

## Discussion Group B

Topic : Budget Cuts in National Libraries: Strategies for Doing More with Less

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### Scope Notes by B. Racine

Since 2008, the world has been experiencing an economic crisis which shows no sign of abating and seems even, like a hurricane, to gather new strength under its course. Like all institutions in the field of culture and the arts, national libraries have been affected by budget cuts and funding has been put under scrutiny. The tide is not to be reversed any time soon and may even worsen.

In this context, we have to make hard choices in order to continue to exist, fulfil our missions and address the challenges of the digital era. These choices must be made in a long term prospective without endangering our institutions further down the road.

If a trial is not a blessing it can at least be viewed as an opportunity. To consider that "less is more", to make virtue out of necessity, to gain muscle and lose fat means also to turn fate to one's advantage and not only from a philosophical point of view. Still the matters at stake are many. Is downsizing an even procedure applied systematically to all investment and running costs or can some missions be sanctuarized and considered holy, out of reach of any budget cuts? The fields in which we can operate cuts are well identified but this may induce hidden collateral effect.

-Staff reduction, for example, is a seducing option and a much favoured one because staff represents a large chunk of any library budget but it may lead to a deterioration of library services and activities in terms of opening hours or productivity. On the other hand, it is an opportunity for reshaping the organization of the library and innovate.

-To reduce acquisition budgets induces an immediate budgetary relief but collection building itself can be at stake in the long run. On the other hand, scarcer budgets may lead to a greater accuracy and precision of choices.

- Can we save money on IT, R&D without posing a threat to the future of our institutions in a time where technological developments run at a very fast pace?

- Libraries are expected to generate more revenues and in this field we certainly have much to learn from each other considering our quite diverse cultural backgrounds and frameworks for action. For some of us it is rooted in their DNA, for others it is an uncharted map, a *terra incognita*.

- When it comes down to digitisation PPP, such as they are advocated by the European Commission, are certainly strongly advisable. Those joint-ventures have a powerful leverage effect and can generate revenues for libraries under the form, for example, of a fee for every copy sold within the framework of the commercial exploitation. This ability to combine heritage and innovation,

to be a key player in the information economy contributes also to enhance our credibility, visibility and image. We have to liaise far more than we have been used to in the past with the actors of this brave new world being born under our eyes.

Several of our peers have already been through this process during the last few years and they will make us benefit from their experience may they be harsh or inspiring ; they will show us or at least lighten the path lying ahead. Nevertheless, this will help us to have a more accurate vision of what every choice implies and of its consequences.