SESSION V

International cooperation

Expanding co-operation providing veterinary information - the European Veterinary Libraries Group

Paul W van Olm
Institute for Animal Science and Health (ID-DLO)
P.O. Box 65, NL-8200 AB Lelystad, NETHERLANDS
Phone: +31 320 238238, Fax: +31 320 238050, E-mail: p.w.vanolm@id.dlo.nl

Keywords: library co-operation, Europe, veterinary medical libraries, EVLG

Three main questions will be discussed and a proposal will be issued. These three questions are:
1. Where have we come from?
2. What's going on now?
3. Where do we go from here?

Where have we come from?

In dealing with these questions I'll focus on the European situation. To start with the first question, according to the Bible we come from void. Some years ago that was indeed the situation in the European veterinary information scene. However, as a result of the first International Conference of Animal Health Information Specialists in Reading U.K. in 1992 two steps forward were done. The first was the foundation of AHIS-UK: the Animal Health and Information Specialists of the United Kingdom, at present a very active group with some fifty members. The second, some years later in 1995, was the foundation of the European Veterinary Libraries Group (EVLG). It was then decided that this group should be a subgroup of the European Association for Health Information and Libraries (EAHIL) and not form an independent organisation. The goals of the EVLG were set to:

1. unite people: to unite all those, who are interested and/or employed in the animal health information field
2. develop co-operation: to develop and encourage co-operation between veterinary medical libraries
3. link up organisations: to maintain the link with international organisations in the field not only with EAHIL, but also for instance with the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) and the World Veterinary Association (WVA).

The first goal uniting people has been the most successful in the past years. In Europe there are 32 countries with in total 78 centres of veterinary education. We succeeded in getting members in 18 of the 32 countries, so in more than 50% of the European countries. The map of Europe (fig. 1) shows the distribution of members and non-members. EVLG members can be found in: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. There are countries with zero members, like Spain and some
Eastern European countries, but also countries with only one centre in the country as EVLG member, like Italy, France, and also the United Kingdom, probably because "everyone" in the UK joined AHIS-UK.

The second goal development of co-operation between centres has mainly been accomplished through direct contacts, especially by using the VETLIB discussion list.

The third goal linking up with international organisations has mainly been restricted to EAHIL. Our group participated actively in the international conferences and workshops of Oslo, Norway in 1994; Prague, Czech Republic, 1995 and in Coimbra, Portugal 1996.

What's going on now?

Answering this question from a European point of view three topics is to be considered. First as a start in 1995/6 we did a survey not only among academic veterinary centres in Europe, but we sent out questionnaires also to state veterinary centres and to veterinary pharmaceutical companies. We asked questions on number of staff, holdings and automation. This survey was carried out by Marta Prosoevá from Kosice, Slovak Republic in the framework of a European Union financed project. A booklet with the data of the 72 centres that responded was compiled (1).

The second project is our own Newsletter. Linda Warden from London and Rosemary Warner from Dublin are the motor behind it and are two enthusiastic editors. Until now they have produced three numbers with lots of contributions not only from Europe, but also from other continents. Subscription information can be obtained through the e-mail address: rosemary.warner@ucd.ie, or by writing to Veterinary Medical Library, University College Dublin, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, Ireland. Recently a new name for the Newsletter was proposed and a new front cover outlined symbolising European co-operation. The new name Chiron is from the Greek mythological creature, half man and half horse. The title has been used before - by the Royal Army Veterinarians, but they and the title ceased in the early 1970ties.

The third project of EVLG of interest is the development of our own homepage. The credit for this goes to Holger Kulemeyer from Berlin, Germany. The URL is http://www.vetmed.fu-berlin.de:80/evlg. The homepage not only gives you all the details on our group but also it enables you to access OPAC's through the American system of linking databases.

Where do we go from here?

For Europe I see three points of action:

1. We must increase the number of members of our group especially in Southern and Eastern Europe. For countries that lack Western currency a system of sponsoring from West to East countries can be set up, for instance a West-European country pays the annual fees for EAHIL and EVLG for that new-member from Eastern or Central Europe. An extension to the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union is also of major importance. Such a system of
system of sponsoring can easily lead to more co-operation for instance also in the field of document delivery so in really providing veterinary information.

2. We must use international conferences as a motor for co-operation. The events for the near future are:
* the 6th European conference of Medical and Health Information and Libraries next year in Utrecht, The Netherlands.
**the World Veterinary Association will gather in Lyon, France in 1999 That seems not only to be a good opportunity to link up with this organisation, but also a good location to strengthen the ties with Southern Europe.
*** in the year 2000 there will be a large conference for the profession in London UK, called Converge on London.

3. The various programmes of the European Union can be used to start East-West co-operation between veterinary information centres. The Copernicus programme is a possibility, but the FAIR programme with one of the main themes "Thematical networks" seems to offer a good opportunity. Such a project should be launched as a "Concerted Action". These projects are fully financed by the EU and they should involve "many" countries. At least two EU-member states must be involved and at least 2 countries from outside the EU, but experience has learned that the more countries are involved the more likely it is for the EU to give a positive reply to the proposal. If such a project proposal can be put forward and it is broad enough, it would be even possible to become a global project. That would be a very promising outcome of this 2nd International Conference of Animal Health Information Specialists.

Figure 1: The present state of EVLG-membership in Europe

system of sponsoring can easily lead to more co-operation for instance also in the field of
document delivery so in really providing veterinary information.

2. We must use international conferences as a motor for co-operation. The events for the near
future are:
* the 6th European conference of Medical and Health Information and Libraries next year in
Utrecht, The Netherlands.
** the World Veterinary Association will gather in Lyon, France in 1999 That seems not only
to be a good opportunity to link up with this organisation, but also a good location to
strengthen the ties with Southern Europe.
*** in the year 2000 there will be a large conference for the profession in London UK, called
Converge on London.

3. The various programmes of the European Union can be used to start East-West co-
operation between veterinary information centres. The Copernicus programme is a possibility,
but the FAIR programme with one of the main themes "Thematical networks" seems to offer
a good opportunity. Such a project should be launched as a "Concerted Action". These
projects are fully financed by the EU and they should involve "many" countries. At least two
EU-member states must be involved and at least 2 countries from outside the EU, but
experience has learned that the more countries are involved the more likely it is for the EU to
give a positive reply to the proposal. If such a project proposal can be put forward and it is
broad enough, it would be even possible to become a global project. That would be a very
promising outcome of this 2nd International Conference of Animal Health Information
Specialists.

Figure 1: The present state of EVLG-membership in Europe

Reference: 1. Prosbová M, OLM PW van, editors. Academic libraries and information centres in