

Second NAPLE Conference, 5-8 October 2005, Supetar, Croatia

Second NAPLE conference entitled *The Role of Public Libraries in National Policies Towards the Knowledge Society* was held 5-8 October 2005 in Supetar, Croatia, in co-organization of Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, NAPLE Forum, National and University Library in Zagreb and City Library Marko Marulić in Split. It focused on two main subtopics: Digitization of Cultural Heritage and Implementation of Multiculturalism in Libraries.

Conference brought together over 100 representatives from 24 European countries and U.S. A mention should be made that along with representatives from the Croatian Ministry of Culture, public library managers and heads of development departments in public libraries from Croatia were also invited.

The opening talk on Croatian cultural heritage, tradition, cultural development, projects and Croatian cultural policy in general was given by the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, Božo Biškupić, whose very presence indicated his support and respect for the conference and its many participants. In his presentation, which was given in an optimistic air of recent positive decision on the start of negotiations with EU, Minister said that today «European integration and globalization are two most important processes influencing Croatian cultural policy» and proceeded to emphasize that «only educated nation can participate in the world of knowledge and that culture is the only form of action which has always been open to cooperation at all levels».

A number of presentations, workshops and discussions on the role of public libraries in national policies of development of society, knowledge societies, multiculturalism, and digitization of cultural heritage followed. The main goal was to encourage dialogue among governments, responsible authorities, libraries, museums, archives and all those who have on their agenda public libraries and their role for citizens in the 21st century. Experiences and best practices were shared among many participants while special attention has been given to models for advancement of profession in UK and Denmark, and lately in Portugal.

Two presenters, however, left a special impression on conference participants, and in particular on public library managers and heads of development departments from Croatian public libraries. The first one was Jens Thorhauge, NAPLE Forum co-ordinator and director of Danish National Library Authority, who talked about globalization and new competition in the world market where knowledge is sought more and more and libraries are expected to offer new services. He proceeded to note that the emergence of Internet brought about the

situation where less attention should be given to the physical library and more to connecting users with databases, collections etc. He also called for «smashing» of old institutions blocking creativity and thus opposing changes and adjustment. The second speaker was Chris Batt, director of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, UK, who spoke very interestingly about investing in knowledge, about new philosophy of archives, libraries and museums in the British knowledge society, new collaborative projects, leadership education/training, quality assurance, and about research that confirmed archives, libraries and museums as the most reliable information sources.

After the conference was closed and the conclusions have been unanimously accepted it is to be expected that conference participants will apply examples of good practices and experience in their home countries. Here in particular I have in mind Croatia, the host country, and its Ministry of Culture under whose authority Croatian libraries operate and the reorganization of Institute for librarianship operating under National and University Library and which treats the development of librarianship in a most traditional way. Also, having in mind that in Croatia local communities still play an important role in deciding the destiny of library profession, and in particular in public librarianship (i.e. cities are founders of public libraries), the conference would have a far more reaching effect if local community representatives responsible for libraries were also invited.

Ivan Pehar, Zadar City Library, Croatia