IGeLU Conference report, Berlin 2013

Between 8th and 10th of September an annual IGeLU (International Group of Ex Libris Users) meeting was held for the users of Ex Libris products. This year's conference, eighth in a row, took place in Berlin at Freie Universität. We arrived at the city on Saturday afternoon, on September the 7th 2013, one day before the meeting. For our hotel we had chosen Residenz 2000 Aparthotel situated at a close proximity of the University, where in the foyer of „Henry Ford Building" the conference was to take place.

The content value of the participation in such a conference is priceless. Ex Libris presented to us a wide variety of their products. The meeting agenda was very varied and interesting. Our chief point of interest was the integrated library system **ALEPH** being the tool we work on at our library, the innovative search system **PRIMO** as well as the 'cloud' based next generation library system **ALMA**.

1. ALEPH Integrated Library System

   The participation in the discussion sessions concerning ALEPH system, enabled us to:

   - meet and exchange experiences with other users of the system coming from different countries worldwide,

   - listen to exposés and reports presenting new functionalities being worked upon for future versions of the system and making prominent the differences between data modules and structures implemented in different locations and versions of the system,

   - get to know the product development strategy of Ex Libris

2. PRIMO System

During the conference we had an opportunity to get to know the latest version of PRIMO multibrowser. At present, it is a universal tool allowing library users to find and to get access to full library resources, such as books, journals articles, as well as digital objects, regardless of their location.

The system developers also presented the functioning of this latest version of the system by connecting directly to those libraries where it had been already implemented.

The presentation of other libraries and their experiences using the PRIMO package to construct knowledge repositories, as well as repositories treated as digital libraries, helped us work out the concept of a repository for our own library.

Moreover, the representatives of Ex Libris presented and thoroughly discussed the nature of the conflict of interest between their company and EBSCO, the company offering data bases. This problem is very important especially for many libraries worldwide which have already possessed and explored for many years ALEPH integrated system.

3. ALMA System

ALMA system is the latest and the most innovative Ex Libris product. It constitutes the future of libraries. This is why we took keen interest in how it was implemented in other libraries worldwide.

During the conference sessions, the following topics concerning ALMA system were discussed:

- the concept of cloud computing library system was presented with its advantages as well as its shortcomings,

- a demo version of the system was presented,

- the difficulties of data migration from traditional systems to those based on the 'cloud' were made apparent

- different ways of meta-data creation and storage in 'cloud' were considered for diverse types of documents (traditional and digital),

- the development strategy and the schedule of implementing it in different regions of the world were presented.

Equally important as getting to know the future intensions of Ex Libris was getting acquainted with more general exposés concerning the future prospects of the development of information systems, as well the extension of the role of libraries in the future. These topic were presented in an excellent exposé the first day by Michael Cotta-Schønberg – Deputy Director General of the Royal Library and University Librarian of the University of Copenhagen and President of the Danish Association of Research Libraries. The topic of his keynote was: "The History of the World Library, 2050-2150".

Another interesting point was the last plenary session of the conference, dedicated to answering user questions concerning all company products, entitled „Ex Libris General Q&A" – conducted by leading Ex Libris employees.

We also took advantage of the opportunity to visit the campus buildings where we resided, as well as to take the pleasure of seeing the University Library. Seeing the working environment of our German colleagues was an interesting experience.

What cannot go without noticing were the exquisite refreshments which were served during numerous brakes between plenary sessions.

During the first day as well as during the following ones in our free time we took trips to Berlin city center in order to see numerous touristic attractions. The only exception was the evening of the 8th of September, when we participated in a social event organized at the Jewish Museum for all the conference attendees.

Afterwards we were invited to a reception where excellent wine and refreshments were served. Last day, just before our departure to Poland, we took a trip to the Pergamon Muzeum. The emotions which those trips inspired in us have been illustrated in the pictures below.

We are very grateful to BI-International – Bibliothek & Information Deutshland, for the financial grant given to us. It allowed us to participate in such an interesting conference and also extend our possibilities of visiting all the exciting places in Berlin which until then we had known only form literature and travel guides.

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