

HISTORIC LIBRARIES FORUM

BULLETIN NO. 13

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Traditionally, 'parochial' libraries have been particularly susceptible to dispersal; since the publication of Michael Perkins's revised *Directory* in 2004 a number of the collections it describes have been lost, whilst others continue to be under threat. With this in mind, it is particularly pleasing to report the donation of the historic library associated with St. Mary's Church in Nantwich to The John Rylands University Library, Manchester, brokered through the auspices of the Historic Libraries Forum. Barnabas Oley began the movement to found parochial libraries in 1685, and the idea gained pace with the establishment of the Trustees for Erecting Parochial Libraries and Promoting other Charitable Designs. Thomas Bray (1656-1730), early advocate of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, was perhaps the movement's most vociferous advocate. The Society was formally founded in 1699, with the provision of Parochial Libraries enshrined in law by Act of Parliament, 4 March 1708/9.

A printed advertisement by 'A Divine of the Church of England' inserted at the foot of a Brief issued to raise money for the rebuilding of All Saint's, Oxford, dated 28 April 1704/5 offers some insights into the date of formation of Nantwich's Church Library. The advertisement called on "The Reverend the Minister of every Parochial Church and Chapel in England" to answer ten questions about their parish, of which number six was "What library is settled or settling in your Parish, and by whom?" Nantwich was one of the 1579 parishes which responded, and one of only 31 that gave a positive answer to question six. Bray's accounts for the period 1695-1699 reveal that a grant was given to Nantwich between these dates for a Parochial Lending Library, placing it amongst the first tranche of Bray-supported foundations. The collection was augmented in 1699 with a donation from Samuel Edgley (d.1721) and its existence is recorded in a letter to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1700.

An early library catalogue records that there were 181 titles in the Library in 1712, of which 96 were reckoned to have survived in 2004, including a 1496 Turrecremata and one of only three surviving copies of Wynkyn de Worde's 1502 *Hymnal*. Nantwich PCC and the Diocese of Chester deserve high praise for recognising the significance of this library and for their decision to preserve it in perpetuity in the Rylands, where it will be well cared for and used. This very successful outcome should, however, not lead to complacency. The Forum is still involved with negotiating to prevent the dispersal of a further parochial library, the antiquarian collections at Cardiff Public Library remain in grave danger (see pp.6-10) and Bishop Hurd's Library at Hartlebury is far from secure (see p. 10).

We are pleased to announce in this *Bulletin* two forthcoming workshops - cataloguing antiquarian materials in Manchester in July, and music cataloguing in September at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge (see p.6). These workshops are always over-subscribed, so book early.

Ed Potten, Chair.

CONFERENCES

Historic Libraries Forum Annual conference 2008

Poverty is no Excuse - Disaster Preparedness for the Small Library

The 2008 HLF annual conference, generously sponsored by Hanwell Instruments, was held at the Wellcome Institute on 20 November and proved popular with around 50 participants, anxious to learn more about a topic which seems to affect an increasing number of libraries these days.

Alison Walker, head of the National Preservation Office, began the day with some advice on creating a disaster plan. She recalled that when she started work on a plan for the British Library in 1983 they were in the vanguard. There was very little written on the subject of disaster planning and no internet to consult. Nowadays there is a considerable body of literature, mostly written after disastrous events. Advice, including a bibliography, is available on the NPO website (<http://www.bl.uk/npo/disaster.html>).

Alison stressed the importance of initial consultation with people working in the building about obvious risks, weaknesses in maintenance and vulnerable material in unsuitable locations. The first stage of planning is Prevention, minimising risks by routine inspection of buildings, good housekeeping and raising staff awareness. A chain of command should be put in place and staff trained to react, moving material off-site, recording damage etc. The second stage is Preparation, making sure that all necessary supplies are to hand, keeping insurance of the building and collections up to date, having agreements with freezer companies and a place where material can be assessed and recorded. She stressed the importance of a plan which is concise and easy to consult in a crisis. Keeping the details up-to-date is essential. If disaster strikes, the third stage, Reaction and Recovery is heavily dependent on the plan. Procedures such as calling the emergency services and other external helpers, salvaging damaged material, if safe to do so, and recording and packing it should all have been clearly set out. Taking photographs early on for insurance claims was recommended. Managers need to ensure that staff are working safely and are well looked after, with counselling available if necessary. Finally the plan should be reviewed in the light of experience.

Graham Matthews has a long-established interest in disaster management with many publications on the subject. His work has involved not only libraries, but also archives and museums. His 1996 project report, written with Paul Eden - *Disaster Management in British Libraries* - formed an influential element of the M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries' framework (www.m25lib.ac.uk/n25dcp). In his talk, Graham identified particular problems that might be faced by small libraries trying to put together a disaster management policy: lack of staff and resources; insufficient expertise, for example in areas of conservation; the difficulty of establishing and contributing to regional network and support groups; lack of support by senior staff within the parent organization; lack of resources for simulation

exercises and staff training, once the policy has been written; and the difficulties of inhabiting shared premises where the other party might have potentially hazardous materials close to the library.

In truth, larger libraries might recognize many of these issues, and prioritisation of resources is always difficult. But, whereas a few years ago library managers might have been tempted to leave the problem in the pending tray, arguing that the likelihood of a true disaster was too low, the scale and range of threats in recent years have made even the most blasé librarian nervous; flooding in particular has become a regular news item. Our duty of care to historic collections and the irreplaceable nature of many of the items, coupled with the need to provide continuity of service and income, means that a well-considered plan is essential. In order for us to be as well-prepared as possible when the unexpected occurs, the written policy must relate to the individual library building, and be reinforced by staff training and simulation exercises, with every member of staff becoming familiar with the emergency equipment stored in appropriate locations. Graham emphasized how helpful fire brigades can be in providing advice and also participating in simulations. A vital part of disaster management involves sharing knowledge and experience with others. And, of course, our plans must be sustainable: updated regularly as new threats arise, new partnerships formed, and new staff recruited. Graham provided a useful bibliography and list of websites to support his talk.

Question time provided the opportunity for a number of practical points to be made, such as the importance of tanked basements (sadly, many library stacks are housed in areas prone to flooding). One participant wondered whether library schools were teaching the preservation skills that will allow future generations of professionals to make informed choices regarding disaster management. The NPO aims to provide training mid-career, but younger colleagues also need some background in the topic. Finally, if an opportunity arises to contribute to the design or redesign of a library building, then we were advised that this is the time to try to address future problems. We were given an excellent demonstration of the benefit of this input when we were shown round the basement stacks of the Wellcome library.

After a lunch break followed by the AGM, the afternoon began in sobering fashion with Jennifer Holland's stark depiction of the 1994 Norwich fire, dramatically illustrated by slides of the damage. Much has been written about this disaster, but even so the audience was silent and moved by the scale and speed of the conflagration, which was exacerbated by the design of the 1960s building. The fire was caused by faulty wiring and temperatures soared to 1000 degrees Centigrade, resulting in the loss of some 125,000 books, including 30,000 from Local Studies, 75 years of newspaper cuttings and a card catalogue of ¼ million items. The archives in the basement were removed and mostly saved, despite the vast amounts of water flooding down into that area, owing to the fact that they were boxed. Communication became problematical (mobile phones would help enormously now). Staff needed to think quickly and to deal with a range of problems, not least liaising with the loss adjusters and the media, arranging a service of some sort for library users and, as time went by, providing counselling services for a traumatised workforce. Such a devastating experience has led to an informed disaster management plan and a wealth of practical advice to feed into the design of the new Norwich City Library building.

The two final speakers were able to lift our spirits by talking knowledgeably of co-operative approaches to disaster management. Alison Cullingford of the University of Bradford told us about the Heritage Lottery funded project Yorkshire Rapid Response Network, set up after widespread flooding in Yorkshire in 2007, which affected some 25 heritage organizations. This project won £56,000 to pay for a project manager and equipment, and will deliver 730 days of training on aspects such as business continuity, planning for an emergency and salvage and recovery. The fact that this project arises from recent experience of flood damage and its ensuing problems, such as the breakdown of transport systems and communication, enables it to address effectively the practical issues that arise from such a major natural disaster.

Kathy Adamson is Librarian at the Royal Academy of Music, the oldest conservatoire in the country, with significant Special Collections, including manuscript scores. Her case study was of three partners – the R.A.M., the Wiener Library of Contemporary History and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) – who were able, because of their geographical proximity, to arrange a joint subscription to the Belfor Rapid Response Scheme (www.belfor.co.uk). Each partner currently pays an annual sum of £390; in the case of the R.A.M., this also covers the museum. This approach was tested recently when the flat roof over the R.A.M. Special Collections leaked following a weekend of extremely heavy rain. Belfor responded within one hour of call-out and were able to take away and treat 150 items of damp material for which they charged £800. Quite a number of items had been stored in archival boxes, and this undoubtedly prevented more damage.

Our speakers provided theoretical and practical perspectives on this timely topic. Our thanks to Hanwell Instruments for their sponsorship and to the Wellcome Institute for providing such a comfortable venue for the day.

Felicity Stimpson and Alison Wilson

Historic Libraries Forum Annual Conference 2009

Security

The 2009 HLF Annual Conference will be held in London in November and will cover a topic that has been in the news several times recently: security. Talks will include practical ideas for improving the security of your collection, what to do in the event of an incident and some case studies. As always, the day will include plenty of time for networking over coffee and lunch, as well as the HLF AGM.

We already have some speakers confirmed but if you have any ideas for other speakers or particular topics or case studies please contact Katie Lord (k.lord@etoncollege.org.uk). Further details will appear in the next Bulletin.

WORKSHOPS

Historic Libraries Forum Binding Workshop Thursday 2nd October 2008

Two items in the October HLF Bulletin were of particular interest to me - the leading article concerning the fate of the book rarities at Cardiff Public Library and the reference to the recent historic bindings workshop at the John Rylands Library.

I work at Central Library in Manchester where we are currently reviewing how we manage, preserve and promote our Rare and Early Printed Books. This is something which, in all honesty, has not been amongst our priorities for quite some time. However, the refurbishment of our Grade II listed building has just been confirmed as part of ambitious new plans for the St Peter's Square area of Manchester and, in contrast to what seems to be happening in Cardiff, we envisage our Rare Books /Special Collections as being a significant part of our offer to customers.

As I am a complete novice to the world of Early Printed Books, the last 18 months have been a totally enthralling but very steep learning curve for me, so I was delighted to discover the existence of the HLF. To discover they were offering a workshop on historic bindings 'on my doorstep' was even better.

The group who attended the workshop included staff from a very wide range of libraries and organisations, including Winchester Cathedral, the Courtauld Institute, Sir John Soane's Museum and no less than four public library authorities (Bath, Newcastle, Manchester and Bolton).

The morning session was a sort of Idiots Guide to Historic Bindings which was presented with infectious enthusiasm and great knowledge by Ed Potten. We were encouraged to stroke and fondle a variety of bindings to help us to distinguish between sheep (cheap), goat (good) and calfskin (quality), and, as a result, terms like 'Alum tawed' and 'Blind ruled panel' now trip off my tongue and I can even make an educated guess at whether a book is English or Continental by the position of its metal clasps and hinges.

Caroline Checkley-Scott presented the afternoon session on conservation and preservation with equally impressive knowledge and enthusiasm. Her message that conservation is the last resort was very clear and to make her point she shared one or two horror stories with us about moths and mushrooms.... She gave us a great deal of practical advice on cost effective storage, cleaning and environment control, including the unforgettable statement that 'Parchment always wants to return to the shape of the animal it originally covered!'

It was obvious that everyone on the course found it fascinating, informative, absorbing and entertaining in equal measure (and we got the best ever goody bags which included a cloth bound, gold lettered notebook each!)

Patti Collins, Manchester Central Library

Future Workshops

Our workshops continue to be very popular; those on rare book cataloguing in particular tend to be over-subscribed. We are pleased to announce that The John Rylands University Library in Manchester will be hosting the next cataloguing workshop on 7 July. Aimed firmly at those with little or no formal training in antiquarian cataloguing, the hands-on workshop will teach the basic skills needed to approach early printed material and numbers will be limited to 12. Additionally, a Music Cataloguing course is being arranged on 21 September, 2009 at Murray Edwards College (formerly New Hall), Cambridge. There will be space for 16 delegates. Details and a booking form will appear in the next Bulletin. Enquiries to Alison Wilson (amw18@cam.ac.uk).

LIBRARIES UNDER THREAT

Further news on Cardiff

A number of people have been asking what has happened regarding the proposed sale of Cardiff Public Library's rare-books collections. The following is an update on the situation as of 13 December 2008.

Following intense public and political pressure, Cardiff Council agreed in late September to enter "round-table" discussions regarding the future of the special collections of rare books it was going to sell. The discussions were to be chaired by CyMAL (the Welsh Assembly Government's museums, archives and libraries division), and to include representatives from Cardiff University, the National Library of Wales and Glamorgan Record Office.

The first meeting of that group was held on 7 October, when all parties agreed (according to a press release issued by the Welsh Assembly Government on 8 October) to "work together to identify which items from the collection should be recommended to be retained in Wales".

The Cardiff Heritage Friends have produced a statement responding to that press release, welcoming the "round-table" discussions and emphasising the importance of retaining these special collections intact as collections in Cardiff, rather than "cherry-picking" individual items.

As a result of that “round-table” meeting of 7 October, the first auction of books, scheduled for 4 November at Bonhams, London, was postponed, and Councillor Nigel Howells (the Executive Member of Cardiff Council responsible for libraries) informed a Council meeting on 16 October that the “round-table” parties had “agreed to meet again shortly to discuss the proposals in greater detail. Until this process has been finalised and implemented it has been agreed that no books will be sold.”

Despite agreeing “to meet again shortly”, there have been no further formal meetings to date. There are, therefore, at present no definite proposals in the public domain to which to respond.

The perception among the public at large – judging from comments in the press and those received from individuals – is that Cardiff Council has “seen reason” and that the books have been “saved”. This is far from being the case as yet! Indeed, as far as one can gather, it still seems to be the Council’s intention to sell a substantial number of rare books as soon as possible.

It appears, from what one hears on the grapevine, that Council officials are actively planning to auction the first batch of books at Bonhams in February/March 2009. The reason seems to be that they need to raise the monies allocated in this year’s Council budget from the sale of the books in order to meet the Public Library’s current financial commitments, and this despite the fact that Cardiff Council, according to the Western Mail of 25 October 2008, has £40 million in reserve funds, and almost £10 million of that unallocated!

Much will depend on the outcome of the second “round-table” meeting, but as things are developing at present, it is quite possible there will be need for a second round of campaigning in 2009 – which will be a particularly unfortunate time for Cardiff Council to attract further bad publicity, since a spring auction in Bonhams will coincide quite closely with the opening of Cardiff’s new Central Library building!

Statement by Cardiff Heritage Friends in response to the ‘way ahead’ announced following round-table discussions on 7 October 2008 regarding the Cardiff City Library’s Special Collections

Cardiff Heritage Friends warmly welcomes the decision of Cardiff Council to enter round-table discussions with CyMAL (the Welsh Assembly Government’s museums, archives and libraries division), Cardiff University, the National Library of Wales and Glamorgan Record Office regarding the future of its special collections of rare books, and to postpone the sale of these books while discussions are in progress.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped bring about this encouraging development, including politicians from all parties. We are particularly grateful to the hundreds of Cardiff citizens who have contacted the Council and their elected representatives to express their opposition to the sale, and to the numerous

individuals and organisations across Wales, and indeed much further afield, who have raised their voice in protest at the proposed destruction of a heritage collection of national and international significance.

While welcoming the current round-table discussions, there is one matter of concern arising from the press release of 8 October 2008 which announced the ‘way ahead’ that was agreed at the first round-table meeting.

The emphasis in that press release seems to be upon collaborating to ensure that ‘items’ of national and cultural significance are retained in Wales, rather than on ensuring that these important collections are retained intact in Cardiff.

The vast majority of the rare books in question were obtained by Cardiff Central Library, not as individual items but either:

- (a) as part of a collection donated to the Library by a prominent figure in the life of Cardiff/Wales; or else:
- (b) purchased through public subscription in order to build up specialist collections (e.g., the collection of representative items from rare Continental presses; the collection of early printed Bibles, etc.)

If, as the press release seems to suggest, the importance of individual items will be the paramount factor in deciding their fate, such cherry-picking of items will destroy the Library’s special collections **as collections**, with all the prestige, ‘critical mass’ and research potential such collections afford.

More and more emphasis is being placed in our day on the importance of ‘collections’, and on the way a book which may be fairly unimportant in and of itself, gains considerably in significance because of its place within a collection.

It is interesting to see, for example, the British Library’s website making this point forcibly:

“Determining the previous history of a particular item now in the British Library is becoming increasingly important to researchers, for example when attempting to reconstruct the library of an historical figure or identify the authorship of manuscript annotations.”

Neither is it without significance that an auctioneer such as Bonhams includes details of provenance in the descriptions of volumes in its sale catalogues.

We would, therefore, encourage the round-table partners, together with the experts that are brought in to advise them, to take full account in their deliberations of the importance of Cardiff Central Library’s rare books collection **as a collection** and of its significance **as a collection** in the cultural history of Wales.

In this context it is important to emphasise that **all the books in question are ‘Welsh’**, whatever their content or authorship, since they form part of the historical

national heritage collection of the Welsh capital's Library, most of them donated by Welsh/local benefactors or purchased through public subscriptions.

Cardiff Central Library's special collections include, among others:

- almost 200 incunabula from the early printing presses of Europe
- an extensive collection of early printed Bibles
- over 800 volumes of 17th century Restoration drama
- over 300 atlases published between 1590 and 1850
- a fine collection of Civil War tracts
- the 5,000 volume collection of D. L. Wooding (1828–91), the important book collector from Beulah near Builth, which includes significant Shakespearian items
- a wide-ranging collection of illustrated books from the 16th to the 19th century, including Emblem books and 400 volumes and 300 prints illustrated by the major 19th century caricaturist, George Cruikshank
- collections of theological books from Pontypool Baptist College and Llandaff Cathedral
- a cross-section of volumes illustrating English and Continental bookbinding from the 16th to the 19th centuries
- major collections of limited editions of volumes printed and finely bound by private presses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries

In our opinion such collections are of national and international significance as collections, and should be retained intact. These special collections were carefully built up in Cardiff Central Library over many decades. Dispersing them would destroy an important heritage collection and significantly deplete the nation's intellectual resources.

We, therefore, urge the round-table partners to take full consideration of the following in their discussions:

- that the vast majority of the special collections in Cardiff Central Library were donated by benefactors for the long-term cultural and educational benefit of Cardiff and the nation; it was not their intention that their donations be sold and the collections dispersed.
- that a key element in the value and importance of these books is their combined prestige and research potential as part of a carefully-formulated national heritage collection.
- that full consideration be afforded to the importance of a collection as a collection; of the enhanced significance of individual items through their being part of a collection; and of the 'uniqueness' of many of the items because of the nature of early printing and binding, their previous ownership, marginalia and other manuscript additions, etc., etc.
- that there are strong arguments for retaining all Cardiff Central Library's special collections intact in Cardiff and in the public domain. If the Council is not in a position to house them at the new Central Library building, it would seem to us that Cardiff University's offer to care for them, free of charge on

long-term loan, offers the opportunity for this to happen at no cost to Cardiff council-tax payers.

- that all the special collections – including the Welsh books, the manuscript collections, the prints and maps, etc. – should be adequately catalogued and curated (including the appointment of an archivist and a rare books specialist to look after such books and manuscripts).
- that these special collections should be regularly promoted by way of thematic exhibitions (in the new Cardiff Museum?), through displays on the internet, etc., in the same way as city libraries such as Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow exploit their special rare-books collections for educational and visitor-attraction purposes.

The world-wide publicity given to the proposed sale has brought much attention to the special collections at Cardiff Central Library, with many realising, for the very first time, the wealth and importance of the collections at Cardiff. Although the publicity has been adverse to date, ironically – if the decision to sell them is reversed and these collections are retained intact in Cardiff – the current spotlight on Cardiff's rich library holdings offers a golden opportunity to promote these collections and Cardiff's place as an international city of learning.

Cardiff Heritage Friends

<http://www.cardiffheritagefriends.org/contact.htm>

Hurd Library

The future of Hartlebury Castle, home of the Hurd Library, continues to be uncertain. In our last issue we reported that the Worcestershire County Council hoped to purchase the entire building (part of which is occupied on a lease by the County Museum). At a Cabinet meeting on 9 February it was decided that the Council, for a number of reasons, both political and financial, would not proceed to purchase. We also reported in our last issue that the Friends of Hartlebury Castle and the Hurd Library planned to set up a Trust with the aim of securing the Castle for future generations. At breakneck speed the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust has been formed and it is now a registered charity (No. 1127871). It was launched at a packed meeting in the Great Hall at the Castle on 6 March. Paul Middlebrough, Leader of Wychavon District Council (which is the planning authority) gave warm support. The County Council has now suggested three bidders (the Trust and two commercial bidders) to the Church Commissioners, who will have the final say. They hope to make a decision by the autumn.

Meanwhile the Bishop of Worcester has demonstrated his commitment to the Hurd Library by asking Christine Penney, former Head of Special Collections at the University of Birmingham, a member of the Friends, and Treasurer for the Historic Libraries Forum, to be the honorary Hurd Librarian, a post which has been vacant for some time. She will liaise directly with the member of the Church Commissioners responsible for the see houses. Cautious optimism has been encouraged by the visit of

our first researchers and the enthusiasm of staff at the University of Worcester, who can see great potential for study and teaching in the jewel right on their doorstep.

The Trust now has a website: www.hartleburycastletrust.org

Christine Penney

COPAC ADDS SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Further to her article in Bulletin No. 12 **Bethan Ruddock** writes:

The Copac team would like to thank all the libraries who have expressed an interest in joining Copac. We had a wonderful response from HLF Bulletin readers, and appreciate this demonstration of the value of being part of Copac. We are now coming to the end of the first round of enhancement funding, and have identified all of the libraries we will be able to add in the first half of 2009. However, we are working to find ways to continue this enhancement activity, and hope to be able to give more information about future developments and opportunities by late spring.

HLF ON FACEBOOK

The HLF now has a group page on Facebook. This can be found at:
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/group.php?gid=28562679022>

You have to be a member of Facebook to be able to use it but joining is straightforward. On the group page you will find details of events and workshops, as advertised on the HLF website and in the Bulletin, but users will be notified of events as soon they are advertised on Facebook. It is also an easy way to network with other members, either publicly on the discussion board or via private messaging, and to share links to websites of interest.

Katie Lord

Training the next generation UCL student placements: the trainer's view

[The latest issue of the National Trust's *Arts, Buildings and Collections Bulletin* (ABC), which showcases the Trust's latest curatorial and conservation news, projects and expertise, contained an interesting article by **Yvonne Lewis** on the use of students from UCL on cataloguing projects in some of the Trust's libraries. We reproduce it here by kind permission of the National Trust.]

As 2008 came to a close, the National Trust libraries team geared up for the possibility of taking one or two students from University College London's School of Library, Archive and Information Studies. For the last few years we have welcomed students who have opted to take historical bibliography as one of their optional course modules. Students who come to us need to have a reasonable grasp of cataloguing and bibliography, and to be willing to travel. For our part we hope to give the students some experience of the wide variety of our collections and/or training with Trust staff who have a wide range of expertise.

Students who begin their courses in September will be with us for two weeks in the following January. Placements are made in December, when we contact the students and plan where we will be going. For 2009 we have ongoing projects at: Wimpole Hall, Calke Abbey, Attingham Park and Dorneywood.

One of the students from 2007, James Fishwick, wrote about his experience with the National Trust in the Spring 2008 issue of ABC. We had another student that year, Samantha Holford, who spent most of her time at Wimpole Hall as part of a team of cataloguers working their way through the collection in various parts of the house during the closed season. Wimpole has a large collection. The collections of the Earls of Hardwicke include two incunabula and thousands of volumes of pre-1800 printed books from all parts of Europe; while Elsie Bambridge, Rudyard Kipling's daughter, contributed contemporary editions of Kipling's *Jungle Book* and books reflecting her own interests in country houses, gardens and Fabergé.

At any time over that fortnight there were three or four other librarians experienced in rare books working alongside Samantha. We took her through the process of how to deal with rare books in-situ, where there are few reference works to hand and no access to online databases via the internet. In some respects this is a positive thing; you have to gain the mental discipline systematically to ask as many questions as you can of the item in front of you before putting it back on the shelf. The thought of having to travel a hundred miles to double-check something you may have missed reinforces it. After most of the week cataloguing, we went into Cambridge, armed with questions and digital photos, to use the reference works in the Rare Books Department at the University Library.

Cataloguing rare books is partly a process of recording the usual details - author, title, place and date of publication, printer, number of pages, illustrations, etc. At the

National Trust the process also includes a close examination of the provenance of each item. How did the book get here? Where did it come from? How long has it been there? Is the information in front of you reliable? For instance, the bookplate of Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke (1690-1764) was reused by later generations in books published after 1764, and even in some published as late as the early 19th century. One bookplate, whose glue has desiccated, has loosened to reveal the evidence that the book came from Tyttenhanger, home of the Pope-Blount family, and through marriage and descent a secondary seat of the Yorkes and the 3rd Earl of Hardwicke, who died there in 1834. Thus we must approach the dating and provenance of some items with caution.

The 2008 student placement brought us Hannah Thomas. As my position is a job-share with a geographical split, my colleague and I decided to share Hannah between us. I cover the Southern and Western Territory on Monday to Wednesday while Nicola Thwaite covers the Northern Territory on Thursday and Friday. Each of our libraries has its own character, created by the owners and their preferences. Hannah spent some of her time with me at Fenton House, Hampstead. Here, Lady Binning (née Salting) had left a small collection of books to the National Trust alongside her impressive collection of porcelain. It had been assumed over the years that these volumes had been augmented with a great deal of non-indigenous items. Our work that winter proved, however, that the majority were indigenous and bore Binning and Salting family inscriptions and bookplates. Quite a few were Eton leaving presents inscribed to George Salting, or books he had bought whilst living in Sydney.

At the end of the first week, Hannah spent her time with two of our freelance cataloguers working on Rudyard Kipling's library at Bateman's, East Sussex. The following week, having spent time in two fairly small collections, Hannah joined Nicola Thwaite at Belton House to see the collection of the Earls of Brownlow, which is far, far larger. Hannah arrived towards the end of what has been a 15 year part-time project; she was thus able to benefit from the knowledge and experience which has been gained by Peter Hoare, who has worked exclusively with that collection.

As 2009 begins we look back over the amazingly various students we have been sent in previous years. All of them have had different skills and ranges of knowledge. In training them to be the rare books librarians of the future, we have to adapt both our needs and theirs into a worthwhile placement experience. We look forward to whatever challenges the next set of students may bring.

Yvonne Lewis

Conservation for Historic Libraries

A new conservation consortium is under construction, aimed at supporting libraries and archives without conservators or easy access to conservation support. The consortium is being developed as a business concept by University of the Arts London and Conservation Ltd, a consultancy practice under its Director, **Chris Woods**, a Research fellow with UAL's conservation department at Camberwell College.

Of course the idea of a consortium for conservation is not new. However, previous ideas mooted have often been founded on an assumption that local authorities and other public bodies might subsidise a facility, which they have been unwilling to do (indeed most such existing support has ceased, with the closure of nearly all regional conservation facilities in the past 15 years). The well known private examples such as Oxford Colleges Consortium, meet a local need at a high price (around £10,000 p.a. for each college). The new proposal, in consultation stages, would involve libraries 'subscribing' to service level of support from an accredited conservator, with suggested annual price options of £750, £1,300 or £2,500 depending on what libraries could afford or the level of support they need. These service level contracts offer a number of days of advisory support on site and remotely, to include such help as: environmental monitoring and its follow up response; liaison with building engineers or estates departments for improving storage conditions; conservation management plans for collections in historic buildings; conservation treatment assessments and reports; specifications for conservation outsourcing; project development and funding bid support; needs assessment surveys; benchmarking and disaster planning; conservation repair work and so on.

The University would help by providing space and equipment at its Conservation Department in Camberwell College. It would fund raise to increase this capacity for future large, funded projects such as cleaning and repackaging of whole collections, where the facilities provided by a consultant in their own workshop would be insufficient. Students would gain practical experience by shadowing and assisting consultant conservators both in the advisory activities in the libraries and in master-class opportunities for complex conservation treatments in the college workshops.

The consortium is at the stage of seeking feedback on the concept from Librarians and Archivists. The level of interest has already been high – the idea of having a conservator 'on tap' or, as one Librarian put it, of "no longer being alone" appeals to many. The extent of this interest is being sought so that a business plan can be produced and some modest initial investment secured to set up the administrative hub of the consortium. If you are interested in the idea, would like to see the draft consultation paper and provide feedback, or think you would be likely to join such a consortium, please write to Chris Woods at c.woods@camberwell.arts.ac.uk The consultation paper will also be available soon on the Conservation Ltd website at www.conservationltd.com

Chris Woods

Facelift for historic libraries

Two historic libraries in the North East are to receive Heritage Lottery Fund grants to improve accessibility. The Lit. and Phil. and Mining Institute libraries in Newcastle have been awarded £300,000 to widen access. The money will be spent on building a wheelchair accessible entrance, which will create a central link between the two libraries, accessible lifts and lavatories. Both libraries are housed in Grade II listed buildings, whose original designs have made access for many people with disabilities difficult or impossible. The solution was found by working closely with Newcastle City Council's Planning Department and English Heritage.

The Lit. and Phil. President, Bill Bower, in welcoming the news, said that the project will enable wheelchair users to have access for the first time. Other smaller improvements will follow the main building works. These will include lighting and aids to reading, and IT solutions assisting blind and partially sighted users. There will also be a two-year education and outreach programme aimed at developing a younger audience.

The award provides one third of the cash required. A further third is already confirmed, leaving £300,000 still to raise. It is hoped the building works will be completed within 12 months.

CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE



TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF THE PARKER LIBRARY TO READERS

ADVANCE NOTICE

During the construction of a new reading room and secure vault, the Parker Library will be closed from early June 2009 until Easter 2010. The manuscripts, which by then will all have been digitised, will be stored off-site. Online access to the digital images will be available from October 2009 via Parker on the Web

(<http://parkerweb.stanford.edu>)

Library staff hope to maintain a photographic and general enquiries service throughout the closure.

Limited access may be available to selected manuscripts during this period, and researchers should contact the library, giving as much advance notice as possible.

Email parker-library@corpus.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 338025.