coming articles is very difficult to obtain. Also there are few places subscribing to Mathematical Reviews, Zentralblatt für Mathematik or current mathematical publications.

The process of "informatization" of the libraries has just begun. It is hindered by the lack of standards. There is a growing number of mathematicians with a computer in their room, and networks are quickly expanding. On the other hand, there is little chance of using on-line database systems offered by some information centers in Western Europe because of lack of money.

The main problem is of course money or rather lack of it. This is responsible for the very poor accessibility to journals. Another problem is the doubling of resources connected with the existences of many rival institutions of the same kind in one city. Exchange of periodicals with educational institutions abroad is too centralized to be of great help for provincial (but not necessarily small) universities. The universal application of the consecutive numbering of the books makes it very difficult to put them on shelves for easy access.

The main university libraries are financed centrally. The local libraries' existence depends on the flow of money from grants from members of the institutes. This makes their future very uncertain.

The Financial Situation of Mathematical Libraries in Hungary

by A. Szendrei

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In Hungary there are six libraries with a significant mathematical collection; two general libraries: the central library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the central library of the Technical University of Budapest, and four mathematical libraries: the library of the Mathematical Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the mathematical libraries of three universities (in Budapest, Debrecen, and Szeged). It should be noted that the mathematical libraries of the three universities are not completely independent of the central libraries of those universities.

The mathematical libraries in Hungary have similar problems; therefore, although I have information mostly on the library in Szeged and the library of the Mathematical Research Institute in Budapest, I think these two will reflect the general situation.

Financing

The financing of the mathematical libraries in Hungary comes mainly from government sources, and the real value of this financing has been strictly decreasing
Financing of the Libraries

for at least a decade. Just to illustrate this with figures for the last two years: in 1991 the inflation rate was 36% while the financing of these institutions was increased nominally by 5%; this year the inflation rate is expected to be 27%, and it has already been announced that no nominal increase is planned in financing for 1993.

We have some other sources as well:

1) Research grants. The grant system was introduced in Hungary in 1986. Primarily, the applicants for these grants are research groups. The source I am referring to is that research groups having grants offer a certain (not low!) percentage of their grant money for the library of their institutes. (Consequently, they have less money for such expenses as travelling and inviting guests.)

2) TEMPUS. The TEMPUS program allows the Eastern partners in the projects to buy books to raise the level of teaching activities covered by the projects.

3) Occasional donations by foundations and institutions in Western countries, and donations by individuals.

Unfortunately, there is a problem with the latter two sources: in most cases sources from Western countries are not allowed to be spent on ordering journals (even for a limited period of time).

How do we try to cope with the situation?

Periodicals. Because of rising prices and insufficient financing we have been forced, from time to time, to cancel subscriptions of several journals. This process started almost a decade ago, so that now we have reached a point where new cancellations would have a severe effect on current research. The most painful loss to the library in Szeged was in 1989 when we were obliged to cancel the Crelle Journal, which we had possessed since its very beginning in 1823. Cancelling subscriptions was coordinated so that each important journal could be found in at least one mathematical library in Hungary.

Since 1991, the Hungarian export-import company for cultural goods, which sold Hungarian journals at an unfairly low price and at the same time was disinterested in negotiating prices of books and journals it bought for the Hungarian libraries, has lost its monopoly. As a consequence, in that year, Western journals cost our libraries less than the previous year. However, it was during this year that the price of journals from Eastern countries rose sharply. It is rather surprising, but in many cases a journal from the former Soviet Union costs practically the same as its English translation. Therefore it is very probable that Hungarian libraries will switch to the English translations, and at the same time will be forced to cancel some of them.

Because of the financial difficulties, exchange of periodicals is very important for us. The mathematical libraries in Hungary have extensive exchange programs, and we are interested in widening them.
Books. I think it is fair to say that the number of books acquired by the mathematical libraries in Hungary is far below the needs. However, if we want to make a year-by-year comparison, the picture is more complex, and depends on how many funds were available from what I called extra sources that can only be spent on books. For example, in the library of the Mathematical Research Institute, the number of books being acquired in recent years has been decreasing, while at the library in Szeged there was a slight increase, thanks to TEMPUS.

The library in Szeged also keeps the books that are reviewed in the mathematical journal of the University of Szeged (Acta Sci. Math.), and these are a very valuable contribution to the collection of books.

Services in libraries. All mathematical libraries in Hungary are in old buildings and there is no room for expansion; in some of them the reading room is very small. Copying is available in all libraries; however, in most cases demand for the copiers far exceeds their capacity.

In the Szeged library, there is a computerized catalogue of books where the decimal and the AMS classifications are also included. The whole process was carried out without any extra fund. In the library of the Mathematical Research Institute, computerization is in the making.

Summary

The financial situation in mathematical libraries in Hungary is urgent, although it is certainly better than in many other East European countries. So far, we have been able to survive with a few sacrifices, thanks to the generosity of colleagues and some foreign institutions. However, we have rather gloomy prospects for the near future.

I would like to conclude with some suggestions on how our problems could be eased.

1) We would welcome offers for exchange of journals, as well as superfluous copies of books that some libraries might have.

2) It would be a great help if publishers regularly sent us their yearly catalogues — even if we cannot afford to buy the books each time. We would also be grateful if publishers sent us a free copy of each new publication that we request for a book review.

3) The restriction of Western projects or donations to the effect that the fund they provide cannot be used for ordering journals ought to be reconsidered. Furthermore, the COST program does not seem to allow spending money on books or journals, which is bad news for us.

4) The financial aid from EC or Western governmental sources intended for Hungarian libraries usually ends up in the main general libraries. Perhaps the European Mathematical Society could try to see to it that a portion of