Crusaders, Greeks, and Turks have all laid claim to its soil; the roots of the modern conflict can be traced to the 19[h century. In 1878 the Ottoman Empire ceded Cyprus to Great Britain, which added the island to its long list of colonies. Antagonisms between Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriot minority were muted under British rule, but tensions flared after Cyprus gained independence in 1960. A Greek nationalistic movement (Enosis) sought a union with Greece, while the Turkish Cypriots naturally demurred. Atrocities occurred on both' sides, and in 1974, fearing a Greek coup against the Cypriot government of Archbishop Makarios, Turkey sent an invasion force and captured 38% of north Cyprus, effectively dividing the island. Greek Cypriots fled their villages in the north, and Turkish Cypriots fled from the south, and the United Nations brokered a cease-fire by drawing a buffer zone (Green Line) between north and south, which is still in effect. The Republic of Cyprus in the south is officially recognized throughout the world, while only Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The effect of this division on Cypriots cannot be underestimated. It is a constant force, economically, culturally, and psychologically. The Green Line is a daily reminder of the precarious peace under which they live, and expressions of hope, regret, and resignation are common on faces and in conversations. Cypriots on both sides of the line cannot normally cross, and crossings by tourists may be made in only one direction, i.e. a visitor who flies into an airport in the north will be denied a border crossing into the south by Greek Cypriot officials.

Under these conditions libraries could be expected to suffer, and so it is no surprise that the following report focuses on some glaring problems with Cypriot libraries, both in the south and the north.

ARRIVAL AND INITIAL VISITS

I arrived in Cyprus on September 25, 1997, and after a few days orientation and rest, began to visit area libraries. Initially I spent most of my time at the University of Cyprus and at Intercollege.

1) The largest institution of higher education in the Republic of Cyprus, the University of Cyprus was physically established in 1992. Its library contains nearly 100,000 volumes, although due to the crash of its automated catalog (TinLib) and a year-long interim period before the new system (Geac Advance) was installed, nearly half of those books are not cataloged and are stored in a warehouse off-site. My initial visits were facilitated by Antonis Maratheftis and Evgenios Ioannides. Antonis is essentially the acting director, although he does not officially hold that title, a situation which has left him feeling frustrated since he never knows whether the decisions he makes will be overturned upon the director's return. The director, Michael Tzekakis, was, to the best of my knowledge, absent from his job for ten months during 1997 due to obligations at his former job as library director in Crete.

2) Intercollege is the largest private college in the Republic of Cyprus, and has campuses in Nicosia, Larnaca, and Limassol. At approximately 15,000 volumes and three staff members, its main library in Nicosia is much smaller than the University's. TinLib is also used here, although the director is beginning to research options for replacement.

CREATING A DATABASE CONSORTIUM

My initial visits to the University of Cyprus and Intercollege libraries were soon supplemented by visits to numerous other libraries in the Nicosia area. In each of these libraries I observed a notable phenomenon. With the exception of the University of Cyprus, which owns approximately 1600 titles, the libraries I visited contained relatively small periodical collections of 50-200 titles, and many of the same periodicals appeared. Collections were therefore uniformly small, and duplicated. Moreover, relatively few periodical indexes existed in these collections.

It also became apparent that Cyprus has relatively good Internet connections. I began to form an idea to introduce some new technology, and by the end of October had contacted four vendors of periodical indexes and secured free trials to their Web-based full-text indexes. The four companies and their products were:

- Information Access Company (SearchBank)

- OCLC (FirstSearch)
- EBSCO Publishing (EBSCOHost)
- UMI (proQuest Direct)

I introduced and demonstrated these databases at my first Cyprus Library Network meeting on October 31 at the American Documentation Center (USIS Library), to a large group of attendees, giving all members free 30-60 day access to these databases.

At this point the serious work began. Thanks to Dr. John Harvey and Dorothea Akkides (librarian at the American Documentation Center) I was taken on a tour of more than a dozen Cypriot libraries, in addition to visiting several on my own. At each of these libraries, I talked to librarians and administrators about the Web-based databases, demonstrating them where circumstances allowed. Usually the databases were viewed with excitement, but there was almost always pessimism in regard to the idea of actually purchasing subscriptions to them. Expense was generally cited as a reason first, but when I explained that my idea was to build a consortium of libraries, wherein each member would contribute a relatively low amount to the total purchase, eyes rolled and I was told that such cooperation had never occurred in Cyprus and that I shouldn't expect that it ever would. Needless to say, some of my early efforts in Cyprus left me quite depressed and hopeless.

Still, I was convinced that my idea had potential. I believed that in one swift move, libraries in Cyprus could substantially increase their periodical holdings with the purchase of these databases. Some of the large institutions, such as the University of Cyprus, were still aiming for a networked system of CD-ROM indexes, and I took pains to express my feeling that the additional hardware and technical expertise required to network CDs would be a larger investment with smaller return than the Web-based databases. Furthermore, most of the institutions simply did not have the technical staff which could handle the creation and maintenance of a CD network. So many other features of the Web databases outweighed CDs: full text, daily updates, unlimited simultaneous use, 24-hour access, etc.

By early December, and with numerous visits and demonstrations behind me, I was feeling a bit more hopeful that at least two or three institutions would consider forming a consortium. Information Access Company had made an exceptionally low bid for its SearchBank databases, and the three largest institutions, University of Cyprus, Interollege, and Cyprus College, had expressed at least tentative interest. In what proved to be an enormously positive and helpful move, the American Documentation Center agreed to become a member of such a consortium. Previously 'there was some question as to whether the ADC could legally join such a group, but approval was granted from the USIA office in Washington D.C.1 In an often cantankerous meeting on December 15, 1997, during which antagonisms between the government institution and the private colleges bubbled to the surface, five institutions eventually saw the advantages of solidarity and agreed to form a consortium to purchase four SearchBank databases from Information Access Company. An agreement was made to sign a contract on January 15, 1998, allowing some time for other members to join.

By January 15, the number of interested parties was up to the limit of ten, according to the pricing agreement with Information Access Company. The additional five members became intersected largely due to the efforts of Dorothea Akkides, librarian at the American Documentation Center, who had phoned local colleagues, and to Dr. Andreas Eleftheriades, director of Cyprus College, who also solicited on behalf of the network. The contract was signed at a meeting at the American Documentation Center, and access to the databases was granted beginning February 1, 1998!

1. The ADC had previously assumed a leadership role by creating the Cyprus Library Network.

2. Shortly after my departure from Cyprus two other schools joined the consortium and an additional database was purchased. At least two more schools are expected to join within the year.

DATABASES

- *Expanded Academic ASAP TM*
  The most expansive full text coverage of academic disciplines available.
  Indexed/Full Text Titles: 1580/527
  Date range-indexing: current year + 3 years; full text: current + 3 years
- *General Businessfile International TM*
  IAC's largest multi-source business product.
  Indexed/Full Text Titles: 900/460
  Includes 90,000 company & industry reports and 200,000 company listings
  Date Range- Indexing: current year + 3 years; full *text: current year + 3 years*
- *Computer Database TM*
  Periodicals on the computer, telecommunications and electronics industries.
  Indexed/Full Text Titles: 150/103
  Date range: current year + 3 years
- *Health Reference Center -Academic*
  A full text multi-source database for health and wellness research. Access to sources in Health
  Reference Center as well as 40 full text nursing and allied health journals.
  Indexed/Full Text: 205/150
  Date Range: Current year plus 4 years

DATABASES	POUNDS STERLING	AMERICAN DOLLARS	CYPRIOT POUNDS
Expanded Academic ASAP General BusinessFile International	14,000	22,844	12, 171.23
Computer ASAP	3,500	5,711	3,042.81
Health Reference Center-Academic			
TOTAL	17,500	28,555	15,214.04

COSTS' BY INSTITUTION (IN CYPRIOT POUNDS)

INSTITUTION	CONTRIBUTION
American Documentation Center	2,000
University of Cyprus	2,000
Intercollege	2,000
Cyprus College	1,900
Fredericks Institute of Technology	1,900
Phillips College	1,400
Cyprus International Institute of Management	1,400
Pancyprian Gymnasium/Severios Library	900
PA College	900
College of Tourism and Hotel Management	900
TOTAL	**15,300**

The libraries saw immediate results of their purchase. Each of them now suddenly had 24-hour access to the full text of articles from more than one thousand journals and magazines, plus indexing and abstracts of nearly three thousand journals and magazines. Results of their searches could be printed, saved to disk, or emailed. The *General BusinessFile* database included an additional 90,000 full-text investment reports and directory information for over 200,000 companies. Implementation of the databases was nearly flawless, with only two members encountering difficulties due to Internet access security firewalls established by their Internet Service Providers. These problems were solved within two weeks of the official start date.

TRAINING

During the campaign to build a database consortium I conducted numerous training sessions at various institutions as a means of introducing the databases. After the contract was signed on January 15 I realized that I could probably spend most of the rest of my time giving SearchBank training sessions to ensure that the databases would be used to their potential. In all, I estimate that I delivered between forty and fifty of these training sessions. Approximately one-third of the sessions were hands-on, taught in a computer lab where the trainees could work on the databases.

In early February I also began to teach a seven-week (14 hours) course entitled *Methods and Technologies of Library Research,* which I adapted from a similar course taught at the University of Utah. It was intended as professional training for librarians from Cyprus, and the response was so great that a second section had to be opened, for a total of nearly forty librarians. The course focused on library technology (using Windows 95 and the Internet, building Web pages, using various electronic databases) but also covered traditional library concepts such as classification and using print indexes. The sessions were held in the computer labs at Intercollege and at the University of Cyprus.

A condensed version of that same course was also taught in northern Cyprus at Near East University, over two consecutive days in late February. Seventeen Turkish Cypriot librarians attended.

In addition to formal courses and database training sessions I also conducted numerous informal one-on-one training sessions for librarians and patrons, many of whom visited the American Documentation Center.

LIBRARY AUTOMATION

There are numerous libraries in Cyprus that have some kind of an automated catalog, and others which are considering automating, or upgrading their current systems. The systems in use are mostly a scattering of home-grown and proprietary systems. None of them (to the best of my knowledge), aside from the University of Cyprus, use the standard MARC cataloging format used by library catalogs the world over. This lack of the MARC standard in the catalogs can be likened to a time bomb. Eventually the catalog software will fail or will need to be upgraded, and because of the lack of this standard the work will not be easily convertible into a new appropriate library catalog.

"lt is crucial that Cyprus not repeat the mistakes of other countries and allow a number of incompatible OF A C's to develop for different user groups. This system incompatibility produces an electronic Tower of Babel that is very expensive and time- consuming to correct. "[3]

Meanwhile, every new book that is entered into the old system ensures a greater amount of work when a new system finally is purchased. For libraries that are just beginning to build an automated system, such as the European Institute of Cyprus, it is imperative that the MARC standard be used from the beginning. There is always pressure to save money and there are many well-intentioned computer scientists who are anxious to display their programming abilities by reinventing the wheel and building a library catalog from scratch, with no regard to, or knowledge of, established standards in the library world. Inevitably these situations lead to long-term damage and limitations which far outweigh the short-term relief they bring, and they should be avoided at all cost.

AUTOMATING ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARIES

Cyprus is blessed with a rich archaeological heritage and is therefore a mecca for scholars. In the Nicosia area there are three special libraries devoted to the collection of scholarly works in archaeology and related fields:

1. Archaeological Research Unit of the University of Cyprus (ARU);
2. Department of Antiquities Library at the Cyprus Museum;
3. Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute (CAARI).

3. Aceto, Vincent J. "Present state of libraries in the Republic of Cyprus with recommendations for the development of a national library information resources network." Unpublished Report. January 1993.

Each of these libraries is within two kilometers of the others. ARU and CAARI art! Approximately the same size, each containing roughly 6,000 volumes and 100-200 periodical titles, and the Dept. of Antiquities Library has approximately 15,000 volumes and 300 periodical titles.

Prior to my arrival the ARU and CAARI libraries were automated on home-grown, standalone systems; CAARI's library catalog is based on a variation of Dbase, while the ARU library was mainly a shelf list built using WordPerfect. The Dept. of Antiquities library was not automated at all, and searching this rich collection could be done only through a title and author card catalog. In an age where library catalogs across the world may now be searched via the Internet, Cyprus's archaeological holdings remain largely inaccessible to the scholars unless they are able to travel to the island.

Fortunately, progress is in evidence. The University of Cyprus began installing a new automated library system (Geac Advance) in November. As of this writing (June 1998) they have recently installed a computer at the ARU library and made a connection to the new system. At the same time that the new system has been installed, however, the University has chosen not to renew the contract of its librarian at the ARU.

During a meeting in early December with the director of the University of Cyprus Library, Mr. Michael Tzekakis, he generously offered space on the library's new server for the bibliographic records of the CAARI library, the Dept. of Antiquities Library, and the Pancyprian Gymnasium/Severios Library (to be discussed later). Based on his offer I wrote proposals outlining this idea and submitted them to the director of CAARI, Dr. Nancy Serwint, and to the then- interim director of the Dept. of Antiquities, Dr. Sophocles Hadjisavvas4. While CAARI already owned computer equipment and had an Internet connection, the Dept. of Antiquities had neither. Nevertheless, Dr. Hadjisavvas greeted the proposal enthusiastically and promised the delivery of a computer.

The proposal to the two libraries basically stated that their collections could be automated and made accessible world-wide rather quickly and with relatively little expense. The offer of server space on the university system precluded the need to purchase a new software or server. The expenses incurred in this endeavor could be limited to site license purchase of the Geac software, and the purchase of MARC cataloging records from OCLC or the British Library .The purchase of the cataloging records would be a one-time expense and would acquire the proper cataloging format very quickly. These records could then be imported into the university's system. Granted, nothing is ever as easy as described, but in basic terms, this could be a relatively simple operation, in which the most time and labor-consuming aspects are outsourced.

Unfortunately, CAARI is in a precarious financial position, and even the relatively low expense (approximately $5,000?) of this project was too far out of range. An alternate plan was devised with the help of Chris Hulin, the designer of the original Dbase catalog. After some discussion and description of MARC cataloging he agreed to write a program, which would convert the existing records to a basic MARC format, which would hopefully be compatible enough with the university system that the records could be converted without having to purchase MARC records. While a good start on this project was made in January, as of this writing no test records have been produced and the project seems dead in the water. It is understandable that Mr. Hulin has other

4 Dr. Hadjisavvas has since become permanent director of the Dept. of Antiquities

responsibilities and that writing a program to convert records into the proper format is no easy feat. This project seems ripe for a grant.

The Dept. of Antiquities, also seemed a dead issue, but in early March the promised computer suddenly appeared. However, when I went to see it shortly before my departure from Cyprus, neither a modem nor a CD player were installed, an Internet account had not been arranged, and no software aside from Windows 95 had been installed. I spent most of a morning there installing the modem and CD player, while the librarian called Cytanet to try to get an Internet account set up. The purchase of the computer is a good step, but unfortunately it has come too late for me to help with automating the catalog. The best I was able to do at that point was to outline the required steps to the computer-illiterate librarian and to write to the assistant director of the University of Cyprus library to remind him of the offer made by the director (who is away in Crete).

P ANCYPRIAN GYMNASIUM

The Pancyprian Gymnasium is the oldest high school in Cyprus. Its Severios Library contains approximately 60,000 volumes and 50 periodicals -a substantial collection for a high school, but it has never been automated and access is through an author and title card catalog only. Three librarians, none of them trained, staff the library that seems to be little-used.

In December I submitted a proposal to automate the library to Mr. Stylianos Papantoniou, the head master of the school. The proposal covered two main areas; joining the library consortium to subscribe to SearchBank databases, and automating the catalog via the offer made by Mr. Tzekakis. Mr. Papantoniou was very interested in improving the library situation, and he immediately took the initiative to become one of the ten founding members of the SearchBank database consortium.

Fulfilling the other part of the proposal will prove to be more difficult. Mr. Papantoniou has followed up on my suggestion by contacting the University of Cyprus library, but since Mr. Tzekakis is still away in Crete' and the university library is short-staffed there is no possibility for moving the project forward at this time. I believe the plan is still viable, and represents the only realistic proposal for automating the Severios Library collection.

GRANTS

In mid-November I submitted a grant proposal, co-authored with the Nicosia General Hospital medical librarian, Andreas Savva, to the Middle East Cancer Consortium (MECC), based in Israel. We requested $30,000 to create a document delivery system for Cypriot physicians, and to create a database of conference proceedings from the numerous medical conferences that occur in Cyprus. The grant will place computers, modems, and scanners in hospitals in Nicosia, Larnaca, Limassol and Paphos, establishing a national electronic infrastructure that will allow physicians to request and receive articles via the Internet. Shortly after my return to the United States I received word from Mr. Savva that the proposal has indeed been funded. I will return to Cyprus sometime later this year to lead the equipment installation and training effort.

TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS

My assignment was to include some work in the north, but time, my work in the south, and the inconvenience of crossing the Green Line and being unable to stay overnight in the north, made work there difficult. Consequently I did not spend nearly as much time there as I would have liked. I paid visits to Girne American University (GAU) in Kyrenia and Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) *in* Famagusta in November, but then did not return to EMU until mid-March.

In December I was invited by Jeffrey Doonan to present a lecture at Turk Marif Kollege (TMK), a high school in Nicosia. In February I delivered a condensed version of *Methods and Technologies of Library Research* (the course I taught *in* the south) over two full days at Near East University and the American Center in the north. I also delivered a lecture on information technologies to a large audience of students and faculty at Near East University.

One week before my departure I visited EMU again, this time accompanied by two representatives from Information Access Company. We delivered a presentation on the SearchBank databases in the hopes that a similar database consortium could eventually be established in the north. The databases were enthusiastically received by librarians and faculty, but a full consortium may take some time, as EMU is currently the only university, which has an Internet connection. This situation is expected to change soon, and IAC representatives will remain m contact.

The library at EMU is by far the most impressive I saw in all of Cyprus. Housed in its own building and covering three floors, the library contains over 100,000 volumes, 910 periodicals, and has a campus-wide network which allows faculty and students to access the library catalog (BLISS) from outside the library.

ANALYSIS

The needs in Cyprus libraries are many, but the issue of training stands to the fore. Few librarians have completed professional training programs in librarianship, and the Cyprus government's stance on this issue is something of a paradox. In the accreditation process it insists that private colleges must hire trained librarians, but its own behavior has shown a propensity to install non-librarians in librarian positions. In the Republic of Cyprus the government has recently created the European Institute of Cyprus, a joint venture with the European Union. The government provides the building and the staff, while the EU supplies the documents to establish a depository library of the Union. For the task of building a library from scratch the government of Cyprus has selected a young woman who, while enthusiastic and intelligent, has absolutely no library training. She is expected to oversee the selection and installation of an entire automated library system, catalog all documents from the EU, provide electronic access to databases, and deal with all other aspects of creating and running a library. This phenomenon *is* not limited to southern Cyprus. At a recent lecture at Near East University (where the librarian is a former geography professor with no library training), I was told by members of the audience that often the only requirement to become a librarian is to know how to type, and further, that libraries sometimes have reputations as backwaters where "problem" staff are installed. The results at Near East University are clear. Nineteen thousand books are in evidence in a ledger, which the librarian meticulously writes by hand, entering each book in the order in which it was received. There is no other catalog, and no way to search for books other than by perusing the ledger, which *is* several volumes in length.

These situations reflect a poor understanding by both governments of what librarians do. There is a common misconception about the mechanics of modern information retrieval, which touches all levels of society in Cyprus, and whose consequences affects libraries and librarians tremendously. In some ways this misconception has become almost a parody of itself; it continues to grow and affect thinking at the same time it is generally agreed upon to be untrue. The misconception is, of course, the idea that anything and everything is available through the Internet, free of charge, and only a few mouse-clicks away. At one training session I demonstrated the full-text SearchBank databases and was somewhat crestfallen to find that the students were not terribly impressed at the fact that millions of previously published magazine and journal articles could be retrieved from these databases. Nor did they seem interested in the fact that there was actually a learned skill involved in searching for these articles. At some point one of them made the comment that it seemed much easier to simply look for books on the Internet, which friends had told her were available in their entirety through library catalogs. Now it was their turn to be crestfallen as I told them that this was simply untrue -that library catalogs would provide only the bibliographic record of a book, not its text; that copyright limitations prevented entire books from being made available free of charge, and that the only books they would find are those (usually old) which are in the public domain.

This misunderstanding of exactly what is available on the Internet free of charge, and how information is organized is crucial to the understanding of libraries and the profession of librarianship. When the ignorance comes from students we merely groan, but when the same misconception *is* voiced by education administrators or government officials -people who have the power to carry out their ideas -the situation becomes serious. There are many educational administrators in Cyprus today who believe that libraries will soon be obsolete, and such logic naturally extends to the cutting of library funding, and to the inability to see the value in educating librarians, both of which in turn ensure the mediocrity of libraries and eventually the inability of citizens to excel in the economies of the information age.

Librarians themselves are at fault for not excelling in their positions and for not drawing attention to their accomplishments. The storage and retrieval of information is a learned skill, and contrary to popular belief (the oft-heard quote "library science is not rocket science" comes to mind) it is not an easy skill. T o become an efficient searcher in a variety of formats and on a variety of subjects takes years of practice. The best way to make others understand what it is that librarians do is to teach them. Teaching can take a variety of forms, from one-on-one instruction at the reference desk, to writing help guides and tutorials, to actually offering and teaching classes. Again, contrary to popular belief, the advent of computer technology has !lQ1 made the library easier to use. Computers have greatly increased the amount of information to which we can gain access, but they have greatly complicated the process. This sophistication of information technology represents an enormous teaching opportunity for librarians, and an opportunity to establish their importance in the information age. But first they must become experts in their field.

CONCLUSION

I feel that my fellowship in Cyprus was a tremendous success. I was able to introduce a new technology and greatly improve access to journal articles via the purchase of the SearchBank databases. More importantly, I managed to establish a consortium of libraries, which is something that had never occurred before in Cyprus, and which may lead to greater cooperation and further group purchases of databases.

Despite the problems described on the previous pages, there are many bright spots. With relatively little expense, for instance, the rich archaeological library collections could be made accessible to the world. With continued cooperation, colleges and universities could connect and share their resources. The possibilities are endless, and Cyprus is in some ways fortunate to be entering the information technologies arena at this stage, when they can leapfrog some of the older tools tried and discarded by American libraries.

As a visiting fellow I was treated with unfailing kindness and hospitality by both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Homes were opened to me, I was taken on trips, and often invited to dinners and other gatherings; those friendships will be treasured for a lifetime. Furthermore, the support of the American Embassy was crucial to my success. Having an embassy identity card allowed me to travel to the north much more easily than if I had gone on my own, and other embassy privileges were extremely helpful.

The value of the ALA/USIA library fellows program is immeasurable. Because of its "in-the- trenches" nature, and due to the relatively long periods of time fellows spend in their host countries, projects requiring a long-term commitment can be successfully approached and followed through. Though this could well have been the final year for the Library Fellows program I submit that its cessation is a mistake. The work that can and has been accomplished in this program brings an enormous amount of goodwill, gratitude, and respect toward Americans. In a world in which we are often viewed as a spoiled, arrogant, and overbearing country, that kind of PR is priceless.

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