

# focus

## on International Library and Information Work

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# Editorial

This is my last issue after five years as Editor of *Focus*, and I make no apology for leaving you with two articles about Zimbabwe! One reports on Book Aid International's work to keep many of our libraries going when there was (still is) no money and few staff; the other describes a project to preserve the culture of one of our neglected minorities. And an article from South Africa tells about the campaign to get school libraries recognized as a vital part of the education system in that country, which we could do with reproducing here.

But the rest of the world is not forgotten: We hear of a personal effort to train librarians in Cambodia, see local history going online in small-town America, and a 'retiring librarian' looks back at his visits to Cairo, Pakistan, Kazakhstan and East Timor.

Finally, there's a report from the winner of the Anthony Thompson Award on his visit to the UK; and we cannot forget the influence that Bob McKee had on international LIS matters.

John Lake, who is retiring as Librarian of the Barbican Library, London, will take over *Focus* from the next issue. He has been involved in a variety of international activities, including eight years on the Standing Committee of IFLA's Public Libraries Section (Chairperson, 2007–2009), and is currently a committee member of Eurolis. He has also had a number of editorial roles over the years in CILIP branches and groups. Over to you, John!

*Roger Stringer*

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*Editor:* Roger Stringer  
P.O. Box MP 1456, Mount Pleasant,  
Harare, Zimbabwe  
E-mail: <iligofocus@cilip.org.uk>

*Associate Editor:* Alice Tyler  
48 Burnham Drive, Whetstone,  
Leicester LE8 6HY, UK  
Tel.: +44 (0)116 275 1379  
E-mail: <a.m.tyler@btinternet.com>

*Book Review Editor:* Ann Irving  
Scarsdale Cottage, Woodhouse,  
Loughborough, Leicestershire LE12 8UA, UK  
Tel./fax: +44 (0)1509 890050;  
E-mail: <annirving@btinternet.com>

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# Unprofessional in Cambodia

Shirley Sinclair\*

*In 1998, Cambodia, formerly Kampuchea, emerged from around thirty years of civil war with a reasonably stable government at last, but with severe developmental needs and a decimated educational system. Adult literacy stood at about 65 per cent, and per capita GDP at US\$1,110.<sup>1</sup>*

Library services were not a priority in this climate, but after eleven years several key libraries stand proudly as testimony to a once proudly creative and literate people. Among these are the National Library, the Buddhist Institute Library, the Hun Sen Library (Royal University of Phnom Penh), and the CDRI Library (Cambodia Development Resource Institute), all managed and staffed with Khmer librarians who have trained abroad, and with support from the Asia Foundation and a small number of dedicated expatriates.

Closer to the grassroots, organisations such as SIPAR and Room to Read work to give basic training to librarians and restore a love of reading to a country where books were systematically burnt in their thousands.<sup>2</sup> I want to paint a picture for you of my own journey into this scenario and encourage those with a spirit of adventure to consider playing their part in the rebuilding work.

I have lived in Cambodia since 2001 and have spent nine years with an international Christian NGO, learning the Khmer language and culture, and working in various capacity-building roles, including library training.

As soon as I had completed one year of full-time language study, I was asked to set up



A typical Phnom Penh street scene

and run a small library for my organisation, consisting of theology, development, local-interest, language and recreational books. I was provided with a small room, a handful of books and a budget of US\$2,000. This was a great joy to me as I had a captive audience (around 80 members) in our small team and a fascinating range of subjects. Later on, after I had started to meet Cambodians involved in library provision, I also realised the generous scale of my budget.

Readers of *Focus* will have different levels of awareness and expectation when they see the word Cambodia. Some will have heard of Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge, and two million people massacred at the hands of their compatriots. Others may know that those targeted for death were the intelligentsia, the skilled, the linguists, and even the spectacle-wearers.

\* Shirley Sinclair is Team Librarian, OMF International (Cambodia), and can be contacted at <shirleyincb@gmail.com>.

<sup>1</sup> UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.sipar.org/?siparlang=en>>; <<http://www.roomtoread.org>>.



The Hun Sen Library (Royal University of Phnom Penh).

Many will consider that the appalling genocide of 1975–79 is long past and that, surely, the situation has improved by now.

It certainly has in many ways, but do you realise that, without the experts, there is no expertise to rebuild what was lost and move forward? There is no training without teachers, and no professional job without the professionals.

Slowly but surely have moved in the development workers, the missionaries, the opportunists, the weird and wonderful, the many willing workers from volunteers to highly paid employees coming from the developed world in order to help build the capacity of the Cambodian people, or just to enjoy hanging out in the relatively unregulated society.

Rebuilding has turned out to be a long job, and while it is going on the rest of the world continues to get ahead. Cambodia's GDP per capita now stands at US\$1,802, compared to the UK's £35,130. Estimates of adult literacy vary, but the UNESCO figure is currently 76.3% of those aged fifteen and above.<sup>3</sup>

The library that I set up and managed started with around 5,000 books, tapes and

periodicals, growing to 8,000 over the nine years. There was no money for a commercial cataloguing system, so my husband, an IT professional, set up an Access database on a clone PC for my catalogue, with a simple form for data entry that I thought could be easily demonstrated to an ESL speaker.

It included essential bibliographic details and space for five keywords. Data could be entered in the Khmer Limon font for Cambodian titles, or in English. Using a Java servlet front-end he then produced a user interface for the catalogue, which allowed it to be interrogated by users, who could search for author and title information in Khmer or English, and also allowed searching by keyword.

I classified with Abridged DDC, version 14, and also included the class number in the entry, although this was not searchable. My first Cambodian library assistant, Chenda, was easily able to handle this, although was particularly challenged by the job of allocating keywords from a fixed list. She would pore over the books, both Khmer and English, searching the contents, the blurb, and the introduction, to find enough guidance to the subject material. At the end of two years, she told me that she had learned to love handling

<sup>3</sup> UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 2009.

books and reading, although she still planned to go and train as a teacher, which she considered to be a 'proper' profession.

Now I began to grow determined to win over one of my Cambodian associates to choose library work over teaching, business, selling, or indeed any of the more usual graduate career paths.

First of all, I increased the level of responsibility of my next assistant, Chanseng, and also planned a series of seminars at an NGO which I was well acquainted with. The NGO was involved in restorative development work and wanted to set up a resource library for local Cambodians to make use of, in the main areas of drug rehabilitation, social work, sustainable development and anti-trafficking.

Their receptionist had been put in charge of this project and was eager to learn from me. Chanseng and I prepared teaching mater-

ials in Khmer, together with many examples of forms and policies to show the staff. Together with the receptionist, a group of other staff attended, drafted in from amongst cleaners and general office staff.

After the first session most of the attendees opted out, finding library terminology, even in Khmer, almost impossible to grasp. Week after week, we ploughed on with the receptionist, who remained eager to learn but for whom concepts such as classification, different types of publications, serials, and even authorship were difficult to grasp. She seemed unable to take the initiative to continue with setting up the library in between teaching sessions.

Her director, an overworked Englishman, presented us with several thousand reports and papers, together with a couple of hundred assorted books from the Asia Foundation (in mainly inappropriate subjects), and a very simplified classification system, designed by a previous resource manager.

His motivational strategy was to refuse her any budget until she had proved herself by getting a basic service started. In addition to this, her job was broadened to include hospitality and PR.

After I had been visiting (at first weekly, then later monthly) for eighteen months, the NGO collapsed and their library was dispersed to the four winds. Many hours had been spent sitting on the floor amidst piles of papers, desperately trying to categorise obscure development concepts, which were outside both my range of experience and my pupil's.

However, one silver lining was the time I spent getting to know this very sensitive and conscientious lady, who was filled with a passion to improve the lives of the disadvantaged in her country.

On one occasion, we were classifying a



Training my library assistant, Chanseng

report on domestic child labour and she asked me for a definition. When I told her, she replied that she herself had been a child enslaved in such a way, and we put aside our work for a while so that she could tell me her story. In this way, I discovered that there is more to teaching skills than just teaching the skills. It is so important to understand the context also.

Meanwhile, Chanseng left me to take up a more lucrative position in an engineering firm, which more closely matched her degree subject, and I employed a new assistant, another student who was called Sochea. Sochea also grew to love books, and his friendly personality meant that many of our users would ask for his advice when translating from Khmer.

His grasp of English was excellent so I taught him basic concepts of DDC and this immediately attracted his interest and fired up his enthusiasm. He loved to understand the complete breakdown of a class number, and when a colleague from another library suggested to him that he might like to look up ready-made numbers via the Library of Congress online, he was very dismissive of this shortcut.

As we tried to pigeonhole different theological concepts, he would become very excited at the way we moved from the general to the particular and what this revealed about the relationships between subjects. He would even be quite critical of my sometimes clumsy efforts, made in haste during my early days there, and we enjoyed very obscure discussions, which would surprise anyone studying in the library that day. After a year, I heard from Chanseng that she would like to come back, but there was no longer a place for her. Instead I recommended her for a post at an International School, working under a

teacher-librarian, and she was snapped up by them, having definitely stepped off the engineering path to be a librarian.

At my workplace I had a Khmer-language teacher who would watch the whole story unfolding with great interest. He told me: 'Cambodians like only short books – they don't really like to read.' I told him: '*Aan jraan, cheh jraan.*' This is a Cambodian proverb, which means, 'Read a lot, know a lot.'

Gradually I lured him in, providing some of the beautifully produced books which were published by the Reyum publisher on Cambodian art, history and society. As his confidence grew in using our service, he started to ask for books in English to help his wife through her pregnancy, then books for his Master's thesis in education, and then, inevitably, on to Googling with Unicode Khmer on our low-quality PC with a slow-as-death Internet connection.

He mentioned the library to a Cambodian friend of his on the Master's course, who happened to be director of a higher-education NGO which provided two-year multi-skills training courses to clever students from very poor families. His institution had a small library, run by two enthusiastic self-taught librarians.

I was invited to view the library and asked if I would do some training. I revised my seminar, but this time tackled the problem of technical jargon by giving up on some of the translation and using a hybrid of Khmer and English.

The two librarians lapped up everything I could offer, and we covered basic library goals, choosing materials, cataloguing, classification, loan systems, organisation and user education.

By the end of ten weeks, with two hours of teaching per week, we had done a user



Sou Bora, eagerly planning refurbishment

survey, developed a withdrawals policy, and formulated a plan for the refurbishment of the library. After several months the librarians had obtained permission and funding towards this plan.

I must admit to a little apprehension when I visited to inspect the new shelving and discovered it to be all massively located in a small section of the library, putting considerable stress on the first-level flooring. However, I don't include any construction-engineering knowledge in my skill set, so I simply gave him a gentle warning.

His plan is to reach out to the local high-school students with library services for the community, including graded school books in Khmer, and simple English readers, as well as developing the service for his own user community. I have not come across any other project like this in Phnom Penh.

Finally, I have returned to the UK for one year and left Sochea in charge of my organisation's library. He needs some supervision in purchasing and overall management, but



Sochea at the OMF Library

his grasp of DDC is growing through sheer passionate curiosity. Don't forget, he is a Khmer-speaker and yet he is managing to make sense of the huge DDC volume. He will be attending a short course at the Royal University of Phnom Penh in November, covering technology and online searching for library staff.

The Royal University would love to organise full-time degree-level or postgraduate training, but as yet there is no funding for this, or any academics willing to teach on it. The story isn't over yet, but so far I am very pleased with my four new professionals.

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to keep up to date with what is happening in your group.**

**[www.cilip.org.uk/ilig](http://www.cilip.org.uk/ilig)**

# Campaign for School Libraries in South Africa

Doron Isaacs and Lukhanyo Mangona\*

*The Campaign for School Libraries, led by Equal Education (EE) in South Africa, shows what dedicated activists, backed up by facts, can achieve.*

In just over a year, the campaign has forced government to acknowledge a major gap in policy, forced publishers to acknowledge their prohibitively high prices, cultivated a reading consciousness in thousands of young people, and built a generation of new activist leaders.

The campaign began with one simple fact: according to government's National Education Infrastructure Management Systems Report (2009), only 8 per cent of schools have stocked libraries.<sup>1</sup> EE members, called Equalisers, who meet every week in after-school youth meetings, raised the issue of libraries constantly, complaining about the queues at the public library, the expense of traveling into central Cape Town, the lack of books to read for their brothers and sisters in Grade 1, and their own frustration at not being able to read fluently. The movement convened a seminar to study the problem.

Many other facts followed soon thereafter: in the PIRLS 2006 report, which tested primary school learners' reading skills in forty nations, South Africa's learners achieved the lowest scores.<sup>2</sup> In the SACMEQ II study involving fourteen sub-Saharan African countries, over



a third of South African Grade 6 learners could not understand the meaning of basic written information.<sup>3</sup> Overall, South Africa ranked ninth behind countries that included Mozambique, Tanzania and Swaziland.

This poor national performance obscures an equally serious problem: the gulf in literacy between the advantaged and disadvantaged sectors of South African society. In 2009, 86.4% of Grade 6 learners in Western Cape schools previously classified as 'white' could read and write at the appropriate level; however, in schools previously classified as 'black', just 24.2% met the standard. These challenges of illiteracy and inequality lie at the heart of the educational crisis in South Africa.

We also began to discover how seriously neglected the question of libraries actually

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\* Doron Isaacs is the Co-ordinator of Equal Education, and Lukhanyo Mangona is External relations and Special Projects Officer at Equal Education. They can be contacted via the EE Website at <<http://www.equaleducation.org.za>>.

<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.education.gov.za/emis/emisweb/Neims/school%20infrastructure%20report.pdf>>.

<sup>2</sup> Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. See <[http://timss.bc.edu/pirls2006/intl\\_rpt.html](http://timss.bc.edu/pirls2006/intl_rpt.html)>.

<sup>3</sup> See <<http://www.sacmeq.org/reports.htm#sacmeqII>>.

is. As reported in multiple academic papers, and as an appendix in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) libraries policy, South Africa has had five draft school library policies since 1994 – but none have been finalised or implemented. There are no government-funded posts for school librarians in South Africa. Only two universities, the University of the Western Cape, and the University of KZN, train school librarians.

Much research in developed and developing countries has focused on the factors which, when employed effectively, can improve the outcomes of learners. The problems in education are multi-faceted – there is no one solution – but many of these investigations have pointed to the positive causal relationship between the performance of learners and the provision of school libraries.

In a major international study, for instance, researchers concluded that, all other things being equal, student performance increases by between 10% and 25% when a stocked, staffed and fully funded library is in operation within a school.<sup>4</sup>

The facts were clear, a campaign for school libraries was not only necessary but imperative. The campaign has been driven by young people. EE has a Leadership Committee which is made up of elected representatives from various schools in Khayelitsha.<sup>5</sup> These leaders discuss strategy and tactics and are included in all decision-making processes which are central to the organisation's campaign. Parents, teachers, principals, government officials and many ordinary people have also been active in the campaign.

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<sup>4</sup> K.C. Lance, M.J. Rodney, & C. Hamilton-Pennell, *How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards: The Second Colorado Study* (Salt Lake City: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2000), 74.

<sup>5</sup> Khayelitsha is a partially informal township on the outskirts of Cape Town in the Cape Flats.

Equal Education members' campaign for school libraries' demands are clear: there needs to be a National Policy on School Libraries. This should ensure that there is a library in every school; that a librarian is hired to assist learners and teachers; that the library is stocked with an appropriate number of books of relevant levels; that priority is given to poor schools in the initial roll-out; that legislation sets aside 10% of the money for teaching and learning materials for school libraries; and, finally, that there is determined work-shopping of school communities about the importance of school libraries.

Equal Education went further to quantify the cost of building school libraries in South Africa. In December 2009 the Department of Basic Education said that putting libraries in schools is unaffordable. The research by Equal Education showed that in order to put infrastructure into the 79 per cent of South African schools that have no library space will cost ZAR 7.9 billion (approx £722 million).

In fact, the total cost to put a library in every school will amount to 1.6% of the total annual education budget if the roll-out is planned for ten years, before declining to 0.85% when the infrastructure and books have been put in place.

Equalisers have been asking the South African government why they were able to build stadiums for the World Cup but can't put libraries in their schools. It is still a difficult question to answer because it is not justifiable to be able to spend ZAR 13.61 billion (approx £1,245 million) on ten stadiums but claim it to be unaffordable to invest in ensuring that children have access to libraries.

One of the Equalisers, Masiviwe Nohashe, asked during the Ashley Kriel Memorial



3000 people marched to City Hall, Cape Town, for school libraries in September 2009.

Lecture (recently hosted by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation), ‘Why are you spending money on stadia whilst we are learning in schools with no libraries, laboratories, etc?’

Activist and freedom-fighter Ashley Kriel, whom the lecture commemorates, would have been proud to hear these young people ask these questions of education department officials.

This call from the Equalisers is understandable as they come from the townships (slums). In South African townships and, to a larger extent, in rural areas, young people come from socio-economically deprived households. These learners receive inadequate support compared to their counterparts from rich families.

These overt inequalities can be argued

to be inherited from the apartheid system, but they persist under democratic rule. Researchers Shalem and Hoadley explain the plight of teachers that educate children from these kinds of backgrounds.<sup>6</sup>

Teachers who work mainly with schools that consist of learners that are cognitively under-prepared suffer from poor health and cannot rely on parents that can model or mediate the cognitive demands of the school.<sup>7</sup>

Most of their learners don’t see books at home.

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<sup>6</sup> Yael Shalem and Ursula Hoadley, ‘The dual economy of schooling and teacher morale in South Africa’, *International Studies in Sociology of Education* (2009), 19(2), 129.

<sup>7</sup> Human Sciences Research Council & Education Policy Consortium, *Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South African Rural communities* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005).

The campaign has been vigorous, and it is far from over:

- 5,000 signed a petition to President Zuma and Minister of Basic Education Ms Angie Motshekga;
- 10,000 marched on the South African Parliament on Human Rights Day demanding a National Policy on School Libraries;
- hundreds of Equalisers staged reading groups outside the gates of Parliament to show that they wanted to read but lacked an environment adequate to do so;
- 5,000 fasted for 24 hours;
- thousands wrote postcards to various government leaders;
- 100 global education leaders wrote to President Zuma; and
- millions have followed the campaign in the media.

The latest event organised by Equal Education members was a 24-hour fast, which was a great success. At Salt River High School the entire school fasted. At Westerford, a privileged school, 245 young people and many of their teachers fasted.

Learners from schools across Khayelitsha and Kraaifontein – the core of EE – fasted: schools such as Hector Pietersen, Chris Hani and Harry Gwala. The anti-apartheid icons after whom these schools were named would surely be proud.

The campaign has spread way beyond EE's core areas into Limpopo, Free State, Gauteng, the Eastern Cape and KZN provinces. For a generation of young people, the campaign has deepened their commitment to their own education and to democracy: they are engaging in peaceful protest for the most important cause.

EE has been flooded with letters and



petitions of support. N. D. Maluleke, School Manager of Shihlobyeni Primary School in Limpopo province, wrote:

Our school has been without a library since 1940 when it was established. It has been difficult to improve the culture of reading in this rural community. It is our resolve as educators, parents, learners and the entire school community to request government to establish a library.

Maluleke reminds us of something basic: libraries are vital because most South African homes do not have books. A school library is the only place where Grade 1 children can find enough reading material to learn to read well.

On 11 June, the government gazetted a major education policy document acknowledging the need for a library in every school. National Guidelines on School Libraries have also been drafted, but, in their current weak form, these guidelines are unlikely to be binding and do not come with a budget allocation for posts and training for librarians, and they are not tied to an implementation

*Focus* asked Heidi-Jane Esakov, co-ordinator of the Public Participation in Education Network, <<http://www.ppen.org.za>>, why she decided to take part in the Equal Education fast.

For those of us who have had the privilege of growing up surrounded by books, it is easy to take for granted this seemingly simple gift. Yet, this gift should not be a privilege, but a right.

However, when we consider that most households cannot afford books, and only 7 per cent of our schools have libraries, the language of rights becomes the language of privilege.

South Africa is the most unequal country in the world, and this is no more sharply reflected than in our education system. Yet a literate and critical thinking society is central to our collective dignity and social inclusion.

It is morally unacceptable that a country that could spend billions on the soccer World Cup cannot provide all schools with a library.

So embarking on a wet fast for 24 hours to draw awareness to Equal Education's call for a library in every school seemed like a small sacrifice –

mind you, when I heard that we could not flavour our water with coffee, I sensed that the fast would be slightly tougher than anticipated!

There were many reasons why I felt impassioned by this call, and was willing to undergo self-inflicted caffeine deprivation:

I have never been denied my fundamental rights; I received a world-class education, I live a life surrounded by books, and have never, without choice, been without a meal. Yet the majority of our children are forced to learn in under-resourced schools, often on empty stomachs.

When the hunger pangs hit, I was brought to reflect on the insular life of privilege that I live in South Africa. Yet I feel that in many ways this fast has helped to break down social and class barriers, and there was an inexplicable sense of solidarity in 'fasting' together for our common future.

plan to roll out school libraries. This is commendable progress, but as it stands it is not enough to bring books into the poorest schools. EE will continue to support every progressive step that government takes, and volunteer our time to assist with implementation.

In addition to campaigning and recognising the immediate need for learners in these poor areas to have access to school libraries, Equal Education opened 'The Bookery'.

Placed in the city centre of Cape Town, The Bookery is the home EE's book drive. The aim of The Bookery is to collect quality and age-appropriate books from the greater Cape Town to set up school libraries in poor communities in the city. The Bookery has since opened two school libraries and is continuing with this work.

Government can't do it alone. The campaign for school libraries is a test of the values of our whole society.

# Libraries Surviving in Zimbabwe

## A Report of a Visit by Book Aid International

Robert Sarjant\*

*In May 2010, as Head of Programmes and Operations for Book Aid International,  
I visited Zimbabwe to assess our work there.*

Book Aid International (BAI) increases access to books to support literacy, education and development in sub-Saharan Africa and, as well as Zimbabwe, provides support to eleven other sub-Saharan countries: Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Zambia, Malawi, Namibia, Cameroon and Sudan.

In 2009, BAI shipped ½ a million books, including 65,000 to Zimbabwe. In most countries Book Aid International works with a national distributing partner – often a national library network or local NGO – to distribute books to schools, colleges and public libraries. In Zimbabwe, BAI operates through two distribution committees, one based in Harare and one in Bulawayo.

It was my first visit to Zimbabwe since 2002 and BAI's first since 2004, the repressive political climate mitigating against visits in recent years. Since then, the Zimbabwe economy has neared total collapse, with the consequent knock-on effects felt across the entire infrastructure of the country.

The nadir appears to have been have been at the end of 2008, by when many Zimbabweans, including many teachers and librarians, had left their posts and/or the

country. Shops were empty and food was running out.

The situation has improved over the last eighteen months or so, particularly since the Zimbabwe dollar was abandoned in favour of the US dollar and the South African rand, and since the establishment of an uneasy coalition government in which Robert Mugabe's ZANU(PF) shares power with rival Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC-T.

For me as a visitor, Zimbabwe felt safe and secure, and, if you have money, you can now buy almost everything you need, but most of the population has very little money.

Until recently, Zimbabwe had one of the best education systems in Africa. It still has high literacy rates and a relatively developed reading culture. It is readily apparent that Zimbabweans still value education highly.

Although it has no national library network, Zimbabwe has a relatively good number of libraries (though mainly in Harare and Bulawayo) and well-trained librarians. Despite the last decade, it is still better positioned than many other countries in Africa.

For Book Aid International, it means that Zimbabwe continues to be a country where our books – from children's readers to management and medical texts – are highly valued and highly used.

This article will describe how BAI works in Zimbabwe, with a snapshot of some of the libraries and partners that I visited.

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\* Robert Sarjant is Head of Programmes and Operations, Book Aid International, and can be contacted at <robert.sarjant@bookaid.org>. Book Aid International's Website is at <<http://www.bookaid.org>>, and more information about this visit can be found at <<http://bookaidinternational.blogspot.com>>, with more photographs at <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/45024905@N07>>.

## Harare

For the first week, I was in Harare with the Harare Distribution Committee (HDC). HDC serves Harare and five provinces in the northern and eastern half of Zimbabwe – Manicaland, Masvingo and Mashonaland Central, East and West provinces.

Its membership is made up of the relevant libraries receiving support (e.g. City of Harare Libraries, universities, etc.) and representatives from relevant bodies such as the National Library and Documentation Service, the Zimbabwe College and Research Libraries Consortium, and local Rotary clubs. The HDC receives valuable assistance from the British Council in Harare to clear the books through Customs.

Books for distribution are stored on open shelves at a depot situated in the University of Zimbabwe library, where the Committee's dedicated chair, Yeukai Chimuka, works as Head of Reader Services.

Visitors can select books at the depot, but few can now afford to get there. Fortunately, local Rotary clubs have played a big role not only in assisting and providing support to schools in Harare but also in getting books out into the provinces.

The municipal City of Harare Library Service has nine libraries. Its headquarters library, in Harare's Highfield suburb, has deteriorated much since I visited it in 2002, with a leaking roof and 'stalactites' forming from the ceiling in some places! The library stock is a fairly battered, too, and the library is in urgent need of renovation. It is a far cry from what it used to be, despite the best intentions of its librarians.

A prospective tenth municipal library (in Kuwadzana) has been under construction for many years now. Recent negative press coverage in Zimbabwe's *Sunday Mail*



A handover of books to a school in Zimbabwe

described the new building as being in 'a state of decay' because work had come to a halt, and described other libraries in the network as 'dilapidated'. I visited two other City of Harare libraries, in Glen View and Glen Norah, which are in better condition, but the library service is significantly under-resourced.

It has introduced charges recently (US\$4 a month to borrow books, \$2 to use the library, \$1 for children) and these relatively high charges seem to have deterred some users. However, all public libraries in Zimbabwe need to charge to survive: the trick is to balance pricing against access for a population that is largely impoverished.

Local Rotarians took me to St John's High School, Chikwaka, about 45 minutes on good roads east of Harare. The school, with 800 students, is impressive and incredibly self-sufficient. Most of the school buildings have

been built to a good standard by its own students. The school has a piggery, vegetable garden, keeps rabbits and grows maize, all of which helps to feed its 700 boarders.

The Head was enthusiastic about the books which they received, and talked about 'an injection and infusion' which has helped pupils to 'explore and learn new things'. Students now want to go to the library; some have learnt to play new sports and one student has learnt to play the guitar. A writers' club has also been set up. There would be no problem if they ran out of room for books – they would simply get the students to build a new library!

The Viva Network runs a number of informal schools for street children,<sup>1</sup> and obtained BAI books from the Harare Distribution Committee about a year before my visit. In their main centre inside the compound of Harare Presbyterian Church, the books are kept in plastic boxes with games and other educational resources.

I sat in on an interactive reading of the Dr Seuss classic *The Cat in the Hat*. This was followed up with a *Cat in the Hat* jigsaw puzzle, which the children took turns to complete. Some of the older children were reading English readers, and some a book of folk-tales in Shona, the local language.

The best pupils will get support to go on to more formal schooling, and some former pupils now work for the Viva Network itself. The books are just a small part of Viva's impressive programme but are clearly enjoyed and play a small part in helping vulnerable children escape their poverty.

## 24 hours in Victoria Falls

I left Harare for Bulawayo via Victoria Falls,

but working for BAI means that such a visit does not start with the Falls themselves. I was picked up at the airport by Douglas Siatimba, the Victoria Falls Librarian, and Sindiso Tshuma of the local Lusumpuko Education Trust, and was taken straight to the public library, which has been open for twelve years and makes a big difference as there is not another library for miles.

It is well organised and has many books that have to be retrieved from Bulawayo, 435km away. The next morning, I finally got to see the Falls. After walking past a couple of elephants on the way down, I got a truly impressive soaking at the thunderous falls before heading on to Bulawayo.

## Bulawayo

The Bulawayo Book Distribution Committee (BDC) serves Bulawayo and three provinces in the South and west of the country – Matabeleland North and South, and the Midlands. There is a large active committee, with members from local libraries such as Bulawayo Public Library, Bulawayo Municipal Libraries, the Rural Libraries and Resources Development Programme (RLRDP), Rotary, and local universities.

Maureen Stewart, Manager of the British Council in Bulawayo, ably facilitates much of the committee's work. At a meeting of the committee, I was told that there was 'a near riot' when Mills and Boon novels came in last year!

Bulawayo Public Library is an established, independent, 100-year-old library that is well run, despite its slightly dated feel. Its main library is in the centre of the city, with two other branches in the suburbs and a mobile library service.

The library has separate sections for children, students and adults, and also includes a

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<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.viva.org>>

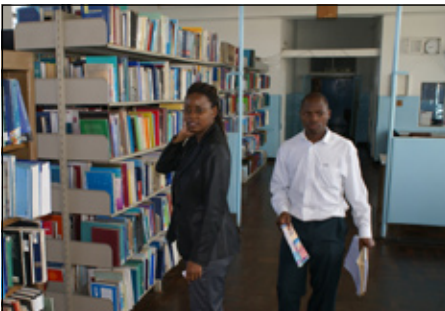
## Scenes from some of Zimbabwe's libraries



Bulawayo Public Library



A branch of Bulawayo Municipal Libraries



Mpilo Hospital Library, Bulawayo



Zimbabwe Open University, Harare Regional Library



Back rooms at City of Harare Municipal Library Service, Highfield, Harare



Braille corner, has good book displays and a red-carpet service for premium members.

The latter entitles its 200+ members to sit in a comfortable red-carpeted side room with a selection of top range titles, and costs \$30 for three months. This is an example of one of the innovative charging schemes that the library has developed, but standard membership for an adult costs US\$7 for three months.

Mills and Boon fiction, the Harry Potter series, A-Level physics and business accounting texts are just some of the books that have been extensively used and frequently borrowed in this busy library. In the most difficult days of hyperinflation and empty shops, the mobile library would be used to run staff across the border into Botswana or South Africa to buy food and other supplies.

The Bulawayo Municipal Library Service consists of nine libraries. I visited two of the nine municipal libraries, which have been very under-staffed and under-resourced in recent years, though new library staff have recently been recruited. Charges are relatively cheap – just \$10 a year for adults and \$5 for children.

The libraries are well organised and have benefited from the reliable management of the Chief Librarian, Leonard Nkiwane, who has worked for the library service for forty years. However, the libraries did not feel that vibrant. The lack of teachers, especially motivated teachers, in recent years, and the inability of pupils to pay school fees have led to much less use of the libraries.

The RLRDP is an impressive NGO with a good track-record of training librarians and sustaining rural libraries going back to the early 1990s.<sup>2</sup> As well as 300 rural community

libraries, usually located in schools, the RLRDP runs twenty donkey-drawn mobile libraries and 120 mobile bicycle libraries that transport book-boxes to schools. I visited two rural schools and got to see (and drive) one of RLRDP's famous donkey-drawn library carts.

Two hours from Bulawayo on good roads is Gwanda, where there are a number of institutions that benefit from support via the Bulawayo Committee. The Edward Ndlovu Memorial Library is an impressive, well-organised and -stocked library, with plenty of well-used books.<sup>3</sup>

It has a real community feel, with story-telling three times a week (I sat in on an enjoyable reading of *Handa's Surprise*), a long-standing rural outreach programme (a book-box scheme for 26 schools), a hospital outreach programme, and a 'study circle' programme which provides information to community groups to support activities such as vegetable gardening and nutrition (25–30 groups have been set up, of which ten are active).

Board books are popular, and mothers are encouraged to bring in their very young children, which is not common in African libraries, where study space often takes priority. Membership is good value at 50 rand (about US\$6) a year.

### **Where there is no doctor**

During the two weeks, I visited four teaching hospitals with libraries, all of which trained nurses and other medical students.

Sadly, the hospital in Gwanda had no doctors, making the copy of the classic medical text *Where There Is no Doctor* very apt. It was apparent that, to make the most

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<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.rurallibrarieszim.org>>.

<sup>3</sup> <<http://edwardndlovulibrary.webblogg.se>>

of the books, an active librarian or principal is required.

At Mpilo Hospital, the librarian talked of the importance of engaging doctors when information can be a matter of life or death. At Harare Hospital, the Principal Tutor is a real advocate of using the library and explained that, thanks to Book Aid International books, only three students failed (out of 64) in the last exams compared to twenty the year before. The books are the only real difference. She explained that 'what we teach them in class is only a skeleton; now students can research on their own'.

### **Universities and polytechnics**

I visited five universities and two polytechnics in the two weeks I was in Zimbabwe. The university sector in Zimbabwe has been hit hard, with many institutions having no funds for book purchases in recent years. Book Aid International's books are in some cases the only books that have been acquired, and often make up a large proportion of the stock.

The relatively young Women's University of Africa, for example, has only 4,000 books, about half of which are from BAI, many of which are on reserve. As regard to ICTs, the computers in most universities are dated, in limited numbers and there is extremely limited bandwidth, so books remain essential.

### **Ending up in prison**

For my last library visit, I visited Bulawayo Prison, a remand prison, and one of a number in which the prison service is trying to reinvigorate/establish libraries.

This seems to be part of a real effort to reform prisons in Zimbabwe and start a genuine rehabilitation programme. In contrast, not so long ago, many inmates were dying in prison from lack of food and medical

supplies, but this was at a time when food was scarce for everyone. Fortunately, things are now much improved, so food for the mind is now required.

### **Better times ahead?**

Zimbabwe is still in limbo, waiting to see whether there will be genuine improvements politically, economically and socially. It will take time for confidence to re-emerge, and while the 2000s were a welcome period of small but vital growth for many African countries, Zimbabwe went backwards. For most of its libraries, this has spelt an end to book-buying funds, the loss of professional staff, and a slow decline in infrastructure.

Virtually all the libraries I visited are far too dependent on Book Aid International for new books. The distribution committees have continued to do an excellent job in difficult circumstances and BAI books are in general well used, helped by being housed in well-organised libraries with trained librarians.

Beyond libraries, the situation in schools is still a cause for great concern, and a generation of Zimbabweans, so well educated until recently, could well grow up illiterate. Teachers have left Zimbabwe and/or the profession in their thousands owing to poor pay and past harassment. Many of those that remain are poorly motivated. And even when the teachers are there, parents cannot afford the fees, and consequently children are constantly sent home from school.

For the population as a whole, the inclusive 'power-sharing' government and 'dollarisation' have brought some improvement in their lives, but there is still an air of repression and little prospect of the economy climbing significantly out of its dark, deep hole. We can only hope that the bad times are coming to an end and that it is not yet too late.

# Tonga.Online

## A Development Project in Binga District, Zimbabwe

Peter Kuthan\*

*For Tonga people like me, there is something deeply biblical about the word Mulonga, yet it is a modern story too. One of massive but unshared technology. One of plentiful water but perpetual drought. – Dominic Muntanga<sup>1</sup>*

Since its launch in 2001, the Tonga.Online Project has focused attention on education, access to information, and promoting a Tonga voice on the Internet. The aim is to provide people in the remote Tonga area of Zimbabwe (and the Tonga across the Zambezi river in Zambia) with access to the most advanced communication tools so that they can represent themselves to the outside world and reflect upon the social, political and economic environment of both the global and local village in which they live today.

The Valley Tonga are the third-largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe and some of the most marginalised people in the country. In the past they were largely cut off from the benefits that accrued to other Zimbabweans, especially those in urban areas. In 1957 they were forcibly removed from the fertile shores of the Zambezi river to make way for the building of Kariba dam, which brought electricity to the rest of Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) and huge benefits to the

nation in the form of commercial fisheries and tourism. Until the early 1980s, which saw the building of schools, clinics and roads, these benefits all but completely by-passed the Tonga.

Much has been written about the harm done to the Tonga through displacing them and abandoning them on arid land.<sup>2</sup> The social disruption was a cataclysm, with families being split and members cut off from each other because of the barrier presented by the dam and, in 1964, the new political border with Zambia.

To add insult to injury, the Tonga were stigmatised as dangerous, deformed, sub-human, and practitioners of witchcraft who hate outsiders. During the time of the settler regime, they were looked upon as occupants of some kind of 'human national park' to be preserved like game for the amusement of tourists. While these myths and crimes of the past need to be exposed, the constant harping on about past ills has its drawbacks, the most serious being that it feeds into the victim-perpetrator mentality that has colonised the minds of millions in the so-called developed world and has also colonised the minds of millions in Africa.

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\* This article is based on project documentation written mainly by Keith Goddard, the late Director of Kunzwana Trust, who pioneered the promotion of Tonga music and the Tonga.Online project, in collaboration with and updated by Peter Kuthan, Chairman of the Austria Zimbabwe Friendship Association, Linz, Austria.

The Tonga.Online Website is at <<http://www.mulonga.net>>, and Peter Kuthan can be contacted at <[argerzim@silverserver.at](mailto:argerzim@silverserver.at)>.

<sup>1</sup> Founder, Council for Zimbabwe <<http://www.zimcouncil.org>>.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Elizabeth F. Colson, *The Social Consequences of Resettlement: The Impact of the Kariba Resettlement upon the Gwembe Tonga* (Manchester University Press, 1971).

Strangely enough, the enforced move provided the Tonga with a small jewel. Shortly before the flooding, the ethno-musicologist, Hugh Tracey, was invited to the valley by the Livingstone Museum to record on tape examples of what were believed to be the last vestiges of Tonga culture before it vanished for ever; he recorded over sixty examples of Tonga music.

Previously, these recordings were unavailable to the culture that produced them; now, through the International Library of African Music (ILAM) Website,<sup>3</sup> and the newly established Internet connection in Binga (although with poor connectivity), this historical legacy, which was transferred from analogue tape to vinyl record and, more recently, digitised (and stored for safety reasons in a Norwegian mountain beyond the Arctic Circle), has the potential to be reclaimed by the people of the Zambezi valley.

Despite their harsh living conditions, the Tonga have always adhered to their cultural heritage and ways of communicating oral traditions that are generations old. The Tonga maintained their identity by organising around what remained of their culture and, because the culture was dynamic, it helped them face and adapt to the massive challenges that their new environment presented them.

One could perceive the Tonga people as a digital community per se because of their music. Their unique Ngoma Buntibe Music is a kind of binary or digital music in its own sense, since one musician masters one note only by contributing a short blow on an antelope horn to an incredible storm of sound and stamping movements.<sup>4</sup>

The Tonga.Online project's Website derives its domain name, *Mulonga* [river], from the

Tonga language. The name reflects the history and the needs of the Tonga people. At one level, the Zambezi has become a symbol that tells a modern story of the development of massive but unshared technology – the construction of Kariba dam on Tonga homeland. *Mulonga* constantly evokes memories of how the Tonga people were displaced.

At another level, the constant flow of the Zambezi is a symbol of continuity which, today, represents the needs of the Tonga people both to communicate amongst themselves and with others, and to preserve and develop their rich cultural heritage. The Tonga.Online Project seeks to establish and expand the communication infrastructure using modern tools of information and communication technology (ICT).

A number of school-based telecentres have so far been established, and these already cater for the larger community, with more schools having been earmarked for such kind of development. Even across the lake in Sina-zongwe district in Zambia, the establishment of a computer centre has been supported by the Austria Zimbabwe Friendship Association (AZFA), while the Tonga.OnAir project, an initiative of young radio enthusiasts from Radio FRO in Linz, Austria, has helped set up a community radio station.

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<sup>4</sup>The journey of the Ngoma Buntibe group Simonga to the 1997 Festival of the Regions in Upper Austria and the participation of a joint Simonga-Maliko ensemble from both sides of the river at the Parade at the European Capital of Culture, Linz 2009, emphasised the beauty, distinction and resilience of the Tonga culture, in particular the Nyele horns of Ngoma Buntibe music.

The musical texture of these horns debunked the myth of Africa being the continent of bongo drums where everyone has rhythm: Simonga and Maliko in Austria would not have sounded out of place in the concert halls of any contemporary music festival. In addition, the presence of the musicians in Austria raised the profile and gave visibility to the Tonga in an unprecedented way. See <[http://visp.machfeld.net/parade\\_09](http://visp.machfeld.net/parade_09)>.

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<sup>3</sup><<http://www.ru.ac.za/ilam>>.

The existing fourteen Information Technology Centres (ITCs) in five primary schools (Binga, Manjolo, Siachilaba, Mucheni, Sina-zongwe) and nine secondary schools (Binga, Manjolo, Sianzyundu, Tinde, Pashu, Kari-angwe, Lubimbi, Lusulu, Siabuwa) are up and running but suffering from aging or outdated hardware, erratic or limited power supply, and poor or non-existent connectivity. Tyunga secondary school has received computers, but still has neither solar power nor generator and is very far from the grid.

Because of the welcoming attitude and backing from Binga Rural District Council (BRDC) the Tonga.Online project has been able to accommodate and offer its services at and from Binga library, which offers services to the general public at the centre of town opposite the Binga Museum and Binga Craft Centre. The library was established a few years ago, with support from Danish development aid organisation MS,<sup>5</sup> with a starting package of books that has never been supplemented since.

Only recently, Tonga.Online managed to ship in a consignment of hardware from Austria designated for the library containing computers, flat screens and other components, as a donation from the Austrian Association of Public Libraries,<sup>6</sup> the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and Voest Alpine Intertrading. The project is now in a position to establish and run an IT centre that is not school-based and therefore more easily accessible to the wider public and Tonga community.

The so-called Public Access Point (PAP) facility complements the existing library with electronic equipment and software to



This rusty sign indicates one of the functions designated for Binga library

access information and knowledge resources like Wikipedia or Project Gutenberg and other encyclopaedias, or, more specifically, Edubuntu and newsfeeds like Pambazuka News.<sup>7</sup> The project's Website has over the years become a rich resource base itself.<sup>8</sup> The PAP provides space and enough workstations for training and for the dissemination of information through printing.

In the long run the Binga library will be enabled to serve the community as its true Parliament Constituency Information Centre, as it was designated for (see the rusty billboard in front of it). The challenge for Tonga.Online and the BRDC is therefore to equip the PAP with the relevant information to create a better-informed community and more transparent local government.

As a first step, the project has to establish a routine and relevant support for easy and open access for all. It will be crucial to use this modern information tool to collect, archive and disseminate local knowledge and to create relevant content. In this regard, the

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<sup>5</sup> <<http://www.ms.dk/sw2564.asp>>.

<sup>6</sup> <<http://www.bvoe.at/en>>.

<sup>7</sup> <<http://en.wikipedia.org>>; <[www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)>; <<http://edubuntu.org>>; <<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/>>.

<sup>8</sup> <<http://www.mulonga.net>>.



The Tonga.Online project's computers in Binga library

major functions of the Tonga.Online studio (currently based at Binga high school) and its efforts for media development are about to move to the library in order to encourage public usage and participation.

Access to information has become a crucial question of human rights, hence the relevance of this project as a tool to spearhead debate, accountability and empowerment among the Tonga people. There is also a huge educational potential for the Tonga.Online project in this remote part of the country, where no institutions of higher learning exist. It lends support not only to higher levels of education but also to rural livelihood and human resources development.

The Tonga.Online project has sometimes been met with severe criticism and has been viewed by some as a luxury gimmick. People have questioned the importation of dozens of computers into schools where there is still a lack of basic text books or stationery. But this linear view of history and development that suggests stone must precede paper, paper precede computer, and computer precede the Internet is dangerous and simply deepens the divide between the haves and have-nots.

Textbooks are expensive; most information

available over the Net is free (if the trap of proprietary software is avoided – the project is promoting free and open-source software (FOSS) such as Edubuntu). It makes perfect sense for the Tonga to leapfrog over the paper revolution and enter directly into cyberspace.

Tonga.Online is using the space provided by ICTs, the Internet and platforms such as regional and international festivals to dramatise a specific example of how technology can be used to reclaim history.

This is poignant when you think that the Net continues to be one of the vital tools for communicating in and between nations that are throttled by restrictions on people's rights to information and in communities which are often seriously misrepresented in other parts of the world.

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The Tonga.Online project was initiated by Kunzwana Trust and the Austria Zimbabwe Friendship Association, with support from the Dutch NGO, HIVOS, and the Austrian Development Co-operation. Recently, the project has been merged into Basilwizi Trust, a Zimbabwean NGO based in the Tonga area and focusing on advocacy and education. Its Website, <<http://www.basilwizi.org>>, will be available soon.

# Local History Online in Maryland, USA

Jill Craig\*

*Is there a role for small public libraries in preserving local history and making it accessible? Western Maryland Regional Library believes so.*

Western Maryland Regional Library (WMRL) serves the three western-most counties of Maryland – Garrett, Allegany and Washington. The area is home to several locations of interest to students of US history. The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, a major engineering undertaking along the Potomac river, brings its own history lessons to two of the counties. John Brown, the anti-slavery campaigner, organised his attack on the federal armory at Harper's Ferry and collected weapons in a farmhouse in Washington County. The Battle of Antietam – the bloodiest single day in American history – was fought in Washington County during the Civil War.

We chose to make available online resources that were either not available elsewhere or not widely available, and now have over fifty collections online, including photographs, newspapers, postcards, log books, payrolls, and oral history – all searchable across collections. Our history Website has augmented some of the more well-known episodes of Western Maryland history with less well-known aspects.

For example, many newspapers covered the Battle of Antietam, in September 1862. The local newspaper, the *Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, however, reported not only on the battle but also on conditions faced by the farmers and residents:

From Hagerstown to the Southern limits of the county wounded and dying soldiers are to be found in every neighborhood and in nearly every house. The whole region of country between Boonsboro' and Sharpsburg is one vast hospital. Houses and Barns are filled with them, and nearly the whole population is engaged in waiting on and ministering to their wants.

...

The region of country between Sharpsburg and Boonsboro' has been eaten out of food of every description. The two armies of from eighty to a hundred thousand each have swept over it, and devoured everything within reach. At Sharpsburg, we understand that the rebels sacked the town, and when they left many of the citizens had not a morsel of food to eat.<sup>1</sup>

Less well-known documents, like the handwritten 1804 Tax Records of Washington County from the rare book room of the library, are now online. This catalogues property-holders and their houses, land, horses, hogs, pounds of plate, and stills. For modern researchers, of particular interest is the record of slaves and their worth, with tax based on gender and age. The most valuable

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\* Jill Craig is Digitization Librarian, Western Maryland Regional Library, and can be contacted at <jrcraig@washcolibrary.org>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, September 1862, p.2, <<http://www.whilbr.org/HeraldofFreedom/index.aspx>>.

slaves were males between the ages of 14 and 45. Women aged 14 to 36 were taxed at two-thirds the rate of men. Men over 45 and women over 36 were taxed at a much lower rate, as they were of a lower commercial value.<sup>2</sup>

We hope that, by making this information available online, the notion that slavery was part of our own community becomes clearer. And by using free software like *Zoomify*,<sup>3</sup> we have made searching online maps much easier, without requiring great bandwidth.<sup>4</sup>

Now that the information is available online, we have received a variety of requests from visitors to our site. One came from Ireland seeking further information about the Irish stonemasons who were involved in building the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in the 1840s. An Australian woman wanted information on Welsh miners living in Frostburg after she found the name of one of her relatives, Paytoe Hanson, in the online version of the 1896 Cumberland City directory.<sup>5</sup>

Another Australian researcher has studied photographs of dead Confederates on the battlefield at Antietam and used the online version of a comprehensive source on the library's Website to attempt to identify them: *A descriptive list of the burial places of the remains of Confederate soldiers, who fell in the battles of Antietam, South Mountain, Monocacy, and other points in Washington and Frederick counties, in the state of Maryland*.<sup>6</sup>

A request for more information on the entry 'Thistle Lodge Free Gardners of Lonaconing' came from Scotland, where research on the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners was being conducted (the Free Gardeners were somewhat akin to Free Masons). Lonaconing, a coal-mining town, was populated first by the Scots, and Burns Day is still celebrated.

*Google Analytics* show that the Website has been visited from more than forty-five countries.<sup>7</sup> Some visitors are clearly there by mistake – our Web page titled 'Photographs from Accident, Maryland' has numerous visitors who leave very quickly when they realize that this is not a Website about grizzly road accidents but bucolic scenes from the town of Accident in Garrett County, Maryland – so named, the legend goes, when two different surveying parties measured the same piece of land.

Numerous visitors from Indonesia visited the Website at the time of the inauguration of Barack Obama, presumably because of collection of Presidential buttons.<sup>8</sup> Specific reasons why others visit are much less clear.

What material to make available online is a decision among competing topics. The Civil War is always popular, particularly since there is little material about the Confederates in the northern states. The Revolutionary War brings its own researchers.

We occasionally mount a collection because it is timely – the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, for example, meant that the Muster Roll for a local militia who fought at Bladensburg against the British (and were soundly defeated) needed to be posted.

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<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.whilbr.org/WashCoTaxes1803/index.aspx>>.

<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.zoomify.com>>.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, <<http://www.whilbr.org/assets/maps/zoomifyimage.asp?imagefolder=Rohrersville1877>>.

<sup>5</sup> <<http://www.whilbr.org/alleganydirectory/index.aspx>>.

<sup>6</sup> <<http://www.whilbr.org/confederateSoldiers/index.aspx>>.

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<sup>7</sup> <<http://www.google.com/analytics>>.

<sup>8</sup> <<http://www.whilbr.org/PresidentialCampaignButtons/index.aspx>>.

Occasionally material has been selected because a patron advocates for it – the Alleghany County African American site being a case in point. A local historian made a strong case that the contributions and lives of African Americans were largely ignored in mainstream history, and so the collection came into being, in an attempt to include everyone in the history of the region.<sup>9</sup>

For those interested in history and genealogy, the state of Maryland provides two databases to all county public libraries – a general history database and *Heritage Quest*, a database of census material from the 1790s to 1930s, journal articles, books and manuscripts.<sup>10</sup> Many Maryland county public libraries supplement these offerings. *Ancestry Library Edition* is a version of the commercially available *Ancestry.com*, and includes census data and many other historic databases.<sup>11</sup>

WMRL also provides *Sanborn Maps* (1873–1930) for Maryland and neighbouring West Virginia and Pennsylvania.<sup>12</sup> Intended for fire-insurance purposes, the large-scale maps of towns show fine detail of structures, such as how many floors they have, what kind of roof, windows and walls, and are of great interest, for example, to those individuals who want to know more about the story of their homes.

Each main county library has a collection of local city directories, and newspapers filled with the births, deaths and marriages that family-history researchers want. The community has regarded the Western Maryland Room of the Washington County Free Library,

with its long-time curator, as a worthy place to donate records from the past, and so we have an established and well-managed local-history collection, with documents, manuscripts, brochures, postcards, photographs and even cookbooks, which add a much deeper view of local historical events.

What can a librarian with an interest in local history add to what is already provided by these resources? With the modern desire that history and genealogy should be available online, WMRL, understanding the local community and responding to relevant needs, has joined many other libraries in scanning local holdings and making them accessible digitally. We are by no means unique – public libraries are adding to the available digital history whenever the materials, technology, skills and commitment come together with the finances.

We are part of the trend that is taking documents out of the ‘rare book’ or ‘special collections’ room of libraries. Our Website, the Western Maryland Historical Library, known as Whilbr, was recently nominated as one of the 2010 best US state genealogy Websites by *Family Tree Magazine*.<sup>13</sup>

Like the others on their list we know that digital access is no longer the exclusive task of the Library of Congress, the British Library, the Australian National Library, or the national libraries and archives of other countries.

Small public libraries, far from the population centres, can and do make their material accessible to the world.

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<sup>9</sup> <<http://www.whilbr.org/AlleghanyAfricanAmericans/index.aspx>>.

<sup>10</sup> <<http://www.heritagequestonline.com>>.

<sup>11</sup> <<http://www.ancestrylibrary.com/default.aspx>>.

<sup>12</sup> <<http://sanborn.umi.com>>.

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<sup>13</sup> <<http://familytreemagazine.com/article/2010-best-state-websites>>.

# Travels with my Dewey

David Alcock\*

*As I adjourn to the pastures of Early Retirement, the Editor of Focus moves me to reflect on my four overseas library experiences. None of them worked out as anticipated.*

The first came closest to success in terms of my own personal efforts. But perhaps success is not to be measured solely in terms of a particular project. I remain a firm believer that modest but significant good can come if people of goodwill from different cultures interact together on a basis of mutual respect.

Generally speaking, my line has been 'this is the way I would do it; take what you will from it'. And I have tried not to divorce myself from the local milieu: I am much happier queuing up for indeterminate stew in the 'Cafeteria Solyanka' in Almaty than I am in an Irish bar full of expats ...

## Cairo

My first trip was to Cairo to give a one-week course in 'Basic Library Practice' at the request of the British Council (time was running out for the organisers; I was their desperate solution). My then employer, the University of Surrey, fortunately went along with this and granted leave of absence.

It seems difficult to imagine now, but at that point systems were almost entirely manual, and I concerned myself with issues like how to file catalogue cards alphabetically (letter-by-letter or word-by-word?), how to record tracings on catalogue cards ... On the whole, I think the course was not unsuccessful – as a

\* David Alcock has just retired as Jordanhill Campus Librarian, University of Strathclyde. If you want to contact him, please use <David.Alcock4@gmail.com>, or, better still, visit the Website: <<http://www.squidoo.com/researchinformation>>.

spin-off, enabling me to see Cairene suburbs like Giza and Gezira (I'm a devotee of Olivia Manning's *Levantine Trilogy*) and to enjoy a lightning trip to Alexandria.

## Pakistan

Some years later, there was a move to establish a new kind of independent teacher-training institution in Pakistan. It was to be an attempt to get away from the stifling culture of the Ministry of Education. To this end, the Director-designate visited various institutions in a range of countries; my own institution (by that time Jordanhill College – on the cusp of being absorbed into the University of Strathclyde) was hopeful of fees and kudos, but, to the irritation of the academics, at first the only person whose services were requested was myself.

It was amazing I got there at all – the Ali Insitute insisted on organising the flight, and British Airways in Glasgow had therefore received a kind of Islamicization of my name, with curious alphabetical consequences for when I tried to pick up the ticket.

I liked all my Pakistani colleagues – the secretary, the bursar, the lecturing staff. The difficulty lay in the fact that the newly appointed librarian seemed more interested in a possible career as an economist ...

Various sessions were sprung on me without warning, e.g. a 'tea party' for local librarians. This might not surprise me now, but it did surprise me then. Now, the problem would be easier to deal with, as the Internet

would make it possible to do the research in Lahore almost as well as in Glasgow; then, you had to grope in the recesses of your memory and invent any shortfall.

There is perhaps a tension between trying to be stimulating and risking being offensive. Subsequently, I wonder if I may inadvertently have crossed that line. I found Lahore very exciting – especially the old city and a trip out to Jehangir's tomb.

### **Kazakhstan**

Assignment three was to assist with an EU Tempus project, masterminded by colleagues in the Community Education Department at Strathclyde (Jordanhill). The idea was to establish a Community Work course at the Ablai Khan University in Kazakhstan. It had not been intended that I would pay more than one or two visits in connection with the proposed Resource Centre, but in the end I went out five times, latterly more as a general member of the team.

I was also quite handy because I was the only one of us who had learnt a little Russian (even a little Kazakh eventually, e.g. *Rakhmet* [Thank you]) and could transliterate the Cyrillic script. How exciting it was the first time we found ourselves in a restaurant on our own to make out p-i-z-z-a m-a-r-g-a-r-i-t-a: 'Ah, Pizza Margarita, let's have that then!'

One problem with this project was that the academic personnel had largely changed between the submission of the bid and its approval (it was turned down first time round). Another problem lay in tensions between some of our local contacts – eventually resolved via pressure from the local EU office's own (Kazakh) director. At the eleventh hour, the situation was retrieved.

In Library terms, we were kept apart from the local staff in the early stages, but when

I eventually got to make contact, I was surprised how clued up they seemed about what was happening in the rest of the world – though, as one of them said to me, 'experts come; experts go; everything remains the same'.

Our experiences – and a solo 600-mile foray across the steppe aboard Kazakh State Railways Train Number 3 from Almaty to Astana – left me with a tremendous respect and admiration for the Kazakhs, given the horrors they have endured over the last 150 years, and how they have emerged, in my experience, so tolerant and so welcoming.

### **East Timor**

Finally, I was fortunate to be involved in a project led by the Universidade do Minho in Portugal to provide assistance under the EU Asia-Link Programme to the library and administrative services of the National University of East Timor.

Part of the programme was also to improve Portuguese-language teaching: when the Timorese regained their independence, the leaders of the freedom movement (brought up at the end of the Portuguese colonial period) re-established Portuguese as the official language, along with the dominant local language, Tetun, whereas younger people's fluency lay largely in Bahasa-Indonesian.

An obstacle here was that one key individual appeared less than enthralled by the notion of visitors from the outside world – a great pity; the others seemed much more disposed to think about what we had to say. Eloy Rodrigues, from Minho, and I had agreed that on our first (and, as it turned out, only) visit we would each go out for a week back-to-back; if both of us were there simultaneously, we feared we might overload the local staff. However, we did overlap in the middle. This

left me as the sole member of the vanguard, with no Indonesian much beyond *Selamat pagi* [Good morning], not much Portuguese, and no translator (despite one having been requested). A very weak starting point.

Notwithstanding some difficulties, Eloi and I urged a purge of many titles that had been donated by well-meaning (but not very thoughtful) donors and which hung like an albatross round the library's neck; we both urged the need to keep the shelves tidy and in order, and to try to adopt a user-friendly approach.

Working together, we did succeed in guiding the library by our own efforts during the couple of days in which we overlapped; and we made some progress with the assistant staff in improving their grasp of Dewey, subject indexing, etc. And we went to the Dili Institute of Technology, where we were impressed by a brave attempt which was then in train to launch a librarianship course. Incidentally, how *do* you get rid of redundant stock where the refuse disposal arrangements are limited to pigs snuffling in communal bins in the streets? All credit to the pigs: they did an excellent job, but ...

I think it would be fair to say that the Portuguese colonial administration did little for the Timorese; and the Indonesians (with the acquiescence of the West, paranoid about the prospect of a notionally Marxist independent Timorese state) were brutal in their initial annexation of the country and in their subsequent attempts to suppress dissent – brilliantly evoked in Timothy Mo's novel, *The Redundancy of Courage*.<sup>1</sup> The struggle for independence was a titanic one. But, with the departure of the Indonesians, there

seemed to be a degree of civic exhaustion – not helped by the colossal devastation and gratuitous destruction bequeathed by the departing forces and their henchmen. Just at the end of our programme (immediately before we had hoped to go out for a second visit), there followed a period of anarchy on the streets of Dili, together with a coup attempt in which President Ramos-Horta had to be evacuated to hospital in Darwin, across the Straits of Timor.

### Resources

I had hoped that our legacy to the Timorese might have been to work together on a set of Weblinks to free English and Portuguese sources in areas relevant to the university's curriculum.

In the end, the best I could do was to devise a set of links for free, quality, English-language material on education, which I hoped would also be useful to our Kazakh colleagues and indeed to those in the UK wanting to read the literature of education but lacking membership and access to the electronic holdings of UK research libraries.

Hence my Website <<http://www.squidoo.com/researchinformation>>. Visit it, if you will, and e-mail me if you have any suggestions for additions and improvements.

### ILIGlist

An e-mail discussion group open to librarians and information professionals who are involved in LIS activities across the globe.

To join the list, just send a brief message to: <[iliglist-owner@yahoogroups.com](mailto:iliglist-owner@yahoogroups.com)>.

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<sup>1</sup> Paddleless Press, 1995; see <<http://www.timothymo.co.uk/insulared.html>>

# Anthony Thompson Award 2010 Winner's Report\*

James Massally

Librarian, Annie Walsh Memorial School, and Co-ordinator of the School Library Group of the Sierra Leone Association of Archivists, Librarians and Information Professionals (SLAALIP)

At about 9:30 a.m. on 18 June 2010, I was driven from Heathrow along the M4 to central London where I was to pass two nights. An enthusiastic, benevolent and curious co-ordinator of that travel visit, Gillian Harris, Head of Tower Hamlets School Library Services and current Chair of ILIG, took me around London to familiarise me with astonishing places.

I quickly came to know the important information centres, particularly museums. Through long discussions with competent educationists and information experts – from University College London to the Barbican Centre – I was privileged to learn about the historical antecedents of British librarianship.

I took two days to identify the transportation services for visitors and the regular train networks, enough to find my way through the whole of the United Kingdom using map guides. Old habits are very hard to part with, as I was to discover that, even after about two centuries of bitter struggle against it, traces of racism still linger in the untravelled minds of a few Britons.

## My first significant travel

My first most significant travel was from Hither Green to Box Hill School in Surrey in the beautiful countryside where horse racing still thrives as one of the lovely traditions of Britons. Box Hill School has an international



James Massally (left) with the Revd. René Jarret, former Chaplain of Annie Walsh Memorial School

reputation as it teaches the International Baccalaureate. The school has a fantastic collection of 18th century literary classics. It was a great opportunity to learn that it was the unique abode of Emily Bronte and other pioneers of modern literature.

Sarah Pavey, librarian and author educationist, appears to be the embodiment of good literary presentations and teachings on good research skills in that institution, considering her contribution to the current trend of adapting the use of the Internet to literacy education and information literacy in the UK.

## My first long travel

On Wednesday, I was on the longest train journey to Aberystwyth in Wales to meet Professor Frank Hogg, one of the founding brains of the Aberystwyth University School of Librarianship and Information Studies. I came to know Frank as a charitable man, a man with an insatiable international interest in good libraries for children, an international educationist with a wealth of experience.

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\*This is an abbreviated and slightly edited version of the full report he submitted to ILIG/CILIP.

My trip to Aberystwyth was not only leisurely, entertaining and exciting for having spent a day and night at the Glengower Hotel with its beautiful sea view, but my encounter and long conversation with Frank has helped to build the kind of bond that exist between a father and a son.

His wish to enlighten me on the nature of a good school library project has served me as an eye-opener, which has enlivened my interest in co-ordinating school libraries in my country. Frank has enabled me to believe that when children have good library resources, exploited and explained by qualified and experienced librarians who are well motivated, they can deal with any problems in life.

### **School Library Association Conference**

At 11 a.m. on Thursday, I was on board a taxi in the custody of Frank for the journey to Nottingham for the three-day annual UK School Library Association (SLA) conference. Frank had chosen to pay my fares and some of the expenses that I would need to attend the conference. Its theme, 'The Magic Threshold', was insightful and thought-provoking.

From the first day I realised that I had no doubt entered into a world of pleasant and playful intellectual grooming. The first session was entitled 'Opening the Book', and launched a new Book Space shelving system for school libraries. It showed how to make libraries more attractive to young people. The new modular system of shelving is really aimed at solving a spatial problem, so the session was innovative and experiential.

The afternoon sessions ranged from discussions about writing books for children to learning about the most recent innovations in educational architecture around the globe.

It was a great opportunity to meet with some of the most astonishing people in the field of education, story-telling and writing around the world. I was particularly thrilled by the PowerPoint presentation by the keynote speaker which was entitled 'The New Media Environment'.

It was a highlight of opportunities and hard times that challenge children of different racial backgrounds, and how the turbulence around the globe, the speed of technology, as well as government policies affect their thinking habits and the school systems.

The second day of the conference was seriously charged with high-power intellectual batteries and a variety of capacitors for different intellectual presentations and marketing. I should have mentioned the long cascade of library designers, technology consultants, writers and their great supporting publishing houses.

As a matter of fact, many librarians are themselves authors – they brought products for sale and transformed the lounge of the Cavendish Conference Centre into a trade and exhibition show centre. The most interesting thing was the encouraging cost of items, which were very affordable.

There were many optional sessions that day that caused a problem of choice for delegates like myself, as all the sessions seemed animating, enlightening, exciting and entertaining, but delegates were restricted to two pairs of options.

Items at the sessions ranged from graphic computing, Web 2.0, lectures on library display, library marketing, networking, Community Library Partnering, building stock and staffing, and poetry lectures, to various author-discussion seminars. Among the celebrity authors were internationally acclaimed Katherine Fisher, Hilary McKay,

Mark Burgess, Bali Rai, and caricaturist Kev F. Sutherland.

The third day was more about finishing touches and was very short. It started with the SLA Annual General Meeting and was followed by a short raffle draw. The most important part of that day for me perhaps was the keynote speaker's address on recent research findings on Children's Reading by the Reading Agency.

I am very grateful to the organisers of this year's conference as well as to those that made it possible for me to be there.

### **The Kirklees Books Plus and community library service**

I departed from Nottingham to Huddersfield, where I was to spend two days at the George Hotel while studying the Kirklees Schools Library Services, named Books Plus, headed by Alison Brummell.

This was again a fantastic moment, to witness for the first time in my life how a live modern mobile library service operates. I was on a mobile tour from Red Doles premises to Fixby Junior Infant and Nursery School, the mobile run to Fixby, Birkby, Fartown, and back to Red Doles Lane.

At this point the idea that information professionals, especially librarians in the UK, are some of the most pleasant people to meet with now manifested itself as a stark truth. This I would honestly say of Alison, as I would of the SLA Director, Tricia Adams, or Morner Williams of Staffordshire County School Library Services, or, to say the least, of Gillian Harris and her colleagues.

On the Tuesday morning, I went on a special visit to Birkenshaw Middle School Library, where I participated in the presentation of Greenaway Shadowing Certificates to pupils involved in the weekly Books Plus School

Reading exercise, organised regularly by Alison with her colleagues in collaboration with school teachers.

It seriously amazed me to see how some primary schools within the council are technologically well-off compared with the appalling lack of these facilities in schools in my country.

### **The SLA secretariat**

On Wednesday, I was again on a train journey to Swindon, to spend half that day in the company of Tricia Adams, the SLA Director.

The SLA staff office is far removed from the town of Swindon, in the precinct of an old diary and agricultural farm. As one of the essentials of my study tour was to study how school library associations function, it would have been unwise not to have visited the SLA secretariat to meet with Tricia. She must have told me everything that was necessary to sharpen my knowledge of the UK SLA.

But I had other exciting asides to this Swindon visit. One was a tour round a nearby strawberry farm, and plucking many ripe ones to take back to London. I remain grateful to Tricia for the cheerful entertainment of my visit to Swindon and for the wonderful lunch time meal.

### **A night and a day in Staffordshire**

I left for Staffordshire on Thursday, where there is an administrative as well as main library division that also extends services to schools with a mobile facility.

Both services are similar in many ways, considering that school library services are paid for by the council/county. The libraries' services in turn are sold out to the schools on request, and in a way the libraries are themselves owned by the county/council. Using the library as the central broker in the

book chain services to schools appears to be especially effective and working everywhere in similar ways, from Tower Hamlets in London to Huddersfield and Staffordshire, and perhaps throughout the UK.

It was a great opportunity to meet with Morna and her colleagues. She has been added to my list of those willing to assist me towards my school library project at home. Morna's recent follow up e-mails are a clear indication of her commitment towards this.

### **Two days at Pinner and a course at CILIP**

On 4 July, I was taken to Pinner in preparation for a one-day course on the Future of Learning and Information Literacy in Web 2.0 at the Chartered Institute of Librarian and Information Professionals (CILIP).

The course, which was effectively handled by Sharon Markless with vital contributions from participants, looked at the most effective ways to develop Information Literacy in the Web 2.0 environment. It clearly revealed implications of research for librarians' practice.

### **My presentation, a trip to Cardiff, and the Sierra Leone meeting**

Having constantly listened to all the veterans in their different fields, the 7th of July was now an opportunity for me to be heard with a report from my country.

There were about thirty people drawn from librarians and members of the Annie Walsh Old Girls Association (AWOGA) based in London.<sup>1</sup> After about a twenty-minute presentation on library development in my country, I answered various questions from participants and established contact with AWOGA members.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about AWOGA, see <<http://www.anniewalsh.org>>.

After that meeting, I was on my second long journey, this time to Cardiff to attend the Wales for Africa Health Links Annual Conference, organised jointly with the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET).

This gave me an insight into issues about the Millennium Development Goals and their relation to a healthy society, and should help contribute to the existence of a good health club in the various schools that I serve as Co-ordinator of School Libraries.

Finally, on our return from Cardiff was the Sierra Leone meeting, organised by Shane Godbolt, director of Partnerships in Health Information, at one of London's Royal Colleges. Its aim was to chart new ways to follow up the Phi-supported DelpHE project in Sierra Leone between the University of Sierra Leone and Cardiff University with a formal welcome of school librarians to the project.

### **Conclusion**

I must confess heartfelt gratitude to members of the CILIP and ILIG groups, and to the Executive Members of the Sierra Leone Association of Archivists, Librarians and Information Professionals (SLAALIP), for the good time I had in the UK, especially for all the encouragement I received from them throughout my study tour.

My special gratitude goes, first, to Gillian Harris, for the times spent with her were very lively and interesting, and, secondly, to Shane Godbolt, for all the efforts she took to incorporate the CILIP course and conference into this tour and for taking me to Cardiff. As for Frank Hogg, I am pleased to extend this my gratitude to him in the way a son does to a loving father.

The essence of all this is to continue to step up the good foundation which has been laid as a result of this study tour.

# ILIG business

*ILIG's committee met on 13 October 2010*

## **Finances**

Treasurer Norman Briggs reported that CILIP's new CEO, Annie Mauger, had indicated that the current structure was not sustainable; CILIP membership was down to 17,000. A move towards 'outcomes-based funding' for Branches and Groups (B&G) and a tighter framework, with CILIP requiring a business plan from each B&G, are under consideration.

The healthy nature of the ILIG's finances, especially in respect of funds held for the Anthony Thompson Award, was stressed, as was the need to ensure that funds raised for this award (operated by ILIG on behalf of CILIP) were clearly identified and retained for the purpose for which ILIG had raised them.

## **ILIG online**

ILIGlist owner Doug Knock reported that ILIGlist membership was up to 327 members, and was listed on the ALA's International Links site. Mention of ILIGlist in a recent issue of the *Gazette*, noted that it had 'changed a life'.

## **Informals**

Informals continue to be lively and informative. On 7 July, James Massally, Anthony Thompson Award winner (see his report on pp.110–13), gave a talk entitled 'Diary of a Sierra Leonean School Librarian'. This was a fascinating evening, in which we were joined

by several members of the London Chapter of the Annie Walsh Memorial School Old Girls Association, and much lively discussion ensued.

On 8 September, Martin Morris, Enquiry Team Librarian at the Central Resources Library in Hatfield, who had been awarded a CILIP first-timer grant, and Ayub Khan, Head of Libraries (Strategy) at Warwickshire LIS, contributor at many IFLA meetings, gave their impressions of IFLA 2010 in Gothenburg. We also remembered, with a few words and a toast, Bob McKee, who died during that meeting (see pp. 116–18).

On 13 October, Paul Byfield spoke about Internet Censorship in Central Asia and Eastern Europe (see the next issue of *Focus*).

The now well-established Christmas Quiz in aid of ILIG's Emergency Fund will be held on 8 December.

## **ILIG Seminars**

Fundraising seminars on plagiarism and transliteracy were delivered in October.

Maria Cotera, who is co-ordinating ILIG's involvement at Umbrella 2011, <<http://www.cilip.org.uk/umbrella2011/Pages/default.aspx>>, reported that the three sessions proposed on ILIG's behalf had been accepted.

## **Focus**

The Committee asked that its sincere thanks be recorded to Roger Stringer, *Focus* editor, for his sterling work over the past five years. Gill reported with pleasure that John Lake would be succeeding Roger in 2011.

## **International work**

The announcement requesting nominations for the ILIG International Award 2011 appears on the inside back cover of this issue.

Alan Hopkinson reported that he would

be hosting three Commonwealth University Fellows (from India, Pakistan and Nigeria) from January to April 2011.

Professor Magnus John, Chair of the Sierra Leone Library Board, had requested help to transport a collection of books to the docks for shipping to Freetown later in the year. ILIG agreed £75, with the same matched by Partnerships in Health Information.

It was agreed that as the work on finding suitable software to enable delivering seminars to international members progressed, it would be sensible to initiate this with a modest pilot probably based on James Massally's small network of school librarians in Sierra Leone.

### **Anthony Thompson Award**

Gill Harris is working with AWOGA, who had donated £1,000, in selecting books for the AWMS Library, supplemented from her own surplus stock.

It was agreed that future AT award winners, in addition to the free lifetime subscription to *Focus* already agreed, would also receive two years free membership of CILIP.

The next Award will be made in 2012.

### **Committee for 2011**

It was noted that there were five vacancies and that a new Secretary would be needed.

*Shane Godbolt*

### **CILIP Medal awarded to Edward Dudley**

The first ever CILIP Medal was awarded to committee member, Edward Dudley, at the CILIP Awards ceremony on 14 October. This special award recognises those who have made a unique and continuing contribution to the library and information profession.

Edward had only recently joined the ILIG Committee and, sadly, ill health has prevented him from attending meetings.

The citation says:

Edward Dudley has made an unparalleled and unique contribution to the profession; making an enormous and beneficial impact on the profession both in the United Kingdom and overseas.

After an early career spent in public libraries Edward moved into education. He spent many years as head of two well-established library schools – Ealing and North London Polytechnic – where he was known as a wonderful protagonist in developing new ideas and initiatives.

In retirement he continued to be an influential figure – writing a regular column in *Library & Information Update* (and its previous incarnation, *LA Record*).

## **ILIG Annual General Meeting: 9 February 2011**

The ILIG Annual General Meeting, to be followed by 'Meet the CILIP President', will take place on Wednesday, 9 February 2011 at CILIP, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE.

The AGM starts at 5:30 p.m., followed by drinks and networking.

CILIP's President for 2011, Brian Hall, will speak at 6:15 p.m.

There will then be an opportunity for questions, refreshments and networking until 7.45 p.m.

For more information about the AGM, visit: <<http://www.cilip.org.uk/ilig>> or contact ILIG's Secretary, Anne Powell <[apowell@inasp.info](mailto:apowell@inasp.info)>.

# In Memory of Bob McKee, 1950–2010

*Focus has asked four colleagues who knew and worked with Bob at international level for a number of years to reflect on him as a leader, a supporter of new professionals, and a friend.*

From John Lake:

My first acquaintance with Bob was during an Association of Assistant Librarians AGM meeting in the 1980s at which he was participating as a representative from another Division. It was then that I recognised a professional who had a particular ability to galvanise people's opinions and demonstrate a sense of leadership and vision, which was to become widely evident and recognised very quickly at a national level.

It was much later that I was to become familiar with those qualities in an international setting when I became involved with the planning of the 2002 IFLA Conference in Glasgow and as an elected member of the IFLA Section for Public Libraries in 2001.

Bob had a very special ability to take a positive view on situations, and his understanding of the library and information profession was one grounded in having been both a working librarian and an educator, as well as an advocate and strategist for libraries in his later career as Chief Executive of CILIP.

Bob had the ability to make meetings and plenary sessions more poignant through the clarification of viewpoints and the understanding and awareness of the profession that he was passionate about. He was a personable and friendly colleague who made everyone feel welcome, involved and valued for their contribution to a meeting, debate or occasion.

## **CILIP/IFLA Aspire Award**

### **Developing New Professionals in memory of Bob McKee**

CILIP and IFLA, with the support of his family, have created the Aspire Award in memory of CILIP's Chief Executive, Bob McKee, who died suddenly on 13 August 2010.

The Award will support Bob's passionate interests –  
developing new professionals and strengthening international relationships.

CILIP will provide a UK bursary to pay for attendance at either its biennial Umbrella event or its annual New Professionals Conference.

IFLA will provide an international bursary to support a new professional from Ukraine, a country in which Bob had a professional interest. The scope of the international bursary will be widened to the whole library community after two years.

It is hoped the Award will be funded by donations. You can donate through either organisation.

To download a CILIP donation form, visit

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/about-us/medalsandawards/aspire/Pages/default.aspx>

The Award was launched on 28 October 2010, the date that Bob was due to hold his retirement party, at a special event held in London to celebrate Bob's professional life.

That quality, of having respect for and an understanding of other people's opinions, while steering progress and change, earned him the deserved respect of both the national and international LIS communities, which will remember him for many years to come.

*John Lake*  
*Librarian, Barbican Library*  
*ILIG Committee Member,*  
*Member of EUROLIS,*  
*Immediate past chairperson of the*  
*IFLA Section for Public Libraries.*

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From Barbara Schleihagen:

It's still unbelievable. A wonderful colleague and friend has passed away much too early.

I met Bob first when he was busy organising the IFLA 2002 Glasgow World Congress, as I was following him in organising the 2003 Berlin Congress. I learned a lot from Bob's experience and we kept our own small competition going about who would attract more participants: Glasgow or Berlin. In the end, Berlin won with three(!) more participants.

Forming part of a small team of advisory board members of the IFLA/FAIFE core programme, we met frequently in The Hague, discussing strategy and trying to find new money. We always ended our meetings very pleasantly in the same nearby restaurant called 'Humphrey's'. That established a nice tradition and our friendship. Bob was such a warm-hearted and friendly person with great humour that made it so easy to feel close to him.

When first Bob and then, two years later, I were elected to IFLA's Governing Board, we congratulated ourselves that – including current president Ellen Tise – already three(!) people from IFLA/FAIFE had made it to the

Governing Board. In the two years sitting together through many meetings, I learned more from Bob about how to run a library association than anywhere else.

Shortly before the IFLA Gothenburg congress, I invited Bob to our Library Association Managers meeting to say a few words about IFLA's new Building Strong Library Association Programme and about his planned involvement. I asked to sit next to him as I expected that I would not see much of him after his planned retirement. I did not know that this in fact would be the last time we met.

Most of all, I miss his warm, smiling face.

*Barbara Schleihagen*  
*Executive Director,*  
*German Library Association*

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From Premila Gamage:

Like thousands of other colleagues around the world, I too was saddened by the demise of Bob McKee, who passed away during the 2010 IFLA Conference.

He was the first person that I met as I stepped into the IFLA Conference registration area in Gothenburg. With his usual natural smile, Bob came to me and gave me the wonderful news about my CILIP Honorary Fellowship.

I had the great opportunity to work with him over the last few years at the IFLA Governing Board, during Tsunami activities, FAIFE, and most recently through the Building Strong Library Associations (BSLA) Programme. I personally learnt a lot from him through these associations and always remember him as a person who inspires us towards a higher vision and who has a passion for the development of library associations.

My memory of Bob is still fresh, with activities together with his usual smile and sense of humour. Bob will be missed by colleagues all over the world, but particularly by his family, friends and colleagues at CILIP. I extend my heartfelt condolences to all of you on the loss of this eminent librarian and wonderful colleague.

*Premila Gamage  
Librarian, Institute of Policy Studies,  
Colombo, Sri Lanka  
Member, Regional Standing Committee for  
Asia and Oceania, IFLA  
CILIP Honorary Fellow*

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From Andrew Cranfield

I first met Bob McKee at the IFLA World Congress in Buenos Aires in 2004. The co-conveners of the New Professionals Discussion Group (NPDG) had asked him to talk at our very first session to discuss and deliberate on how people entering into the

library profession could engage with and get involved in the work of IFLA. Here, as so often, Bob showed his wonderful ability to be relevant, to the point and amusing – all at the same time.

He had the unfortunately all too rare gift of immediately understanding an issue or problem and then working to find a solution or route to follow – always with analytical skills, humour and, above all, respect for others.

Bob's support for the NPDG continued over the years, and I always felt very privileged that we had his backing and interest when we met at IFLA events and meetings.

Later as Director of EBLIDA I would appreciate Bob's support, advice and friendship in my attempts to steer the organisation (of which CILIP is a key member) in the right direction.

As EBLIDA is based in The Hague, as is IFLA, we were able to meet many times in our favourite bar in the city, where issues of copyright, freedom of expression, digitisation policies, and much more were discussed over some rather excellent local beers.

The international library community has lost one of its most colourful and intelligent personalities, and many of us have lost a good friend. Bob will be sorely missed and not easily forgotten by those of us who knew him well.

*Andrew Cranfield  
Director, European Bureau  
of Library, Information and  
Documentation Associations,  
2006–2009*



cilip

Chartered Institute of  
Library and Information  
Professionals

ILIG

The International  
Library and Information  
Group of CILIP

## ILIG International Award, 2011

ILIG is inviting nominations for the 2011 ILIG International Award for making a difference in libraries and information services outside the UK.

The deadline for receipt of completed nominations is 31 May 2011 and any CILIP member may make a nomination.

This annual prize is awarded to a person, group or committee, which has made a real difference to a community through their work in library and information services in countries outside the UK.

The nominee will be or will have recently been working overseas in the library and information sector and the award will recognize an initiative that is either current or has been completed within the last year. Precedence will be given to those who have not already received recognition for their work, e.g. by national organizations or publicity. Any person or group, except members of the current and immediate past ILIG Committees, is eligible.

They may be of any nationality and need not be professionally trained librarians.

Previous awards have been made to:

**Vimbai Hungwe**, for services to health information worldwide, and

**Jane Kinney Meyers**, for her work with the Lubuto Library Project in Zambia. (Jointly, 2010)

**Dr Ruwan Gamage**, for his development of the Sri Lanka Library Friends discussion group. (2009)

**Mr Gray Nyali**, in recognition of the way he has developed and taken library and information services out to a large number of people throughout Malawi. (2008)

Further details are available through

<<http://www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/special-interest-groups/international/awards/Pages/newintaward.asp>>

The 2011 award will be made in June.

There will be a cash prize of £100, plus one year's free subscription to *Focus*, ILIG's journal.

To make a nomination, please complete a proposal form, which can be requested from the Secretary of ILIG by e-mail to <[ilig@cilip.org.uk](mailto:ilig@cilip.org.uk)> or by mail to Anne Powell, INASP, 60 St Aldates, Oxford, OX1 1ST, UK

The deadline for receipt of completed nominations is 31 May 2011.

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## ILIG INFORMALS AND MEETINGS

### **ILIG Informals are free.**

They provide an excellent opportunity to find out about international LIS issues in a relaxed setting, and to meet like-minded professionals.

- ❖ refreshments are provided
- ❖ networking is encouraged
- ❖ everyone is welcome

They are held at  
CILIP, 7 Ridgmount Street, London, WC1E 7AE (unless otherwise stated)  
on Wednesdays from 6.00p.m. to 7.45 p.m.

### **Forthcoming in 2010 and 2011**

***Wednesday, 8 December:*** Christmas Quiz

***Wednesday, 9 February:*** Annual General Meeting,  
followed by a talk by the new CILIP President, Brian Hall

***Wednesdays, 13 April, 8 June, 12 October:*** TBA

**Look for more information and updates on**  
<<http://www.cilip.org.uk/ilig>>

or contact Alice Tyler <[a.m.tyler@btinternet.com](mailto:a.m.tyler@btinternet.com)>

Tel.: +44 (0)116 275 1379

or e-mail <[ilig@cilip.org.uk](mailto:ilig@cilip.org.uk)>.

