

Notes pour une allocution prononcée par M. Michel Pigeon, recteur de l'Université Laval, à l'ouverture du 26^e congrès de l'International Association of Technological University Libraries, le dimanche 29 mai 2005, à 18 h, au Cercle du pavillon Alphonse-Desjardins

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I am pleased to cordially welcome all participants to this 26th Annual Meeting of the International Association of Technological University Libraries. Welcome to Quebec City, welcome to Université Laval. It is an honour for us to host the first IATUL conference to be held in Canada.

I would like, in a nutshell, to present our university. Université Laval was created in 1663. It is the second oldest institution of higher education in North America, right after Harvard University established in 1636. Initially, Laval was a seminary dedicated to theology.

However, the institution rapidly expanded its programmes to medicine, law and arts, and was officially granted a University Charter by Queen Victoria in 1852. Today, Université Laval is a leading higher education institution in the francophone world as well as a major Canadian research-intensive university, with more than 38 000 students. Among them, more than 3 000 come from abroad, and a quarter of our total student population is enrolled in graduate programs.

With more than 400 academic programs, we offer bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. programs in practically all disciplines. Our 2000 professors and teaching staff operate on an annual budget of more than 400 million Canadian dollars, and an additional 250 millions in the form of research grants and contracts.

Université Laval, the oldest francophone university in North America, is also one of the Canadian strongholds in scientific research and technological transfer. It is at the fifth place amongst the 10 most important Canadian research-intensive universities. Laval heads three Canadian networks of centers of excellence in photonics, geomatic and Arctic research. Because this quite large institution is established in a relatively medium sized milieu, it has and always had a tremendous impact on the progress of our region.

The last quarter-of-century diversification of the Québec City economy beyond tourism and government civil service was by and large the result of the transfer of the applications of our research. Université Laval efforts in this respect are in good part responsible for the fact that in April of this year, the unemployment level in Québec City was at 5,3 %, one of the lowest in Canada, if not THE lowest rate in our country. Most if not all of the high-tech companies in our region are linked with - or were founded by - Université Laval professors or former employees.

To be closer to your concerns, the Université Laval Library is, with its 4,5 million documents, the largest and the most important east of Montreal, Maritime provinces included. It holds the 61st rank amongst the Association of North-American Research Libraries for, up from the 72nd rank in the previous year. It is also a very important documentation center for the Québec Government.

I am therefore very happy that you have decided to hold your meeting in Québec City, and on our Université campus. Here, at Laval, our fundamental mission is the creation, diffusion and exchange of knowledge, for the benefit of our students and for the advancement of society.

Our library therefore holds a central and essential position in this mission. That is why the IATUL network is very important to us, by its affiliation to UNESCO on the one hand, but also, on the other hand, because of the focus it puts on the progress of librarianship in the context of the accelerated progress of a worldwide knowledge society, based on the growing development of communication and information technologies.

This Congress, placed under the theme of information and innovation, will be an opportunity, as mentioned in the program, to advance understanding about the relationship between the creation, the publication and the use of scientific information and the innovation agendas of governments, industry and universities worldwide.

It will be the occasion to explore the relationship between the advancement of knowledge and the advancement of society, to see how it reinforces and strengthens the innovation capacity of communities at the local, regional and national levels. Mostly, it will undoubtedly lead to active and fertile discussions as to what libraries can do to optimize the process.

Your meeting will not only contribute to the advancement of knowledge in librarianship, but it will also help participants develop fruitful contacts with their colleagues from all over the world. I hope you will find here new ideas, new opportunities for collaboration and partnership.

I wish you every success in your discussions, and a pleasant stay on our campus and in Québec City, a World Heritage site recognized by UNESCO, which will shortly be celebrating its 400th anniversary in 2008.

Thank you.