Members of ASIS may have noted from an announcement in the August/September issue of the Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and posted on ASIS-L, that ASIS and the [French] Association of Information and Documentation Professionals (ADBS) have signed a cooperation agreement. Beyond reciprocal privileges granted to members of each society, the purpose of the agreement is to facilitate their interaction and cooperation in any suitable form. This introduction is expected to help achieve this.

It is all but an easy task to summarize the variety of interests and activities which can be found within ADBS. It is rich from the talent, expertise and dedication of its many members. We hope that you will find matching concerns which will prompt you to get in touch with them. If I can help ASIS members in making contact with ADBS members, I will be happy to do so. A parallel introduction to ASIS is being offered to members of ADBS.

More information about ADBS and its ongoing activities may be found on its Web site at http://www.adbs.fr, which has an English version option, as do most Web pages in continental Europe. A Minitel service is also available at 36-16 ADBS. The headquarters may be contacted by e-mail at adbs@adbs.fr. The society further operates a non-modified listserv, whose address is adbs-info@univ-remix1.fr; it may be an easy channel of communication with colleagues in France and elsewhere, even though the use of the French language is preferred.

ADBS was established 33 years ago as the Association of Documentalists and Special Librarians, a name reflected in the acronym which was kept after the change of the full name. With a membership now over 5000 it is the largest professional society of information professionals in France. About half of the members are in the Paris region. International membership is relatively small (1.84%). Corporate members represent about 12% and student members 25%. Of course, France has a number of other professional or scientific societies in our field, reflecting particular concerns or trades. ADBS maintains a standing liaison with most of them, especially through an inter-society board.

ADBS is a not-for-profit association. It is managed by a president who is assisted by an executive committee, which meets almost monthly, and a board, which meets on a quarterly basis. The membership elects the board by a mail ballot. A third of the members are renewed each year. The president and other key officers are elected by the board.

A permanent delegation headed by an executive director with a staff of about 10 is securing the day-to-day operation of the society. Its office, located near Gare de Lyon in Paris, is used for meetings and training courses. It also hosts a few sister societies which, it is hoped, others will join in the future so as to form a House of Information.

The structure of ADBS includes 7 committees which assist and advise the board on a number of key issues: 18 chapters (called regional groups); and 18 sectoral groups, somewhat equivalent to the SIGs in ASIS, except that they correspond more to the sector in which members are practicing than interest in a particular topic.

The budget of ADBS is close to $2.5 million. Membership dues and subscriptions to the journal (which are separated) represent roughly 35% of the income and continuing education courses another 35%.

Continuing education has always been a major activity of ADBS. In 1995 some 125 courses were run over 370 days and involved 27,000 person hours of training. A number of courses are implemented in cooperation with other organizations, including sister societies in French-speaking countries, as well as in the major French cities in cooperation with the regional groups. All kinds of subjects are covered in information technology and methods as well as related disciplines, from introductory to advanced levels. One-day seminars also allow a wider audience to be briefed about and to discuss hot topics.

ADBS publishes 5 issues per year of Documentaliste-Sciences de l'Information, which is one of the few French-language journals in information science and technology. The journal has 1800 paid subscriptions in addition to the 2700 members who choose to receive it. It is distributed in some 80 countries. ADBS also has a monthly information bulletin. The society publishes 2 series of monographs which carry for the moment 13 and 18 titles, respectively, and the proceedings of the now annual congress. It also distributes in France the European Union's information directorate (DG XIII) publications as well as those of ASTED, a sister society from Canada.

Both the permanent delegation and the regional groups are actively involved in a placement service. Jobs are advertised in the information bulletin and on the Minitel (with access restricted to members). A couple of years ago, ADBS initiated a procedure for granting professional certification and is working with sister societies toward European standards in this relatively new area.

The regional and sectoral groups do have a number of meetings each year. They also organize visits and study tours. At the national level, ADBS is organizing an annual meeting. IDT, in cooperation with ANRT, the association for technological research, and GIH, the information industry association, IDT is now run as a self-standing organization. It takes place in June in Paris. Presentations in English are welcome. A popular exhibit of information products, services and technology is taking place in conjunction with the congress. A number of parallel events are organized by ADBS, other societies and information companies.

ADBS is represented in various national consultative bodies, such as the Committee.
for the Coordination of Information Activities in Government Agencies, the High Commission for Scientific and Technical Information and the National Commission for the Curriculum of Undergraduate Programs in information-communication and in networked services.

At the international level, ADBS cooperates with many sister societies in Europe and French-speaking African countries. It is a member of the European Council of Information Associations. It is also active within FID and IFLA. It has been a National Sensitization Partner within the IMPACT program of the European Union and is considering ways to continue its involvement in the promotion of European programs.

The following are among the issues on the agenda of the society:
- monitoring changes in the field and in the profession (a grid for specifying profiles has been recently developed, for instance);
- the creation of a corps of information officers within the state civil service and the recognition of information professionals within labor regulations in general;
- copyright and legal aspects of information;
- information highways;
- competitive intelligence; and
- professional education and training and in particular the use of Internet for this purpose.

In 1995 ADBS started a review of its structure and strategy in order to adjust better to the changes in the information professions and to meet the needs of its members.

It is perhaps at the grass-roots level, when the interests of persons, committees, chapters and groups are related, that exchanges between ASIS and ADBS may take place and possibly evolve into a real cooperation. I would be pleased to provide further information and to help those interested get in touch with counterparts.

The committees have usually a small number of members and are quite flexible in their organization and proceedings. They deal respectively with the following:
- the profession and professional profiles, which involves among other activities occasional surveys of salaries or career patterns;
- education and research;
- information technology and information handling methods;
- international activities;
- certification;
- copyright; and
- civil service statutes and labor regulations.

A horizontal group, called Prospective group, involves members of various committees and is currently looking at trends in the information professions.

The regional groups (chapters) are generally established on the basis of the French regions. Their membership ranges from 50 to more than 1000 for Ile de France (Paris area). Their organization and activities vary from place to place. They may be first hand contacts for locating information sources in the particular region, arranging study, or not professional-only, tours. While most members in the regions belong to the local group, some 20% of members, mostly in the Paris area, are not affiliated with a regional group. Membership in up to two regional groups is free.

The sectorial groups have a membership ranging from 20 to more than 300. They have an elected group of officers and may organize themselves and develop activities as they feel appropriate. There is no fee for belonging to a sectoral group. Only 50% of the ADBS members are affiliated with usually only one group. The groups may offer a unique expertise about information resources in their particular sector as well as about professional and technological trends. The groups cover the following areas:
- agriculture;
- insurance industry;
- audiovisual industries;
- local government;
- legal information;
- economics;
- electronics and computer industries;
- health, medicine, pharmacy and biology;
- developing countries;
- the press;
- social sciences and social services;
- transport and equipment;
- education (that is, information professionals working in educational institutions, not LIS education);
- culture;
- environment;
- energy;
- finance, banking and stock markets; and
- continuing professional education (in any field, not in information).

The establishment of an information consultants group is being considered. Some consultant members of ADBS are listed in a directory available in print, Minitel and Web format.

In these various bodies, you are likely to find, at any time, the current or future leaders of the French information profession. You may also find a number of old timers (like this author). Perfection does not exist, but in Leonardo's work.

Like any other professional society, ADBS can only deliver what its members are able to deliver. Some do, some do not. Some cannot do much, for any reason. I do hope that ASIS members with an interest in French information affairs, or the French corner of the European ones, will be able to find someone to talk to and possibly a new friend.

A fact worth keeping in mind: in 1995, only 15% of ADBS members had an e-mail address. It will change fast (if universal service may be secured), but snail mail or fax may be the only channel in some cases.

Michel J. Menou, a consultant with CIDEGI in France and co-contributing editor of the International Column of the Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science, can be reached by mail at 13 rue Nationale, F-49250 Les Rosiers sur Loire, France, or e-mail at michel.menou@utopia.fnet.fr

International News

British Library Name Change

The British Library Research and Development Department has a new name—the British Library Research and Innovation Center (RIC).

The name change follows a wide ranging program of changes to the structure and functions of the department.

The aim of the RIC is to promote, support, manage and disseminate high quality research, innovation and development in information, library and related fields.

Full details of RIC's functions and its support for research, innovation and development will be maintained at its Web site: http://portico.bl.uk/ric/

In other news, the British Library has developed a new computer system which will revolutionize the way visitors to the library's galleries view the treasures on display.

Turning the Pages uses computer animation, high quality digitized images and touch screen technology to simulate the action of turning the pages of a book. The prototype now in use allows visitors greater access to two of the library's great treasures: Book of Hours of Bona Sforza and Leonardo da Vinci's sketch book.

The International Column and International News are coordinated by co-contributing editors Michel Menou and Pam Richards.