

HISTORIC LIBRARIES FORUM

***BULLETIN* NO. 5, August 2005**

Historic Libraries Forum Annual Meeting 2005: Archives for non-archivists

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 15 December 2005 in the Stevenson Lecture Theatre, British Museum. Business will start at 11 am with a 10.15 start time for coffee and networking. The lunch interval will be short (45mins) to enable us to finish promptly at 4.30pm. A visit to one of the libraries within the British Museum will be offered at the end of the meeting.

The topic for the next meeting will be 'Archives for non-archivists'. The concept behind the theme is to help librarians and libraries with small "archive" collections to identify them, adopt appropriate measures for handling them and understand the why and how of bringing them to public attention. It will also aim to clarify when and how one might bring in a professional archivist and look at sources of funding and collaboration. A booking form is enclosed with this issue and the full programme will appear in the next issue of the *Bulletin* and on the website. We have kept the cost down to the same price as last year (£35.00 to include lunch) but we need a good level of attendance to maintain this low price so your assistance in publicising the event will be very welcome.

If you would like the meeting to address a particular aspect of the theme, please contact Helen Cordell, Hon. Librarian, Royal Asiatic Society, 16 Daleham Mews, London, NW3 5DB

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Automate or vegetate: report of the Historic Libraries Forum Autumn meeting, 29th October 2004

Peter Hoare opened the meeting by reminding us that this topic was at the top of the list of themes chosen by the membership. The title was deliberately aggressive because the non-automated library if not a vegetable, is at best a flower, and perceived by others as out of this world. Automation enables the library to offer a better service to its users and to make its collections better known to the wider world. This in its turn brings other consequences, the need to improve access and security but also offer better recording of material.

These improvements and their consequences, however, mean that the small library must get it right. The system chosen must be right for the library and the users. Small libraries do not have the staff or the financial resources to have several attempts at such a project. The outcome will contribute to the national heritage as has been found with the many rare items found in the National Trust collections.

Alison Wilson (Librarian, New Hall, Cambridge) then took us through the key points to bear in mind when managing an automation project once the system had been chosen. The initial planning was the key to the success of the project. The plan which should be congruent with the long-term plans of the Library also offered the opportunity to make changes to the Library's practices and standards such as cataloguing rules, subject headings, organisation of the collection and classification and shelfmark schemes. In addition, other projects such as security tagging the collection and recording conservation status of the rare books could be incorporated into the work programme. This planning enables the Library to seize opportunities which might occur during the project but if necessary the work can be broken into smaller achievable units, which will eventually come together in the planned whole. A file of written policies based on these decisions should be maintained and further decisions taken on standards and implementation as work progresses added.

Having decided the extent of the project, it is helpful to consult the user community and the staff for their opinions of the plan and if possible visit other sites to learn from their experience of automation, particularly if they have chosen the same system. It is essential to establish the resources needed for the project i.e. the staff, space, equipment, time and money and whether adequate resources are available. Someone will need to be selected to manage the project and if an existing member of staff takes on this role, consider how normal work routines will be covered for the period of the project. Space to undertake the project with adequate links to the network and power points needs to be allocated, with if necessary secure storage for material being processed if it is not possible to restore it to a strong room. The hidden costs of insurance, contingencies, support costs and additional unbudgeted training have to be included in the plan. Staff costs should include an allowance for holidays and sick leave. Ideally a small pilot project will be undertaken to estimate the staff time and costs required. Time taken for a single operation becomes significant when it is scaled up for the complete project. Planning will enable the library to balance its goals against its resources and to look for additional funds to make up any deficiencies. Moreover, the parent body will look more favourably on the provision of funding if they can appreciate the planning that underpins the project.

Setting up the system chosen will require the Library to make decisions, which are largely irrevocable for the life of the system. The amount of help provided by the system provider and the cost of that help will vary. It is essential to document the decisions taken, which should be based on the advance planning and the reasons a particular system was chosen.

The manager for the project will need to maintain the plan and keep the project on course, not allow it to drift into other desirable but unplanned activities, unless there is revision of the plan with additional resources. Statistics of work done should be kept. This will facilitate monitoring of the project and the ability to report progress to the users and funding bodies. Quality control of the work will be undertaken by the manager or designated assistant and should be based on sampling of work done. As staff gain experience the number of records sampled can be reduced from every record at the outset, to 10% and ultimately 1% of records.

The manager will also need to manage training. System providers normally offer training, but decisions will have to be made on how many staff to train and how training will cascade to other staff. If volunteer staff are used the costs of training for them should be included in the budget as should the cost of recruitment and training for contract staff. To make the best use of expensive training, Alison advised that staff should work on the system first so that they can ask more in-depth questions at training sessions.

Security of the collections can be compromised by the changes caused by an automation project. References of casual staff should be checked; a close control of keys needs to be instituted; work in progress needs to be stored securely if work rooms cannot be locked. Conservation issues will be raised by the movement of the stock which such an enterprise causes.

When the project is completed take time to celebrate and launch it to the Library's users and the world at large!

Alison recommended several relevant leaflets available from the National Preservation Office website: <http://www.bl.uk/services/npo/publicationsleaf.html>

In particular:

Packing and moving Library and archive collections: <http://www.bl.uk/services/npo/moving.pdf>
and *Designing out crime*: <http://www.bl.uk/services/npo/doc.pdf>

The afternoon programme was devoted to the selection of systems and reports from four libraries that had adopted systems recently. Alison Wilson highlighted the points to bear in mind when choosing a system. The plan should be based on the immediate and longer-term needs of the Library. Research on the systems available can be done by web searches, visiting exhibitions, asking other libraries what system they use and how it meets their needs. Penetrate beneath the surface of the suppliers' presentations to discover how much work they are putting into the sustainability of the system and how reliable the company is. Find out what support they offer and the cost of such support, what is included in the annual subscription fee and what might incur an additional charge. It is worth asking for the best price they can offer, because there is often a certain amount of leeway available and newish systems in particular may offer a competitive price. The system supplier should help specify the hardware requirements and many offer to assist with procurement if required. It is essential to work with the supplier so that the appropriate hardware is chosen because once implemented it will be necessary to identify if faults reside with the hardware or the software and maintenance contracts will be needed with both suppliers.

Ed Potten introduced the second part of the programme by describing four systems that he had researched at short notice, based on their respective website descriptions. This was followed by presentations on the implementation of these systems in historic libraries. The presentations demonstrated how these systems were able to cope with the specialized records that each library required and a fuller exploration can be undertaken on their respective websites. Emmanuel College, Cambridge has successfully adopted the ADLIB System which they find works well. It was chosen for its flexibility, it can be customized with the Toolset, although that may conflict with upgrades. One drawback is that it does not use MARC format for its records and so Emmanuel are mapping their records to MARC so that records can be exported. Eton College chose Mikromarc for its historic collections. This is a Norwegian system which means that there is less support available in the UK and not all the documentation is translated into English. The attraction of the system apart from a low price is its flexibility and the ability to maintain several databases for the different collections such as pictures, furniture and silver. Christ's College, Cambridge chose the Heritage system; it was felt to be good value for money. St Catherine's, Cambridge, had chosen a newer system, Liberty3 from Softlink. They were very pleased with this product, which they were pioneering among the Cambridge colleges. A helpful question and answer session with the speakers closed the meeting.

Libraries in Danger: report of the CILIP seminar, 26 April 2005

The seminar was organised by the Rare Books Group and by the CILIP Advisory Panel on Preservation and Conservation (which I sit on, and where I can bring the Historic Libraries Forum matters into the CILIP orbit), following concern in recent months over the number of libraries threatened with dispersal or closure – several of these cases have been reported in Forum's *Bulletin*. A lively attendance meant that discussion and questions following each paper added to the day's success and enjoyment.

Robin Price, chair of the Pres & Con Panel, opened the seminar, with reference to cases such as the Royal Commonwealth Society, York Minster, special collections at Keele University and the Science Museum Library, and the possible threats to Government department libraries and special collections in metropolitan public libraries. He said there was a need to persuade the Government to provide funds for emergencies of this kind, and cited a recent AMARC meeting on collections in danger, referring to the Mappa Mundi at Hereford and more recently the Macclesfield Psalter.

Philip Plumb was indisposed but his key-note paper was read in his absence. He referred to a note in the 2nd edition of the *Directory of Rare Book and Special Collections*, as long ago as 1997, on the great losses that had taken place since the first edition, and regretted that the dangers had not disappeared. In 1947, after India independence, the India Office Library and Records faced demands for "repatriation" of its collections to India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – and he feared such demands would not be resisted today, though they would mean the break-up of an integral whole. He recommended that arising from the seminar CILIP and other bodies needed to develop defence mechanisms and procedures – ensuring prior notice of threats, with a network of informants, and seeking ways to fight such threats. These could affect not only small and vulnerable libraries but also collections within large libraries – such collections were still being formed and needed protection into the future.

Brian Jenkins spoke controversially about the successful bid by Cambridge University Library for the Royal Commonwealth Society's collections, 250,000 items which came to Cambridge in 1993 – in the context of 30 other major collections of printed books taken in within a few years. The University Library faced serious problems in dealing with such acquisitions (some deposited, not even the property of the University, but still demanding costly conservation and management). The RCS collections are now better recorded and preserved than ever before, and form an important part of the library's research collections; but they have lost the intimacy of open-access approach possible in their original home with specialist and experienced staff of their own. He felt that a similar opportunity ten years later could not, in practical terms, have been seized by the university, and questioned whether even the consultation figures of 3000 items a year could really justify the on-going investment. In response to questions, he said that storage of large collections was a major problem, especially for legal-deposit libraries, and that outside funding was getting ever harder to find. In a sense the University Library was "doing it for the nation" and would not consider discarding – but there were implications for Government support for such national needs.

John Powell gave a partly reassuring picture of the present arrangements for York Minster Library following the debacle two years ago, with the new Dean speaking of “walking on firm ground” and an advisory committee set up – though meeting only infrequently and without much staff consultation! The library now contributed to the “York Libraries Forum”, intended to publicise holdings of all types, and was now better integrated into the Minster administration. Nonetheless it was clear that the library had only limited links with its parent body and was not at all heavily used, or much appreciated, by members of the Chapter, who formed the governing body – and this was a worry for the future, one shared by many similar libraries within the Church of England. Suggestions from the floor included the use of the media, from local and national television to *Private Eye*, to publicise the value of such libraries and attract public support.

Geoff Allen spoke on public libraries and their special collections. A 1998 survey by LASER had assessed the importance of these collections, with many being rated as of “national” importance. They included, for example, local collections which might contain material on local characters of national importance, and collections of regional importance whose importance was sometimes not acknowledged even by their custodians, and which were less well known as a result of the decline in regional bureaux and inter-lending generally. Much of the old subject-specialisation coverage for non-fiction had been abandoned. Special collections no longer had priority, either for librarians who were no longer “bookmen” or in the face of new funding initiatives which stressed “modern” technology and media. He hoped that the MLA’s designation scheme for libraries might improve matters, though he had doubts about its appropriateness for public libraries (as against local museums), and also referred to a working party on collections in the south-east under the Association of London Chief Librarians. Sarah Dodgson, on behalf of the Rare Books Group, said that in looking at producing a new edition of the *Directory of Rare Book and Special Collections* the RBG had found opposition to the whole idea of reporting losses, especially among public librarians, who feared “upsetting the apple cart”.

The threat to the Science Museum Library was the subject of a presentation by Jon Tucker, head of the Science Museum, and Nick Wyatt from the library. The increase in rents imposed by Imperial College, despite the integration of the SML with the College Library, and the balance of use between college and museum staff, meant that the Museum, with its funding already under review, could no longer afford to operate the library in its present form. Options under consideration were dispersal of the collections (e.g. to the BL / College / Museum), or keeping them together but on other London sites or perhaps a remote store in Wiltshire. One problem for the library was that it was seen, internally, as in competition with the Museum itself, which found it easier to attract sponsorship. As a national institution, the Museum needed to establish what Government really wanted for such museums and libraries – this might be a good test case.

The last paper, by Gordon Graham, was more positive. He described his formula for creating special collections: Fashion + Purpose + Money. After noting Aaron Lansky’s *Outwitting History* on rescuing the books of Yiddish civilisation, his own example was the Burma Campaign Memorial Library, one of a number he had founded, and established specifically as a “war memorial” to include all published material on the campaign. He had developed a strategy for fund-raising, involving precepts such as “Demonstrate you’ve already done something” and “Don’t ask for small sums”.

An open discussion section produced a number of ideas (and other disaster stories such as the disposal of material by the BBC). The importance of special collections as an “accumulating asset” needed to be made clear to parent bodies bent on raising a quick profit; exhibitions demonstrating the breadth of many collections, beyond their obvious subject content, were another way of opening eyes to their value. The role of whistleblowers and the early symptoms of decline were discussed at some length, with pleas for CILIP to recognise the difficulties and encourage appropriate action. However, not all situations call for a major public outcry (as at York Minster) – the learned societies in Burlington House preferred to negotiate (successfully) with Government without outside pressure being applied.

Finally, Robin Price wound up the seminar (noting that the scale of concern could be judged by its having been twice over-subscribed) with an undertaking to make CILIP much more fully aware of the fact that libraries are in danger, and that the right approach to dealing with individual cases and with the problem at large should be a high priority. It had been a stimulating if often depressing day – but at least I was able to tell those present about the Historic Libraries Forum and its concerns in this field, and attracted many people to sign up for our mailing list!

Peter Hoare

Library News

York Minster Library Advisory Group Report

In 2003 the Dean and Chapter of York Minster set up an advisory group, chaired by Lord Habgood, to advise about the future of the York Minster Library. It made a report to the Chapter on October 21st 2004. The Dean and Chapter have accepted the advice offered in the report, and confirm that their core responsibilities in relation to the Library are:

- The housing, conservation and access to its own archives and those donated in the past, almost certainly within the present building for the foreseeable future.
- The housing, conservation and access within the present building of its collections of early printed and modern books. They also believe that the book holdings should continue to be a living library and not a ‘frozen’ collection.
- To ensure the maximum use of the conservation facilities given the public funds made available for their fitting out and construction.
- The development of a properly worked out acquisitions, gifts and disposals policy for both archives and book holdings [including other collections of playbills and tracts] in order that the collections may develop and improve in what they can provide for its users. This is a fundamental element in the work of any library or archive. They will work to develop clearer policies about the work of the conservation studio and its priorities.

The group have also advised the Dean and Chapter to develop a modern records management system within the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. This would be a complementary process to that being developed in respect of the historic holdings.

The Dean and Chapter have also agreed on the basis of the recommendations in the report that:

1. the idea of housing the City of York's archives should not be pursued.
2. a specific collection devoted to modern or contemporary theology should not be built up.
3. the University of York be approached for a new service level agreement.

The members of the York Minster Library Advisory Group are:

Lord Habgood (Chairman) Mrs Elizabeth Heaps (University of York Librarian) Canon Allen Warren (Provost of Vanburgh College, University of York & Member of Chapter) Dr Christopher de Hamel (Parker Librarian at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge) Canon Glyn Webster (Chancellor of York Minster & Member of Chapter) Mrs Barbara Woroncow (lately Chief Officer of Yorkshire Museums, Galleries and Archives Council)

There are also three consultants, Professor Mirjam Foot (British Library), Dr Christopher Kitching (Secretary to the Historic Manuscripts Commission) and Mr John Tuck (British Library).

Executive Secretary: Dr Richard Shephard.

Review of the Documentary Heritage of the Church of England

In 2003 the Church Commissioners set up a review group to examine the housing and conservation of the documentary heritage of the Church of England. The review was concerned with Lambeth Palace Library, the Church of England Record Centre, and the Library of the Council for the Care of Churches and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission. The Review Group has now completed its work and has recommended that the new post of a Director of Libraries, Archives and Information Services be created. It is expected that the Director will be in post by Autumn 2005.

The text of the Report is available via <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/papers/docheritage.doc>.

Association of Independent Libraries

The Sybil Campbell Library in London has joined the Association. The Library was founded in 1928 by prominent members of what was to become The British Federation of Women Graduates. Books were donated by notable literary figures and scholars of the 1920s-30s. Recently the acquisitions focus has been on the achievements of women. More information is available from Margaret Roake, Library Trustee, 28 Great James Street, London WC1N 3EY (postal address) or via the Directory of A.I.L. Libraries at: www.independentlibraries.co.uk.

NEMLAC News

The new NEMLAC web site is now available at <http://www.nemlac.co.uk>. New features include:

- An interactive map which will locate the nearest museums, libraries and archives and link to the region's electronic catalogues and virtual collections.

- Statements about NEMLAC and about the value and potential impact of our sector on the life of the region.
- Link to the 'old' web site which will continue to provide relevant documents, information sets and current awareness including news, job and consultancy promotions.

The interactive map is innovative and a first for a Regional Agency or MLAC. It is queried by postcode and will locate the first 10 museums, libraries or archives nearest that postcode. You can then link to the web site of the required venue for further information. On the map you can zoom in and out and move the map in all directions. The map includes road numbers for easy location of venues. The site has been tested for accessibility and is designed for standard monitor resolution. A text-only version of every page is available from each page or from the Site Map.

Conservation and Preservation Issues

'Where shall we put it? Spotlight on collections storage issues'. Papers given at the 2004 National Preservation Office Conference are now available free of charge at <http://www.bl.uk/services/npo/publicationsconf.html>. Please see the Events Calendar (below) for details of the 2005 conference

Advice requested

Hilary Ely (h.ely@surreycc.gov.uk, working on behalf of the Cranston Library, Reigate) writes:

"I would very much welcome advice on what to do about copies of the Book of Common Prayer in terrible condition, without provenance, and otherwise unexceptional. We feel we should restore or conserve them, to bring them back to the standard of the rest of the collection, yet they will cost more to restore than many of the core items in the collection. If any are not worth conserving, are they worth keeping?"

Jessica Gardner (J.P.Gardner@exeter.ac.uk.) writes:

"At Exeter, we are currently revising our insurance arrangements for the special collections. I would be very grateful to hear about how other institutions approach insuring their collections, both in general and in specific relation to groups of material held on loan".

Rosemary Mathew (bslib@lib.cam.ac.uk) writes:

"If people have bibles to dispose of they can check Bible Society holdings in the Cambridge University Library Newton catalogue <http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk>, and if they then want to get in touch to email me. I don't have a budget to buy unfortunately, but non-duplicate donations are very welcome if of bibliographical interest, or a translation we don't have."

Ed Potten (Edward.Potten@nationaltrust.org.uk.) writes:

"I am interested in tracing books that were once in the Parish Library of Holy Trinity Church, Little Ouseburn, North Yorkshire. The few titles I have so far located have inscriptions identifying them as from the church library, and as far as I know there were no formal book labels, plates or other regular marks of provenance. I would be extremely interested to hear of any other survivals."

Publications of library interest

A.I.L. librarians contributed to *Mechanics' Worldwide 2004 - Buildings, Books and Beyond*, The First International Conference of Athenaeums, Institutes/Libraries, Literary Institutes, Lyceums, Mechanics' Institutes, Mercantile Libraries, Philosophical Societies, Schools of Art and Working Men's/Women's Institutes which was held in Australia. Contributions from the U.K, the U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand and other countries have been brought together in a collection of 49 conference papers published by Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc., Box 1080, Mitcham North, Victoria 3132, Australia, Tel:+61 3 9873 7202; Fax:+61 3 9873 0542; e-mail: jim@theruralstore.com.au. (\$77.00 plus \$8.00p&h, per copy ; CD: \$60.00 plus \$4.00p&h)

The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution invites orders for its limited edition book, *Leonard Jenyns. 1800-1893: Darwin's lifelong friend*, to be published by the Institution in September 2005. The book includes a description of the Jenyns Library, now part of the BRLSI's collections. Details from the BRLSI, 16-18 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HN; <http://www.brlsi.org>.

Newly-published: Michael Perkin. *A Directory of the Parochial Libraries of the Church of England and the Church in Wales*. (London: The Bibliographical Society, 2004).

Events Calendar

September

7 –9 September 2005, New Hall, Cambridge: 'Whose book was it anyway: book ownership and provenance': 2005 CILIP Rare Books Group Annual Study Conference. Booking forms are available on the CILIP website (<http://www.cilip.org.uk>).

11 – 13 September 2005, Oxford Brookes University: The Third International Conference on the Book, 'Access, Diversity and Democracy'. [http:// www.brookes.ac.uk/publishing](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/publishing)

13 September, CILIP Scanning and security systems showcase. Contact Joan Thompson 020-7255-0544, joan.thompson@cilip.org.uk

26 and 27 September 2005, British Library Conference Centre, 96 Euston Road London NW1 2DB: CILIP Library and Information History Group and the Wolfenbütteler Arbeitskreis für Bibliotheks-, Buch- und Mediengeschichte 4th Anglo-German Seminar on Library History, 'Libraries and Innovation'. Free of charge to CILIP members, but booking essential. Fee for non-CILIP members is £25. Further details from Dorothea Mieke, e-mail: dorothea.mieke@bl.uk or Christopher Skelton-Foord, e-mail: christopher.skelton-foord@durham.ac.uk.

November

7 November 2005, British Library Conference Centre, 96 Euston Road London NW1 2DB: National Preservation Office Workshop, 'Preservation for access: managing paper-based collections in museums, libraries and archives. Cost: £117.50

25 and 26 November 2005, Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly: 'Fairs, Markets and the Itinerant Book Trade': annual conference on book-trade history 2005'. Fee for those booking before 31 July will be £80 (£100 after this date). Further details from the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association, Sackville House, 40 Piccadilly, London W1J 0DR Tel: 020 7439 3118. E-mail: admin@aba.org.uk

December

15 December, Stevenson Lecture Theatre, British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG: Historic Libraries Forum Annual Meeting, 'Archives for non-archivists'.



<http://www.historiclibrariesforum.org.uk>