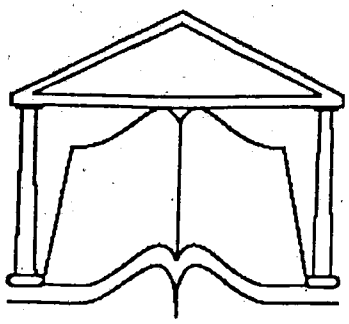

ARCLIB BULLETIN 6

JANUARY 1997

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRMINGHAM CONFERENCE TAKES SHAPE

As members will know by now, the 1997 ARCLIB conference will be held at the University of Central England in Birmingham. We will have at least two overseas speakers: Alfred E Willis, of the University College of Los Angeles, will talk about his involvement in the formation of the electronic journal *Architronic*, and Teresa To will be describing the Hong Kong Architecture Library, which should prove particularly interesting given the imminence of the hand-over of Hong Kong to China. A session on slides is proposed, plus product reviews and a discussion on the role of the Architecture Librarian in the Teaching Quality Assessment process. As usual the social side has not been neglected, and Norman Ashfield is planning various good things including a canal boat trip. Further details should reach members very soon.

ARCLIB TALKS TO RIBA ABOUT APID

The RIBA responded positively to our suggestion that ARCLIB Committee members might meet them in order to express the concerns of members over limitations and defects in the software, and to suggest possible changes. The meeting itself was also cordial and positive, and some changes were agreed there and then (members will see these very soon, with the issue of the last update for 1996). A full account of the meeting can be found on pages 3-4.

RIBA SENT LIBRARY CHECKLIST

As reported in the previous edition of the Bulletin, ARCLIB now has representation on the RIBA's professional Literature Committee, in the person of Sylvia Harris of the Welsh School of Architecture. One outcome of this involvement has been the compilation by the Committee of a checklist of criteria for assessing Library resources, to be used by RIBA visiting Boards. This was sent to the RIBA's Director-General last March. We wait with interest to see the extent to which this will be brought into use. The checklist is reproduced in full on pages 5-6.

RUDI BETA-TESTING, ADAM PROGRESSING

Web surfers will know of RUDI (Resource for Urban Design Information), an e-Lib project aimed at drawing together electronic resources on urban design. The project has now reached the beta-test stage, with testers asked to give responses by the end of January. Catherine Tranmer, one of the RUDI team, will give an update on the project at the Birmingham conference. Also at Birmingham, we will hear about the latest progress on another e-Lib project of interest to ARCLIB members, the ADAM project (see page 10).

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BUILDINGS OF ENGLAND REMAINDERED

Oxford University Press have pulled the plug on Michael Good's CD-Rom index to the mammoth Penguin series Buildings of England. The good news for ARCLIB members is that Michael has bought the last 25 copies and is offering them at a reduced price of £100. Further details are enclosed with this issue of the Bulletin.

COMMITTEE NEWS

NEW MEMBERS, NEW CHAIRMAN

At the AGM in Liverpool last July Pamela Masters, a founder member of the Committee, finally took her turn for a well-earned rest, as did outgoing Chairman Keith Parker. Our thanks to both of them for all their hard work for ARCLIB. Their places on the Committee were taken by Margaret Gregory of Liverpool John Moores University, and David Buri of the Mackintosh School of Architecture. At the first meeting of the new Committee, Norman Ashfield was elected Chairman, other officers remaining as before. A full listing of Committee members appears on page 12.

WORK STARTS ON ARCLIB WEB PAGE

The ARCLIB Committee recently decided that a priority project for the immediate future should be the development of a Web site for the Group. This will be an important means of communication with members, and between ARCLIB and the rest of the world. Margaret Gregory has volunteered to work on the project, and has received an offer of help from Pat Barclay of the University of Westminster. No work was possible during the hectic autumn term, but Margaret was optimistic that a start could be made in the new year. Any suggestions or offers of help to Margaret, please (her contact details are given in the Committee listing on page).

COMMITTEE VISITS PRINCE

Well, not in person! Always on the lookout for London venues for its meetings (London being the most accessible location for its disparate membership), the ARCLIB Committee asked the Librarian of the Prince of Wales School, Alan Powers, if he would kindly agree to host the December 1996 meeting. This he readily agreed to do, and we duly assembled at Gloucester Gate at the appointed time and date. (Despite the fact that we are all seasoned travellers, there is nonetheless something of a feeling of wonder whenever we manage to come together at the same time from our various corners of the British Isles!).

After the meeting, Alan kindly showed us the Library and gave us a tour of the School. The Library is small, but well-organised. There is talk of re-locating the School, which Alan hopes would provide more space for the Library. We were impressed by the commitment of the students whom we met from both of the Schools courses: the foundation course, which is a pre-qualification course not offering RIBA accreditation, and the Postgraduate course which carries Part II accreditation.

It has been interesting to read since our visit that the Part II course, which has met with some criticism from the RIBA, may be dropped. Having visited the School, Committee members will watch its future progress with increased interest.

Many thanks to Alan for his hospitality.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

At last year's conference in Liverpool we were pleased to welcome Julie Coleman from **Liverpool University** (j.coleman@liv.ac.uk). If memory serves correctly this is the first time we have had representation from Liverpool University (as distinct from Liverpool John Moores, conference venue and home to old friends Joan Shaw and Margaret Gregory). We hope to see Julie at many future conferences.

On the other hand, we were sad to hear that Ruth Dar, one of ARCLIB's original members, would no longer be in charge of Architecture at the **Bartlett**. Ruth has been taking increasing responsibility for Art, and will from now on be dealing with this subject on a full-time basis. Her replacement as Architecture Librarian is Elizabeth Braim (e.braim@ucl.ac.uk).

Another change at **Bath**: whereas we had welcomed Terry Veale at Cardiff conference in 1995, the representative at Liverpool last year was Katy Jordan (k.m.jordan@bath.ac.uk). We hope to see her again this year.

Rumour has it that our outgoing Chairman Keith Parker, of the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at **York**, may be taking early retirement. To be confirmed!

Finally, much to the relief of other committee members, Chairman Norman Ashfield of **UCE** is at

last reachable by email. His address is norman.ashfield@uce.ac.uk.

APID:

ARCLIB MEETS RIBA

As mentioned on the front page, the Arclib Committee, in the persons of Julia Barrett and Ian Mayfield, recently met representatives of RIBA to talk about their CD-Rom database Architectural Publications Index on Disc (APID). RIBA staff attending the Liverpool conference last year could have been left in little doubt that we had serious criticisms of the product, and we thought it would be a good idea to put these to them more formally. A list of perceived problems was sent to Ruth Kamen, Director of the British Architectural Library, in advance of the meeting.

Notes of the meeting held at the RIBA with ARCLIB representatives to discuss APId on 14th January, 1997

Present: Ruth Kamen, Julian Osley (RIBA Library); Geoff Denner, Diane Williams (RIBA Publications); Mike Ray-Jones (RIBA Information Services); Ian Mayfield (University of Portsmouth); Julia Barrett (University College Dublin).

The point was made initially by the RIBA representatives that there were no plans to change the existing software. Ian and Julia indicated that criticisms of the software fell into two categories: firstly, the software was difficult to use, because of its complexity and slowness, and confusion caused by the existence of inappropriate defaults and unhelpful options. Secondly, it was impossible to conduct complex boolean searches.

It was agreed that the best way to proceed would be to work through the list of specific comments made by ARCLIB members and sent in advance of the meeting to Ruth Kamen.

1. Difficulty of use

Display order. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the fact that in the display of search hits the oldest references are displayed first: users usually want the most recent first. However, since the only way to add records to Idealist is to append records to the end of the file, the only way to change this would be to re-load the whole database every quarter. This is impracticable. Ruth pointed out that a way round the problem is to use the available arrow to click straight to the end of the file then work backwards; however, the order in APID by date of addition to the database rather than date of publication; to order the records by publication date the British Architectural Library would have to add records in that order.

"Find all records" button. This button, which appears on the 'Expert Search screen, causes confusion because users don't realise it will take them back to browse the whole database. Unfortunately, this cannot be removed. However, the 'Browse all' button, which appears In the starting sequence of screens and does the same thing, will be removed from the next disc (1996:4).

Date options on start-up screen. Whilst discussing the introductory screens, RIBA representatives reported that they had planned to drop the 5 year and 10 year search option from the next disc. Following discussion it was agreed that the 10 year option would be removed but that users might find 5 years a useful option and therefore this would be retained.

Printing/exporting. This was a major area of concern. There were 3 print icons on the toolbar, each performing different task, which was confusing. Some users don't have printers attached, but require users to export to file: this operation, which has to be done from the file menu rather than an icon, is also problematic since it is not obvious to users which of the four output formats they should select. The only useable one, 'Idealist natural', is unhelpful to users because it lists the records in one unbroken sequence.

It was agreed that the number of print icons will be reduced to one, from which the user will be prompted to a number of options. It was suggested that the Export option should be included here; Mike was 95% certain he will be able to incorporate this. It was agreed that an appropriate output format would be the basic reference plus subject headings; this will apply both to print output and Exported files. Mike will also look at changing the export file type options, for example to include a choice of exporting to Word, Procite etc. Unfortunately, however, it will not be possible to remove the Export function from the File menu, so an element of confusion will probably remain.

Ian asked if, at some time in the future, it would be possible to provide links to other databases (as other products do) e.g. to Procite. This would enable downloading straight into other databases. It was not thought that this would be possible from Idealist.

Slow response times. Searching is considered slow, especially when combining terms. Mike said that they are pushing Idealist to improve response times and also to give clear processing messages and the

opportunity to bail out if required. It was pointed out that when a search is aborted the records retrieved so far may be viewed: for example, an aborted search for the phrase 'steel cladding' will produce a list of references containing both of these terms; however they will not necessarily appear as a phrase.

It was noted that codes are currently being developed for every journal so that, in the future, all journals can be searched by their unique codes, thereby speeding up the search process significantly.

Ian asked if it was possible to restrict the search to journals only available in the searcher's library. This was possible, but only by purchase of the Idealist software and the subsequent creation of a separate local database.

List of subject terms. There was some discussion about the possibility of an on-disc thesaurus, i.e. an electronic equivalent of Architectural Keywords listing the contents of the 'subject' field. It was felt that whilst this might be possible, to use it as a search tool would be unacceptably slow since the software would search for each component word of a search term and then look for records that contained them in sequence. Indeed the advice in the APId manual and given to this meeting was to select single terms to search on and combine by narrowing/widening.

Activity messages. It was suggested that the 'busy' message was not displayed very clearly on the screen. It was agreed that, from disc 99:6, this will appear in 12 point font.

2. Boolean searching

Since Idealist does not recognise brackets, it is not possible to do boolean searches combining, for example, terms joined by "and" and terms joined by "or" (e.g. (hotels or motels) and (england or ireland)). It is not possible to retrace search steps and combine sets together that way. This means that it is impossible to construct a complex search. Ian and Julia strongly emphasised that in their opinion, this was the major drawback to Idealist and one which would justify a change to another software platform. They suggested that users would probably be prepared to pay more for the product - a likely result of such a change - if the product were substantially improved by the change. RIBA representatives acknowledged the strength of feeling on this issue and indicated that a change to a new platform, whilst not currently under consideration, would not be completely ruled out for the future.

Other matters discussed

'All fields' display. It was noted that the 'All fields' box in Quick search had been moved, two quarters ago, from the bottom to the tope of the dialogue box. This was agreed to be a very helpful change.

Toolbar. The question of users' ability to change the Toolbar was discussed. It was agreed that, although it was in fact possible to change the Toolbar, this was not in general desirable and should not be made too obvious. It was agreed to make no change to this.

List of journals. It was proposed to include a list on each disc of the journals indexed by it.

Software re-load. It was pointed out that it is good practice to re-load the software every time a new APID disc is issued. If this is not done, any changes made to the software will not be apparent to the user.

Future meetings. It was agreed that this had been a useful and positive meeting, and that there should continue to be such meetings on a regular basis in the future.

Ian Mayfield adds:

After the meeting I reflected further on the discussion about an on-disc thesaurus ('List of subject terms' above) and realised that the point made about slowness of searching for phrases assumed that the only way to index the contents of a field was word-by-word. I wrote to Mike Ray-Jones pointing out that many CD-Rom databases offer an index of phrases as distinct from single key words, and bibliographic software packages such as Pro-Cite will index the contents of a field in a variety of ways, including phrases; surely it must be possible for Idealist to do this? His reply was that indexing by phrase **was** *possible, but only for the database as a whole - not within individual fields.*

This serves to re-inforce the impression that although the agreed improvements are welcome - and we certainly welcome the spirit of co-operation which we met at the RIBA - the apparently insoluble problems which remain point to the need to consider a change of software.

SUGGESTED CHECKLIST OF MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED BY RIBA VISITING BOARDS IN RELATION TO LIBRARY SERVICES

As outlined on page 1, this checklist has been jointly compiled by the RIBA's Professional Literature Committee and ARCLIB. In sending the list to Dr Alexander Reid, Director-General of the RIBA, the then Chair of the Committee, Stanley Cox, hoped that 'it will aid objectivity, help to build a comparative database, and save Visiting Board time'. Naturally

we would endorse that sentiment, though whether Visiting Board members will be aware of this list without some prompting from ARCLIB members remains to be seen. It may be appropriate to consider this at the next ARCLIB AGM.

1. BOOKS

- Is the architectural library stock separate, or does it overlap with other collections within the institution?
- Is it adequate in representation of fine arts, science and the law?
- Is there an accessible rare books collection?
- Are multiple copies of recommended texts available?
- Is there access to current trade literature?
- What is the policy on acquisition, and discarding of books?

2. JOURNALS

- What journals are subscribed to regularly?
- What happens to journals - e.g. how displayed, used, bound, stored?
- How are journals listed and accessed?

3. MICROFORMS

- Number of items available?
- Is the viewing and reproduction facility adequate?

4. AUDIO VISUAL MATERIALS

- What is available in audio, slide, and video format?
- Are there adequate playing and viewing facilities?
- What are the arrangements for borrowing

5. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROVISION

- Is there already online access to external databases?
- Are in-house databases available (e.g. listing dissertations or slide collections)?
- What relevant CD-Roms are available?
- Can students access national or international networks?

6. RESEARCH FACILITIES

- Do researchers have access to other good collections locally?
- Is there adequate access to national collections via inter-loan systems?
- What arrangements exist for easy access to RIBA Library facilities?

7. FUNDING

- What is the current total budget for the architecture library, and how is this apportioned between books, journals, and information technology?
- How does the current budget allocation compare with recent previous years?
- Is there a contingency figure in the library funds which would allow immediate action for special purposes - e.g. acquiring second hand books, exhibition catalogues, etc as they become available?

8. STAFF

- What are the current staffing ratios per library user?
- What are the current numbers of qualified and unqualified staff for the library?
- What is the policy for library staff training, CPD, and the pursuit of specialist interests?

- What facilities exist for contact between the library staff, book retailers, and publishers?

9. LIBRARY FACILITIES

- What are the opening hours, and what level of staffing obtains for these periods?
- What is the space availability for library users?
- What are the facilities for library staff?
- What is the storage facility for items both current and in reserve?

10 USER FEEDBACK

- What is the evidence of use and user satisfaction from staff, students, and researchers?
- What is the evidence of use and user satisfaction from practitioners and others outside the architecture department?

FINANCING OF ACADEMIC ARCHITECTURE COLLECTIONS

Some years ago ***Norman Ashfield*** *of UCE, not then an ARCLIB Committee member, began enquiring into the levels of funding available to colleagues in other institutions. The ARCLIB Committee, always willing to support new initiatives - especially is someone is willing to do the work - encouraged Norman to develop this into a fully-fledged survey of funding levels in schools of architecture. This piece looks at the results, which are set out in tabular form on page 7.*

Background

After some persistence and badgering on the part of Committee members, there was eventually a good response to the questionnaire which ARCLIB sent out as far back as 1995 to examine the current state of resourcing in Architecture libraries. In general, researchers expect a thirty per cent return rate to their questionnaires. On this occasion we received twenty seven responses out of a possible thirty-nine - a seventy per cent return.

The replies revealed what we have always suspected, that we all provide an extraordinarily diverse range of service for a widely varying number of clients (in some cases not even quantifiable!), from collections which may be small and specialist or part of a complete University library, out of finances which are provided, with greater or lesser generosity, from general or very specific allocations.

The introduction to the "UK Airport Statistics" volumes on our quick-reference shelves warns that as each airport offers its services in a variety of different ways, care needs to be taken when directly comparing one place with another. This too much surely be the message for our own situation in the provision of architecture collections in varying circumstances.

The Financial Basis of the Study

Most libraries in this survey were cautious over the absolute accuracy of their financial statements, because of the many complicating factors in their institutions.

The base taken was the 1994/1995 academic year. Here at least there was one degree of accord, in that all English, Scottish and Welsh respondents confirmed that their financial year now runs in tune with their academic year, from August to July. That said, for a number of respondents 1994/5 was an untypical year with a larger or smaller budget than usual, and with moving or rebuilding in progress.

Number of Clients

We asked everyone to quantify this if possible. Some libraries found this quite *impossible.*

Others have their collections potentially available to an entire University population, which makes estimating the numbers of external users very difficult.

Finance

a-Serials

Most libraries were able to quote an approximate figure for serials, though sometimes this includes books obtained on standing order, and in other cases the purchase is merely out of the budget for the entire University serials collection.

b-Videos/Slides/Tape-Slides

There is a marked divergence of practice over the acquisition of Audio-Visual materials. Sometimes these are purchased as part of the book budget, and occasionally the information is irretrievable because materials are bought regardless of their form, and no special statistics of their acquisition are kept.

Had we been sending out the questionnaires this year, it would have been interesting to ask

Financing of Architecture Collections

UNIVERSITY	USERS	EXT. USRS	TOTAL FINANCE					FINANCE PER CLIENT			
			Serials	A/V	Books	Notes		Serials	A/V	Books	Tot per ct
Southern	460		19067		21441	Remainder of University & locals are external clients	and locals	41.45		46.61	88.06
Irish	150	300	17887	500	16380	Architecture part of Built Env't; hard to separate funds		119.25	3.33	109.2	231.78
Southern			6493		14266						
Southern	300	100	15000	600	17000	Extra money provided for rare & ref bks,multiple copies		41.45	2	56.67	100.12
Northern	500	10000	5000	3000	15000	An untypical financial year-rectifying underfunding		10	6	30	46
Irish	350	100	17500	1500	23500	An overspend took place;largely on journals		50	4.29	67.14	121.43
London	328	1430	3740	500	10352	Large part of budget spent on photocopier leasing		11.4	1.52	31.56	44.49
Northern	300	1600	8000	1000	12000	External clients include practising architects		26.67	3.33	40	70
London			5011	1500	12000	Arch is part of Built Env't; total budget £56,000					
Northern	674	1043	5500		10000	External clients figure for this site only		8.16		14.84	23
Southern			3000	500	15000	Funds are based on FTE numbers					
Northern	205	2000	9000	300	2222	Many other Univ, and other faculty students use too		43.9	1.46	10.84	56.2
London	85	300	11500		5000	General books on B.Env't bought from another fund		135.29		58.82	194.12
Northern	400					Architecture purchased out of £60000 general A&D fund					
Northern			1900		1200	Extra funds for architecture in parent library					
London	520		3400	500	7500	Funds higher for this year than the next-fewer students		6.54	0.96	45.19	52.69
Northern	268	150	1000		2900	Courses are modular-may affect external numbers		3.73		10.82	14.55
Southern	500	500	14500		12500	A/V not accounted for separately		29		25	54
Southern	300		15510		10200	Extra resources for Arch from A&D and Fac. of Techn.		51.7		34	85.7
Southern	60		1000		1000	Untypical year. Normal budget £5000		16.67		34	50.67
Southern	256	1000	5000		6000	£2000 derives from HEFC research exercise funds		19.53		23.44	42.97
Northern	353	14847	6608	280	10649	Funds are formula-driven.Books include continuations		18.72	0.79	30.17	49.68
London	520		6000	900	8000	Basic book budget,but extras sometimes available		11.54	1.73	15.38	28.65
London			5300		8000	£23000 available, approx 33% available for Architecture					
London	250		4700	500	8800			18.8	2	35.2	56
Northern	60	160	1925		2950	External clients could include all Univ and outsiders		32.08		49.17	81.25
Average: no's	326	2395	8668	92	10437			34.8	2.29	38.4	74.57

c-Books

Most libraries were able to say how much they spend on books, however approximately. In general, it was the allocation which was quoted, rather than the actual expenditure, so we hope most libraries actually received goods to the value they anticipated. Not everyone has the luxury of funds carry-over.

Expenditure per client

The most useful comparison the ARCLIB Committee felt could be made for members, however suspect the figures might be, was the calculation of average expenditure per estimated Architecture client (forgetting the countless external users).

The information was supplied in confidence by members and it seemed both unfair and politically insensitive to openly reveal the names of the Institutions in the accompanying table. Those apparently spending little may well have special circumstances, such as a large Public library or other institution on their doorstep, or an Architectural Learning Resource Centre offering additional services on their campus. On the other hand, those libraries which appeared to have a good average funding per client in 1994/5 might be correcting a previous history of underfunding. No-one wishes to discourage them from continuing well. It has been also pointed out to me that it is much harder for libraries serving large numbers of students to score well on an expenditure per person basis.

So I offer you an *almost* anonymous table, which places our institutions in London, Southern or Northern University categories, with the dividing line being, for convenience, just north of Oxford (rather than Watford Junction, as is the legendary norm!)

I can reveal that the apparent winner of the best resourced Architecture collection in 1994/5 was Queen's University, Belfast, by a clear margin. Congratulations to the staff and their lucky students!

The Architectural Association were good enough to submit a return, but as they could not quantify their clientele and were obviously a very different body to all the other Universities being compared, I have omitted their response here.

Most notes and disclaimers, etc, submitted by respondents have been incorporated into the table for the interest they contain; they may actually help librarians identify their own returns!

Any misreadings of figures, misinterpretations or miscalculations are my responsibility and not that of the Bulletin Editor.

Norman Ashfield

MACKINTOSH IN PARIS: REPORT FROM THE ANNUAL SEMINAR OF THE FRENCH ARCHITECTURE SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

The rather tongue-in-cheek title given to this piece is derived from the fact that David Buri, Architecture Librarian at the Mackintosh School of Architecture in Glasgow, was invited to give a paper to the French group at their annual conference on the subject of the ADAM project, in which he is involved. Also attending the meeting on behalf of ARCLIB was Committee member Ian Mayfield. Here Ian gives an account of the seminar, whilst below David gives a brief overview of ADAM. There will be more on ADAM at the Birmingham conference in July.

My first difficulty in relation to the conference was that day 1 was to be held at the Paris-Tolbiac School which I had not previously visited and, although I had an address, it seemed not to be shown on any map in my possession. Having arrived in Paris the day before the conference, I thought it best to establish the whereabouts of the School in order to avoid problems the next morning. This turned out to be an uncharacteristically wise decision, since when I asked a shop assistant if she knew the road in question, she said it was a 'rue souterrain' - an underground road. Not quite believing her, I went in the general direction indicated, then asked again - only to be told the same thing. I eventually found the underground road and wandered up and down it with some trepidation - it seemed a sinister place of warehouse doors, obscure notices and locked entries - until eventually I encountered a human being who, to my great relief, was able to take me up in a lift to the School. It is based in a concrete precinct which sits on top of the underground road, rather like the Barbican complex (though rather bleaker).

Thus reassured, I arrived bright and early the following day and easily encountered someone who was expecting me. I was soon enjoying (another) breakfast at a cafe in the precinct, renewing old acquaintances - albeit in a rather stilted fashion - and making new ones even more hesitantly.

The first day of the conference was devoted to 'housekeeping': reports from the various permanent working groups which exist to further co-operative work in various fields, including periodicals, online catalogue, dissertations etc. The French Schools of Architecture are much more uniform than ours: all come under the Culture Department (a recent change from an earlier home within the Department of the Environment, and like most such changes a source of much concern) and all are provided with the same computing equipment, both hardware and software. This has made co-operation very easy and desirable,

though the position of the schools within a large bureaucracy carries its own difficulties. One of these - though maybe the existence of MINITEL is a factor here too - has been the relative slowness of French schools to connect to the Internet.

The first day sessions were held, not in a lecture theatre or conference room, but in the Library itself. This made life somewhat difficult since the group was spread out in a disorderly fashion around a very long table, with offshoots hidden away behind bookshelves etc. I managed to follow the deliberations, which were interesting but rather technical, reasonably well though I flagged a little after lunch, which was taken at a nearby Chinese restaurant. (I felt better when I saw the Swiss guests sneaking out early). I survived a potentially disastrous moment when the speaker asked 'how is this problem dealt with in England?' and all faces looked in my direction. Fortunately, I had been at that point been attending and keeping fairly well in tune language-wise, and realised that I was called upon to say something about ownership of dissertations. I stammered something about how difficult it all was and how no-one seemed sure who owned the copyright, and everyone seemed satisfied (later I had to exercise a firm will to prevent myself inspecting retrospectively the damage I had probably inflicted on the French language).

At the end of the day I found Sylviane Ricou of the La Villette School in Paris , who had kindly offered to accommodate both David Buri and I. We travelled back to her house and, since there was still some time before David was due, she drove me up to a nearby park and we enjoyed an interesting walk. Having experienced Sylviane's approach to crossing a main Paris road in the rush hour, I was glad of the relaxation! After David's arrival - an event which occasioned a good deal of mutual relief - we enjoyed dinner 'en famille' before retiring early in preparation for what would be - especially for David - another hard day ahead.

Day 2, which was held at the Paris la Defense School, was devoted to a series of invited papers on electronic themes, mainly revolving round the Internet. The extent to which we English (I attribute to David here his English origins rather than his Scottish domicile) were able to understand the speakers varied enormously, depending not just on the speed but also the clarity of the speaker. Some papers I was able to follow almost word for word; whereas on the other extreme there was one speaker in particular on whom I gave up after a minute or two: she spoke softly, with head bent over her overheads, and also very quickly; even worse, her poor-quality overheads were offered and removed before they could be read. To our great satisfaction even the French were muttering disapproval withdrawing into private reveries long before she had finished.

David had the good fortune to follow this debacle. In impressive contrast, he spoke slowly and clearly, and very deliberately left his overheads until he was sure everyone had finished reading. Even the very small linguistic errors he made were sympathetically received by his audience, who seemed charmed by his contribution. He sat down, exhausted but relieved, to substantial applause.

David's paper on ADAM formed part of the central theme for days 2 and 3, which was the potential impact of the Internet on the work of documentalists. Topics covered included the nature of the Net itself, how it could be organised to facilitate retrieval of subject information (cue David), the effect on Library users and training implications for documentalists. It was fascinating to see a group of colleagues rehearse the questions and arguments with which we had grappled a year or eighteen months previously. Also intriguing was the extent to which the French colleagues saw themselves as the key players in providing and mediating Internet access, whereas it seems to me that we in the U.K. have become accustomed to the fact that in many cases our users are quite happy to discover the Net and its delights for themselves. As on the previous day, the opportunity arose to comment on the situation over here; this time we took refuge in the translation service readily available from fluent English speaker Ghislaine Lhermitte, an old friend of ARCLIB (though of course we could have coped if necessary). It occurred to us that a paper at the 1997 seminar in Nancy on the theme of 'the electronic library in the U.K'., or some such, would be appropriate. Unfortunately, a pattern seems to be emerging by which both the French and ourselves hold our conferences in July, so a potential clash is inevitable.

Day two's programme finished with a choice of visit, with both David Buri and I opting for a guided visit to the Jardin du Citroen. The directions and maps left a little to be desired, leading to an entertaining contest between British and French as to who best could interpret the map and find the correct meeting point (we won). It was a very interesting visit, but on top of a long day listening to a foreign language - and in David's case giving a paper in it - served to ensure that it was two exhausted Englishmen who collapsed around a restaurant table with Sylviane, Ghislaine and Susan Day of the Institut Francais d'Architecture.

After the 3rd day session, which finished at lunchtime, David and I mooched around the Grande Arche de La Defense in the rain before I departed to catch my 'bus home. David was to enjoy a couple more days (this being Friday) including a son et lumière at the Palace of Versailles.

The generosity and friendliness of our French hosts was again impressive. This was my third such

conference, and they are always interesting and enjoyable, as well as offering the chance to make and renew friendships.

THE ADAM ELIB PROJECT

The ADAM eLib Project is creating an information gateway to Internet-based art, design, architecture and media resources. The Project has been funded for three years and is run by a consortium of ten institutions led by the Surrey Institute of Art and Design. I have been contracted to spend 10% of my time identifying and cataloguing the architectural resources, which will include town planning and landscape design, but exclude building construction.

Significant progress has been made since the Project started up in December 1995. You can now access the basic service which will allow you to search our database of quality-checked resources via the World Wide Web. The resources that we have found have been given keywords using the Art and Architecture Thesaurus. We have also provided an informative summary of each resource, and hyperlinks allowing you to move directly between ADAM and a particular www site. Do take a look and see what has been catalogued so far. By the time you read this, there should be around 100 architecture resources alone on the ADAM database. There is no charge for using the service.

The Project is about more than just cataloguing Internet resources. We have been undertaking a Consultation Process which will enable us to tailor our service to the needs of the user community, and we will be looking at issues such as providing user-friendly interfaces to handle Boolean searches, and the use of thesauri to expand searches to include synonyms. The information stored in the database will be continually monitored to ensure its accuracy, and we will be providing a training and awareness programme to promote full utilisation of the service.

The address of the Project is http://adam.ac.uk, where you will find further information including a form for you to suggest useful sites for inclusion in the database. Do contact us if you have any questions or comments, and keep an eye on ADAM as it develops further during the coming months.

David Buri
Architecture Librarian, Glasgow School of Art
d.buri@gsa.ac.uk

ARCLIB SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Members are reminded that it is ARCLIB policy to provide funds, subject to the discretion of the Committee and availability of funds, to assist members in attending relevant conferences and other professional development events within Europe. In cases of conflicting claims Committee members representing ARCLIB will normally take priority, but this does not preclude other members from asking ARCLIB for assistance. Enquiries should be addressed in the first instance to Ian Mayfield, ARCLIB Treasurer.

LIVERPOOL CONFERENCE: RESUMÉ

Thanks to the efficiency of conference hosts Margaret Gregory and Joan Shaw, and especially of ARCLIB Secretary Julia Barrett, the Proceedings of last year's conference were published very swiftly. We nonetheless thought it worth including here a resumé of the conference for those who haven't got round to reading the formal proceedings, and also to give a flavour of the social side of the event. As last year, thanks are due to Margaret Black of the University of west of England for producing this resumé.

The theme of the 7th ARCLIB Conference was "Finding and meeting users' needs". It was held at Liverpool John Moores University in July 1996 and organised by Margaret Gregory and Joan Shaw up to the high standard of previous ARCLIB conferences.

We met at a reception on the Wednesday evening in the Aldham Robarts Centre, followed by a tour of the learning resources centre and a meal at a university restaurant. The serious part began the following morning when I had the dubious pleasure of giving the first paper and I described the work we are doing at the University of the West of England, Bristol on user surveys using Priority Search's LIBRA package. I could then relax and listen to how Keith Webster, sub-librarian of the University of Newcastle, operated an electronic surveying package using the opening screens of OPAC's in the Robinson Library.

"Making the case for resources: marketing strategies" was the title of the paper by Eileen Eliott de Suez from the University of Northumbria. She pointed out the advantages we have as architecture librarians

when it comes to marketing as we have a subject focused constantly on user need.

Sylvia Harris, librarian of the Welsh School of Architecture, talked of her involvement in teaching architecture students 'how to find out' and the projects aimed at helping them to develop their information skills.

Newcastle was represented yet again by Chris Hagar, Environmental and Social Sciences Librarian, who described recent developments in the teaching of electronic information skills to architecture students at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Phil Sykes, Learning Resources Manager at our host organisation, did NOT talk about architecture, but about the convergence of library and computer services and the training issues within a learning resources centre - an issue likely to affect many of us.

The viewpoint of the user was presented by an architect, Gladys Martinez, who spoke on how architects find and use information.

Two information services aimed at external users were described. Firstly Caroline Spreckley, Business Information Officer at the Aldham Robarts Centre, talked about setting up the Liverpool John Moores University Business Information Service, then Julia Barrett, Architecture and Planning Librarian at University College Dublin, delivered a paper written by Jane Nolan of Archinfo on the background to establishing Archinfo, a commercial service providing information to architectural practices in Ireland, based in UCD's architecture library.

Alice Fulcher told us about the Dartford Article Index, a local index they compile for Built Environment subjects in the library of the University of Greenwich, and provision of information at a regional level was the theme of Karen Latimer's paper. Karen of Queen's University Belfast, gave 3 examples:- a regional service to architectural practices in partnership with the Royal Society of Ulster Architects; a fee based service referring to use by built environment professionals; and IDEAL, the Irish Database on Environment and Architectural Literature.

Dr Jeff John's paper was about how CTI (the Computers in Teaching Initiative) can help in disseminating information and promoting integrated use of IT.

This is a very brief summary of the papers, but the full proceedings can be obtained from Julia Barrett at University College Dublin.

Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral figured large at this conference. We were housed in student accommodation adjacent to it and our conference dinner was held inside it, followed by a tour of the building including a climb to the top of the tower. On the Friday afternoon we had a tour of the city on foot, led by an architecture lecturer and finishing with a glorious view of Liverpool from the top of the Liver birds. Our thanks and congratulations to Margaret and Joan for organising such a useful and enjoyable conference.

Margaret Black
Subject Librarian for the Faculty of the Built Environment
University of the West of England, Bristol

DOCUMENT DELIVERY: 'FAST FOUR FAX'

Is there a quicker, more efficient alternative to dear old Inter-Library loan, with its form-filling, high cost and relatively slow response? When work was under way on the ARCLIB Union serials list, it was suggested by Catherine Tranmer that it might be possible to set up a more informal means of document exchange based on co-operation between ARCLIB members. Her idea, which she termed 'Fast Four Fax', was that members might agree to send, between themselves, documents up to four pages long, by fax, free of charge. The Union list was seen as a key tool in this process, since it would be an means by which members could easily check which journals were available where.

Unfortunately, since only sixteen members contributed their holdings to the list, its ability to perform this function is somewhat limited. However, this does not detract greatly from the potential of Catherine's idea. Leaving aside for now details such as numbers of pages (and acknowledging the alliterative attraction of the otherwise fairly arbitrary figure of four pages), could the idea be workable? In particular, could it operate successfully alongside existing inter-library loan arrangements without causing tension and perhaps arousing the concern of Library managements worried about shrinking budgets? The impact on individual libraries would depend on the scale of the operation, i.e. the overall level of demand. Might some libraries be net losers and other net gainers on an unacceptable scale? The Editor would like to hear your views on this, prior to what the Committee hopes will be a full discussion at the AGM later in the year.