

Editorial

This issue of *Education for Information* contains the papers presented at the Conference on the Education of Overseas Students in U.K. Educational Institutions held in London in March, 1992. The inspiration for the Conference came partly for the need to promote the results of the *Brain Train* project which is discussed later in this issue and partly by discussions with Joseph B. Ojiambo, who had organized a similar Conference in the United States. All U.K. educational institutions with LIS programmes were invited to send staff and student representatives to the Conference. Although the Conference focused on the U.K. educational experience, many of the points raised are relevant to educational institutions in other developed countries.

As head of the Department of Library and Information Studies, Faculty of Sciences, Moi University, Kenya, Joseph Ojiambo was an especially appropriate person to prepare the keynote paper, as he had pursued his undergraduate and masters study in the U.K. and his doctorate was gained in the U.S. It had been hoped that Dr. Ojiambo would be able to open the Conference in person. As this was not possible, he videotaped an opening presentation for the first morning session. He characterises students from developing countries as “silent consumers” and his aim is to give voice to the views of this consumer group.

The report on the *Brain Train* project is complemented by a view from the rock face – an opinion survey from students currently studying at U.K. institutions during academic year 1991–1992 and students participating in the Conference. This paper has been modified since the Conference, to incorporate the views of the Conference participants. In planning the Conference, it was felt that the role of the British Council and exchanges, links and roles should be discussed. These topics are covered by Gil Bate and James Shearer respectively.

As one of the main goals of the Conference was to encourage a sharing of experience and exchange of ideas between the staff and students participating in the meeting, a substantial amount of time was devoted to discussion group sessions. Three groups were held in parallel followed by a plenary session. While some of the ideas raised deal with the general care and support of overseas students, a number of points are directly connected with professional educational concerns. An encouraging feature of these discussions was the very positive nature of many of the comments made. Representatives of organizations involved in the Conference met in May, 1992, to review these discussions and prepared a summary with suggestions for further action.

Ian Johnson and Russell Bowden had the task of “topping and tailing” the

Conference – and they complemented each other very well. The former laying stress on the nature of the problem (if there is one?) and the responsibilities involved in providing solutions, while the latter stressed the “oneness of librarianship” and, especially, the need for teaching about professional responsibilities.

This Conference provided an opportunity for the needs of students from developing countries to be explored in an open and positive manner. It is hoped that the publication of the papers in this issue of *Education for Information* will give voice and focus to the silent consumers.

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