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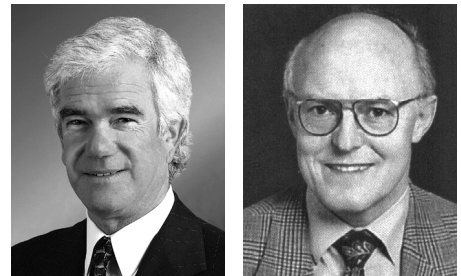
Towards worldwide cooperation – OCLC and PICA

Interview with the president of OCLC

Vorbemerkung

Im Dezember 1999 wurde der Vertrag zwischen OCLC¹ und PICA unterzeichnet, der eine 60%-Beteiligung des amerikanischen Online-Bibliothekszentrums in Dublin/Ohio an der neu gegründeten PICA-Online Information Services (OIS) im Verlaufe des Jahres 2000 vorsah. In dieser Situation war es von großem Interesse, die Vorstellungen des Präsidenten von OCLC, Jay Jordan, über die zukünftige Entwicklung kennenzulernen. Im Gegensatz zu vielen anderen Amerikanern hat er langjährige Erfahrungen in Europa gesammelt. Das folgende Interview, das am 06.03.2000 in Dublin/Ohio durchgeführt wurde, geht zunächst auf die Frage ein, ob die Übernahme von PICA eine wesentliche Veränderung der bisherigen Geschäftspolitik von PICA bedeutet, das sich bisher durch die Kombination des Vertriebs von selbst entwickelter Software für Verbundsysteme und lokale Anwendung und ihren konkreten Einsatz in den Niederlanden auszeichnete.

Daneben werden Fragen der internationalen Zusammenarbeit bei der Erschließung und Bereitstellung ins-



besondere elektronischer Medien, die zukünftige Rolle des OCLC und neue Ansätze der inneren Führung angesprochen.

Interview

M: Our main interest is, that OCLC is starting a European activity, working together and taking part at the new PICA society. I would ask you first that after this new start in continental Europe, will that change PICA or will that change OCLC? PICA was until now a service provider with the philosophy to build a network of regional or statewide networks of little size. And OCLC was more world wide oriented builder of a big world catalogue. Will PICA and their partners now get a part of this WorldCat only?

J: We are very excited about the opportunities that our partnership with PICA bring on behalf of libraries both in

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Europe and outside that region as well. And it's a very enlightened question to ask whether it will change PICA or would in fact change OCLC. My strong desire is that it will change both of us for the better. I think OCLC has operated quite effectively outside of the United States for certain activities. I hesitate to call OCLC truly global in its approach to services, though. It was founded by Ohio academic libraries and then extended to the balance of the U.S. and today serves multiple library types in the United States and increasingly outside the United States.

But PICA has developed some very good central and distributed solutions that are well integrated out to the point of actual document delivery, which in fact is more than OCLC has done with some of its systems. We think we can learn a great deal about PICA's approach to developing and networking medium-sized organizations.

And at the same time we think we can bring new value to PICA by perhaps giving them greater access to content. Certainly WorldCat is an obvious opportunity. We also think there are opportunities for abstracting and indexing and full-text journal content. We can extend PICA's offering by negotiating agreements, or renegotiating current agreements, to provide the additional contents for the PiCartasystem.

M: In which stage now is this co-operation you will do with PICA? Are there mutual exchanges of staff? What is the timetable of the co-operation?

J: Well, as you're probably aware, the process took about one year so that each of us understood precisely what the value was for us to come together in a partnership. And we were obviously developing plans then and since the completion of the transaction in December of 1999 we have accelerated those activities. There have been a number of staff visits between OCLC staff, staff from OCLC's Birmingham office to Leiden, the PICA headquarters, and vice versa. A number of PICA staff have visited OCLC over the past six months so that we can understand where the near term opportunities lie, and plan accordingly the allocation of resources for both of the partners. But PICA's mission does not change in the near term and probably not particularly in the long term. And so it's very important that they continue to develop and support the systems that they are running today; that we launch PiCarta and that they complete the national French contract, the cataloging system for academic libraries, on schedule with the quality that is called for in that contract.

So, we are looking at infrastructure issues-what our systems look like, the internal systems at PICA, the internal systems at OCLC. We actually run on similar technology. So we think a common platform in the future will offer intelligent economies and synergies as far as performance is concerned.

M: But PICA is changing from the TANDEM system to a UNIX platform. Will you do the same?

J: We already run both TANDEM and UNIX here, so we feel we can help them in their transition to UNIX and a part of the staff exchange was on that subject. We had our UNIX team over in Leiden understanding what their challenges are and, since we have deployed UNIX here, we feel we can be a very helpful partner in that regard and we are looking at the next generation system for our main cataloguing affords here.

M: You mentioned WorldCat. Will it be somewhat like EUROCAT, or will you merge the European data into WorldCat?

J: What we are trying to do is provide the best solution for European participants. It probably doesn't make much sense to take the entire WorldCat database and load it to a server in the Netherlands. What we want to do is to provide seamless linkage to WorldCat resources. If in fact segments should be mounted locally in the European region, then we will look at that. We do want to develop a more extensive network of resources using PICA as an operation centre to develop a better network to other national catalogue resources or regional catalogue resources, or in fact individual institutional resources.

M: Librarians are using different rules in Europe and in the United States. As a German partner, I know that quite in detail, because I did some research on that in the REUSE project what was partly funded by OCLC. We had a lot of problems for example, cataloging directly into the CORC system. It is much easier for us, since we catalogue electronic material in the PICA system to transform these data into the formats of OCLC, of WorldCat or CORC. In this aspect it would be quite good perhaps to have a mirror in Europe for this CORC material. If we speak about electronic material the publication world is extremely changing, the role of the author is changing, the role of the publisher is changing; the learned societies will perhaps play a stronger part and the libraries as well as the subscription agencies may change their activities and duties. How do you define the role of OCLC in this changing world of internet publication and communication?

J: Let me go back to your earlier observation about different cataloguing rules and how PICA and OCLC in partnership might help force the situation and the exporting and the importing of the intelligent exchange of knowledge objects. As you well know, one of the facilitating tools within the CORC design, is Dublin Core. Perhaps some day the DOI/URL standard will be there. But if it is, it allows us to take different rules or different rules based information and provide common tools so that those differences can be resolved.

I think that is an important role that is implicit in the CORC design, that we want to be a resolving knowledge exchange, if you will. So that the search could come in from Japan or searches could come in from Germany or searches could come in from the United States and those interrogations could be resolved at the server and the result set send back, within the appropriate rule set. So I think that is one thing that is definitely a possibility and should be in our vision. Another option is to run the CORC tool set on the PICA platform.

But, we must finish our initial release of CORC (The Cooperative Online Resource Catalog went into production in July 2000.) before we export any versions so that we are sure what the performance is, that it is robust enough, that it is reliable and so on and so forth, before we have it as a part of a platform for European regional solution.

Now the change in the relationships of the creation or management of intellectual property are certainly interesting. OCLC today as you are aware plays a number of different roles in the value chain and I think our roles must change as well.

I think what we are looking at currently is, OCLC owns certain content. So the library collaborative known as OCLC owns the WorldCat database. OCLC owns other databases such as NETFIRST. Recently we merged with PAIS (Public Affairs Information Service) in New York City, which has built an abstract and index file of 450 000 items representing publications from a 120 different countries. Now that the content is owned by OCLC, the desirability is to control the price to the end-using institutions.

So one thing we can do is look for other opportunities either to create resources directly through OCLC or PICA or in fact to merge with an other organization or to acquire.

Today we also provide a great deal of information with license from third parties. Whether they are aggregators themselves or intermediaries or in fact direct publishers. I think we have to look constantly re-balancing the portfolio to understand what percentage of the offerings of either PICA or OCLC should be licensed third party.

The only reason that OCLC should offer licensed third party material is in fact that we add value either because of intelligent linkages between one data object and another or in fact the common interface, the common platform, the tool set, because obviously we don't own those databases.

So we have to constantly ask the question, are we adding distinctive value for libraries and – if we are not – we must look again at our license content arrangements and understand how they must change.

A third area would be actual content development with institutions as the partners so that if OCLC/PICA were to offer an ability to publish into this knowledge container directly so that an individual author of a dissertation, a thesis or an article could be published with obviously the proper refereeing authorities supply to it and then shared with the rest of the library community on some reasonable cost basis. We think that this presents another area that we need to look at closely.

So then we would be creating some content as OCLC/PICA, some content would be created on a collaborative basis as WorldCat was created and we would continue to offer certain third party licensed to content as well. That made sense within the overall context and in fact added value.

M: There is a development in the learned societies and in the research societies that they try to bring the publication field in their hand. Could you imagine that OCLC/PICA could be a partner for such societies as well?

J: Yes, but I don't see OCLC solving the equation by itself. Certainly the relationship between libraries and institution partners are critical. I think certain professional societies could well be logical partners for OCLC/PICA in the future. But as you are well aware there are some very good efforts going on, such as the SPARC initiative, that are looking at alternatives to the current scholarly publishing model. So I think it's important that OCLC participate in those alliances if they are logical and in fact create the best solution for the community.

M: Is this a new view of this matter?

J: We know the publishing model is changing rapidly. I think publishers and aggregators also understand that the ground is moving under our collective feet.

We have very frank relationships, very good ones, with those from whom we license content. They understand

our needs and that we serve libraries as our public purpose. But if a different model emerges that will allow OCLC to serve its communities more effectively, that is where we must go.

And again, we will continue to evolve our relationships with publishers and hopefully we are still providing the extensive content with their co-operation.

M: You mentioned Dublin Core. Dublin Core is in some aspect a new philosophy for the internet, where the content providers themselves combine their material themselves with metadata. There are other activities of similar kind for example the Santa Fe convention. Would you like to involve OCLC more in this process of standardisation of communication tools?

J: Yes, and I think it is not well known how involved OCLC already is in these activities. Several of our staff from the office of research have been involved in the creation of the Dublin Core approach to metadata. They also have been involved in the resource description framework, the RDF standardization activity. We stay involved in ISO-activities as they relate to ILL. So there is a lot of standards activity going on at OCLC and a number of OCLC employees are members of standards committees, both US and international committees.

These are important activities that we will continue to do and that we will do more of as appropriate so that there is someone at the table, if you will in a standards discussion on behalf of libraries.

M: As you have done with Dublin Core. It was really the right moment to bring people together who were interested to do what was needed but was not functional until then. Could you think that that OCLC could have a role as a body what looks for the development in internet cataloguing, then trying to bring together people to make conferences you give the opportunity people exchange their ideas and that if the situation is more clear OCLC takes the role of the leading body for the realisation of the results, using the standards and making matters working well.

J: In formulating the question you have answered exactly as I would have. Yes, there is a very important role for OCLC to play and, once again, OCLC can not on its own drive the standardization activities on a global scale. But I think that notion that OCLC/PICA can be a facilitator, a clearinghouse, for a group of interested parties to come together to map out an approach and understand what the practical challenges will be is relevant.

The very talented individuals in the OCLC Office of Research are already engaged in a number of these activities. I think we must operate more globally, and I know our partnership with PICA will help in this regard. One of the ideas we look at constantly is the World Wide Web consortium. That is an effective model; we know the value that's been created there. The principle that is demonstrated there might in fact be a model that we can pursue in a context of new technologies and new standards. It's all about exchanging knowledge objects without regard to time zones, rules or borders. I think that is an absolutely important role that OCLC and its partner libraries must play.

M: Lets come to a different kind of matter. You know that the libraries are extremely stressed to reduce staff, to save money for services and so on. As OCLC was funded it was the shared cataloguing idea and what re-

ally helped the libraries to overcome with a similar situation. Do you have a strategy to strengthen the library for the future work in a similar way?

J: Yes, perhaps we'll provide a publishing platform into which original publishing can go. I think another role that we might play is the intelligent linking of collections. Let's talk about special collections, for example. Let's say a grant funded the digitization of a special collection. That's great as long as the collection is also catalogued. If it's not catalogued, it's still a very special collection to which not many people have access. I think one of the other roles that OCLC can play on behalf of libraries is starting to link those bibliographic records.

Other collaborative activities and productivity tools that we have produced or are producing certainly includes the fee management module within the inter-library-loan system, which does the accounting between the lending library and the borrowing library. It's been immensely effective and a very efficient value added feature, especially for net-lending libraries.

I can see an extension of that model, which I don't want to go in to today, that will help track copyright, royalties, intellectual property rights and so on, on automated basis.

We have produced 2 new services just in the last 12 months. One is called CatExpress. CatExpress allows smaller institutions to do simple copy cataloguing using a Web form. The other product is called CORC, the OCLC Cooperative Online Catalog, which lets libraries create metadata for Web resources.

We have had feedback from large institutions using CORC that said they can actually use reference librarians to build the initial cataloguing record and have a cataloger upgrade the final version. So because of the constraint of resources for cataloguers, and anybody else in the library environment, I think we should build better tools that help the productivity issue. Another product that was released is called WebExpress.

WebExpress allows the library to configure their web front-end to point at their holdings or in fact to point at any other holdings using Z39.50 targeting. And yet they can customize the interface, if you will, so it's a sort of „my librarian“ in the YAHOO sense. The point is why should every library in the world have to hire a contractor to develop a web front-end for their library? If this is a common need then that's the type of work where I think OCLC can add value, for libraries globally. So yes, it is always our strongest desire to produce collaborative products which in fact add value broadly to participants.

M: You mentioned that you are looking for content under the aspect of helping the libraries as well. Do you think that this could be a role as in some respect as a competitor against the publishing houses who sell the material at extremely high prices so that the libraries have to spend so much money that they are no more able to fulfil their normal tasks?

J: I think if we look way out into the future that might be a scenario, where one of the large publishers might consider OCLC to be an alternative publishing model. We know what the equation is for the scholarly journal article and a distribution, indexing and linkage delivery at the other end of the equation. So they still have substantial value now whether the pricing the return to them is reasonable that's really up to the buyers to negotiate with their sellers. But I do think there is a tremendous

amount of – I don't want to say grey area – but there is a space in the middle I don't think that's been particularly well served.

OCLC might provide a tool where – if people choose to publish in this environment, they can do so. Certainly there is no strategic plan to displace any large publisher. That's not our mission nor do we have the wherewithal to do that.

But I really do believe there is still a value added service, and the objective is not to create a competitive situation with any given publisher. I just believe that there is a missing area that OCLC could help provide more value in building this knowledge base.

M: There is a model in Denmark with a technical library they started with the philosophy to change from printed material to electronic only. And they reduced staff at about 20 percent. They used the money they saved to get more material online as they have had before in print. Their philosophy for the future is to have the totally electronic library. Do you think it's a model what could be a future model for the whole library community and what OCLC will help to realise?

J: Well, it's a very interesting approach. And obviously it must be a viable approach at least in that one instance because if they are still operating and are able to add more content for the same Krone, then it seems to be working. I really think that OCLC's role is broader than that, because obviously scholars want access to original materials. So that is still within our public purpose and in our mission: to create access to knowledge objects. And I talk about knowledge management, a great deal, and I talk about knowledge objects, a great deal. And I don't think it's for us to differentiate whether or not we are pointing at one of the copies of the Gutenberg-Bible at the Göttingen Library or pointing at digital object that was born digital or was originally published as a paper dissertation.

So I don't think our goal should be to create a paperless environment. We obviously serve a role having catalogued a great number of media from recorded music to video objects to monographs, manuscripts and so on. I think we must continue to be a mutual container, without regard to what form the object takes, if in fact there is an image version and a print version. And, you know in the case of a monograph, there is an author version because it's the author reading his work., So there is an audio file, a video file, that movie that was produced, and so on. I think all of the objects have to be treated equally within this large knowledge exchange container.

M: So that the metadata are electronically, but not the media.

J: Right, the metadata obviously is the best service we did. All the using community in fact add this electronic data to our database.

M: Right, now all those changes in the publication world and the management of information world have certainly make necessary to change OCLC as well. What is the organisation process you are going on with OCLC in the next months to compete in these developments?

J: Well, we'll do a number of things. There is a lot of activity here which could be categorized as cultural change initiatives if we want to put it under a broad umbrella. I'm not going to list them for you, because I'm sure your readership is not interested in all of them, but the CORC project is a good example.

What we tried to do is build a collaborative team, so that they have resources from every part of OCLC that needed to be on the team. So that is truly a concurrent engineering model and in fact it is a collaborative model. So not only are we building a collaborative database in a concurrent fashion with some 250 institutions around the globe participating, but the tool set is being developed in a collaborative fashion as well. So we are developing features quickly, and if the user said this feature is not working or it's too slow or it's not particularly useful, then the team takes a look at it very quickly and in some instances we install solutions within a day, within a matter of hours. And that user logs on again and says, my heaven you fixed the problem. So it's a very exciting model.

I really do not believe personally that quality and speed are mutually exclusive conditions, that you can retain quality and you can also move quite quickly. I think that our friends in the „.com“ commercial world prove that on a daily basis. So, one of the things we are trying to do is understand what type of organizational structure, what type of leadership is required at which level, at the project level, frankly at the CEO level, at the vice presidential level, at the directors level. What type of leadership is required here.

So another big initiative is to do leadership development to get people out of Ohio as much as possible so that, one, they can sit in the environment of a large library, a medium sized library, a smaller institution and understand the workflow, understand the challenges that you alluded to earlier.

What about all of those resource constraints that are facing libraries today? We have to go out and plug in to the communities so that we understand what today's needs are. And then we can develop on a faster cycle for developing solutions for today's problems, and not have it (in a silly metaphor) baking in the oven for three or four years. By the time we serve it up to the market place, they have moved on and can't use it anymore. So, leadership development, different approaches to how we do project management, much more interaction with the various library communities and frankly much higher sensitivity of international, of non-US needs.

Again every time I say that I get in trouble with the US institutions. They say: „Are you going forget us?“ I said: „Certainly not!“

Once again, these are not mutually exclusive goals. We need to pay attention to global issues. And, as you say, whether we are talking about different approaches to cataloguing knowledge objects or we are talking interoperability, we are talking about the difference in intellectual property, in private law around the globe or just the infrastructure differences in various arrangements. We have to pay attention to those, so that we can develop global solutions. And that is one of the reasons we are excited about our PICA partnership, because they are a solutions developer operating in another region.

So, they are developing regional solutions that we are trying to look at. What we are doing here to make sure that there is integration between whatever tools PICA develops and whatever tools we develop here, so we really have global solutions. Understanding how complicated that is, it is not plug and play in every country in every library system in the world, but we can certainly take a broader perspective and build better integrated

solutions than perhaps we have done in the past. So that's a short list to some of the things we are doing.

M: So you will have, in some aspect, if I understand you well, interoperability in the OCLC/PICA world as well.

J: Yes.

M: So that diversity what has been up to a mile outside OCLC is not perhaps part of OCLC itself.

J: Now that I have talked global, let me revert to an US example. A little more than a year ago, we merged with WLN² which is an nonprofit organization similar to OCLC in the north-western United States, just south of Seattle. We've been very pleased with the integration that we have achieved there.

So they are more productive in Lacey, Washington today. All of their transactions are being run on servers here in Ohio. So we took the infrastructure problem out of Lacey, Washington and put it here where we have the bandwidths and the CPU to process. They are establishing new records in monthly productivity by applying the intellectual leverage in Washington, but operating out of the infrastructure leverage that's resides here.

They are a center of excellence for authorities processing and for collection analysis. Since they have developed tools, we are going to let them have the lead. So Dublin will lead with some things, Lacey, Washington will lead with some things and PICA will lead with some things. We have to look at this as a distributed network of OCLC partners.

But if in fact we allow those diverse entities to produce regional solutions with a focus on global standardization, so that we get the interoperability in the broadest application of the tool as possible, I think we'll have a great deal more value than we would have as separate organizations around the globe.

M: I think it is a great venture to bring bodies of like PICA and the colleagues from Washington together in OCLC not to mix it to much, but to build a new OCLC in some aspect. I wish you good luck for this really interesting and for the library world really exciting work you have to do.

J: That's probably the best way to put it, we are living in exciting times. And we're all challenged. But I think if we look back, not just at OCLC, but if we look back in history at what librarians and scholars have accomplished because they operated in collaborative environment, and if we figure out some way to resolve all of the metadata schemes that have been applied on different rule sets, and then we look to the future to collaborate with as many universal tools as we can, I think there is immense value sitting out there, in a year, or two or five, to provide this huge knowledge exchange for the global population.

M: All right, and every library I hope will act local and think global in co-operation with OCLC.

J: That's an important notion. And that's what we're trying to achieve with.

M: Alright. Thank you very much indeed for this interview!!

J: Thank you, it's been a pleasure.

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