APPENDIX 1

Results of the Questionnaire

A survey of mathematics libraries in Europe was started at the beginning of 1992. This survey was intended to define the various problems for which the libraries share concern. Around 200 questionnaires were sent to libraries on the one hand, and on the other hand, around a hundred were sent to European mathematical societies to be distributed among their own mathematics libraries.

We received 36 answers from Western Europe, 9 from Eastern Europe and 27 from France.

We are well aware that for European countries outside France, this is just a beginning, albeit a promising one. Concerning France, the network of French mathematics libraries was helpful in targeting addressees and collecting a large number of answers primarily from mathematics departments.

The order of preference of proposed themes was explicit enough and helped us to define the orientations of the round table (financing, documentation cost, documentary inflation, computerization and new technologies, library personnel).

Collections and readers

Tables 1 and 2 give an idea of the quantity of documents possessed by various libraries.

The number of readers in research libraries depends on the size of their department, and their educational level corresponds to at least four years of university studies. On the contrary, university libraries did not differentiate readers according to their discipline and their educational level is more varied.

Users almost always have access to the shelves and can borrow almost all books. Periodicals can be borrowed in half of European libraries (but only in one third of the French libraries).

Funding

There is a significant difference in financing among European libraries. French libraries receive funds from very diverse sources, whereas libraries in the rest of Europe are essentially dependent on a unique source (government, mathematics department or institution).

If most libraries have a regular funding (either good or bad), they are all concerned with their diminishing purchasing power in the face of documentary inflation and rising publication prices.

Several solutions are suggested in the face of this situation. If some are resigned to their fate, others consider looking for patrons. Many libraries try first to compensate for this situation by decreasing book purchases through a vigilant acquisition policy and the development of coordination with other libraries. Above
all, everyone is starting to reflect on the causes of this inflation (43% have already cancelled subscriptions).

On the average, libraries devote one third of their budget to book purchases and two thirds to subscriptions. The binding budget is around 5 or 6%, but unfortunately this only concerns a small number of libraries.

Libraries that have been computerized often benefited from specific funds.

Documentary policy and interlibrary relations

In all libraries, most acquisitions are decided either by a committee of mathematicians, or by a mixed committee of mathematicians and librarians.

If 80% of the libraries surveyed are developing exchanges, 40% admit, with the exception of Eastern European countries, that this has little impact on their budget, although for 46% the scientific impact is significant.

What is exchanged? Mostly preprints and periodicals and few publications in series.

60% of the libraries take part in interlibrary loans. Most libraries have essentially local (city or region) connections in the form of common catalogues and a supply of photocopies.

In several places, acquisitions are coordinated to increase documentary coherence and also as a savings measure.

New technologies

75% of the libraries are computerized, 40% of which were computerized about 5 years ago. Computerization has been slow but steady and its pace has increased since 1985.

The most commonly computerized function is cataloguing, then acquisitions and loans. The machines most widely used are PCs or Macs. In big libraries, the main frame is the main server.

In most countries, computerized cataloguing norms are diverse, often local, and the same is true for software. France stands apart with a more unified situation: one software is dominant and the MARC standard is widely used.

More than 50% of libraries do not have a CD-ROM yet and 50% (not necessarily the same 50%) have no access to databases.

Almost 40% belong to a national network and slightly more than 30% to a thematic network.

Questions raised

The financial problem is essential for all. Apart from this, the main difficulties are caused by personnel problems and sometimes a lack of space.

In some cases, a blatant lack of personnel prevents normal operation of the library. In other cases, lack of qualifications produces the same effect. Without exception, all institutions raise the issue of lack of personnel.
In view of the results of this survey and of the discussions of the round table of the European Congress of Mathematics, it seems that many subjects deserve an in-depth study. European mathematical documentation is still not well known and needs a more comprehensive approach.

The generalization of new technology should bring the various institutions closer to each other. A network would probably constitute a precious help, even if it is informal in the beginning. Coordination of standards could only reinforce relations and exchanges. More frequent meetings should enhance existing ties and lead to common projects.

Besides, this “future network” would be a more appropriate framework in which convincing arguments could be found to substantiate financial requests necessary for the smooth functioning of libraries. Indeed, we can only stress once more that libraries are the essential tools of mathematicians.