

LONDON CLIP

Newsletter for CILIP in London

Idea Store Whitechapel

After months of anticipation and controversy in the London press, Tower Hamlets' flagship Idea Store in Whitechapel opened on 22 September on schedule.



With cutting edge architecture by David Adjaye, the Store boasts an adult lending library with DVDs and CDs

for hire, classrooms offering courses for every interest, children's and reference libraries, a café, free Internet access, specialist teaching spaces for dance and complementary therapies and a crèche for the children of readers.

Idea Store Whitechapel will complement the two existing stores, in Crisp Street and Bow, which already attract over 30,000 visitors each per month, achieving more than three times the number of visitors of the two libraries they replaced.

The former Whitechapel library building will continue to be available to be enjoyed by the local community as a result of Whitechapel Art Gallery's plans for expansion in the future.

2012 Olympic Games

The success of the London Olympic Games bid for 2012 presents London's archives, libraries and museums with a unique opportunity, according to ALM London. The organisation believes that a key aspect of success in negotiating a strong role for the sector in the planning and development of the Games (as well as in its legacy) will be to ensure that there is a co-ordinated and unified voice for the sector in leading negotiations with the bid company and shortly the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG).

ALM London and Museum of London have organised an initial round table discussion to start to scope out how the sector can play an active and positive part in the preparations and run-up to 2012.

Black Poets Ink

Black Poets Ink is the latest reader development project in the programme London Libraries Recommend.

Launched in Black History Month in partnership with the GLA, the project focuses on published and performance poetry by Black writers.

Libraries across the capital have a selection of books and CDs for readers to explore the verse of a range of poets, from the world-famous Maya Angelou and Linton Kwesi Johnson to the newer faces of Phenzwaan and Zena Edwards. Black Poets Ink will include a library-based programme of creative writing workshops in association with the literature development agency Spread the Word.

More information at www.londonlibraries.org.uk/read/

Fashion Lives

Fashion Lives, a new exhibition at the British Library, brings together a collection of post-war fashion leaders who have defined their profession and played a unique role in shaping the fashion industry as we know it today.

Get London Reading

The Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL) and the London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA) have launched the ALCL literature strategy, 'Get London Reading'. The strategy was launched at a seminar to explore audience development through reading promotions. The seminar, which was co-hosted by ALCL and LLDA, was followed by a reception with a speech from David Herbert (below).



Curated by Alistair O'Neill from London College of Fashion (LCF), the exhibition draws on the Oral History of British Fashion interviews from the National Life Story Collection at the British Library's Sound Archive. Fashion Lives is on exhibit from 11 November 2005 until 7 February 2006.

Rising from the Rubble

John Lake reports on a talk by Premila Gamage on the Tsunami affected libraries in Sri Lanka on 24 August

The human and community devastation created by the Tsunami of 26 December 2005 is already well documented, but Premila Gamage of the Sri Lankan Library Association (SLLA) provided details of how the disaster had destroyed over 60 public libraries on the south and east coasts of Sri Lanka. The meeting, which was held at CILIP HQ, was organised by the Career Development Group (CDG) for London and the South East and the International Library and Information Group.

The SLLA is a small member-based organisation of just over 400 members. With limited funds, their response to rebuild the infrastructure

of affected communities had to be very focused and pragmatic. They selected four libraries where they could make the most impact where there was still a library building in place to inhabit even if all the stock, furniture and equipment had been destroyed. This was a carefully chosen strategy since the rebuilding of libraries will take a long time to be agreed through the local political and administrative authorities and in any case would take significant financing.

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John Lake & Premila Gamage

Around the World on a Library Degree

Ian Snowley celebrates Phil Bradley's talk on 14 September



The upstairs room of the Sekforde Arms was packed to capacity on a warm September evening, to hear Internet consultant Phil Bradley tell his life story in an entertaining and illuminating style.

Phil studied at PNL (Polytechnic of North London), where he gained a Librarianship degree and a wife (Jill was in the audience to verify some of the wilder tales). After PNL, he began work at the British Council. Phil confessed that he had wanted to be a librarian since the age of 13 - but had never worked as what he considered as a 'real' librarian (though I think answering written enquiries for the British Council Library does count). This early ambition wasn't because of a love of books - far from it, but instead it came from what Phil described as 'an interest in knowing how to find things out'.

It was the British Council (BC) that started Phil on the 'globetrotting' lifestyle he enjoys today (having visited 20% of the world - as verified by the website www.world66.com). In fact 'enjoys' isn't really the right word: Phil said that despite all the travel he's undertaken it isn't a big interest for him.

His role at the British Council saw him providing training to groups of library staff around the world, and at one point being called upon to deliver what he had learned on his four-year library course in just two weeks.

By the mid-1980s Phil had heard about a new technology - CD-ROM - and, recognising its potential to store and distribute vast quantities of data, tried to get the BC interested. They

weren't ready for it, so Phil left, joining the fledgling SilverPlatter as UK & European Technical Support Director (as a team of one) working on the basis that a librarian was best placed to take on this new role. This led to many happy years installing CD-ROM drives, and providing the early support for this new area of information storage and retrieval.

In 1992 Phil picked up on another new technology, the Internet. In fact Phil claims a good track-record in spotting the potential of new areas - but not quite soon enough to make his fortune (he says). He also began working part-time, spending the rest of his time delivering training courses for TFPL - including their first Internet course in 1994. After a while the other work took over and he left SilverPlatter to strike out into the potentially lonely and risky world of the self-employed.

In fact, thanks to some careful planning (building up savings in advance and the fact that Jill kept working), he managed the transition very successfully, and seems very happy being in paid work two days a week (or is it one? - some dispute on this).

A major part of Phil's effort in establishing himself to potential clients is his website (www.philb.com) which acts as a showcase for his knowledge and skills, featuring a range of articles and useful resources. He enjoys writing, and his many books have proved to be very popular and useful in attracting new business. His latest is the third edition of the *Advanced Internet Searchers Handbook* (Facet Publishing 2004).

Phil ended with a quick overview of some new and emerging Internet developments: weblogs; file-sharing sites such as Flickr; Internet telephony; the Google Wallet; and the move by Yahoo, Microsoft and Google to create communities of users.

His closing plea was for librarians to 'get involved' and influence these developments.

This short report really can't do justice to a very packed life (with much more to come I'm sure), his interaction with the audience nor to the great warmth with which Phil was thanked at the end of his talk. If you missed the talk, try the website or one of his courses for the full Phil Bradley experience.

E-Learning

Tegwen Williams reports on the Sekforde Arms meeting of 12 July

Elizabeth Malone is Head of E-Strategy and Collection Management at Kingston University, dividing her time between the organisation and development of electronic resources and the printed collections. Her primary role is to promote the use of new technologies through liaison with library and teaching staff so that they can benefit the university as a whole.

In 2000, e-learning was first introduced at Kingston with the testing of the Blackboard system. A strategic rollout was planned and the aim was to have supporting materials available for all modules over a three-year rollout. This was incorporated into the University's Learning & Teaching Strategy. Subsequently, the desire to move beyond just supporting materials has led to the development of the SeSL (Sustainable e-Supported Learning) project. Kingston's adoption of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has proved a good example of how academics and librarians can work together.

A VLE is an opportunity for these two groups to use their common skills, particularly those that involve the presentation of ideas. For example, librarians are frequently involved in sessions on research methods, showing students how to evaluate resources and helping to demonstrate the world beyond Google! These skills are especially suited to the e-learning environment and have given the librarians a chance to shine. Librarians can also use their knowledge to help explain the advantages that technology can bring, without scaring off the academics by being techies. They also have an understanding of student behaviour, and are often considered sympathetic and objective when dealing with student needs.

To begin with, the work on the VLE was very varied in terms of the kind of information available and the way it was presented. Material like course descriptions, lecture notes, reading lists and e-journal and e-book links was commonplace, but there was also a need for more challenging, interactive and audio-visual content to be developed so that the full capability of Blackboard could be used.

In order to develop this more challenging material, SeSL Days were instigated. These comprise a preparatory

meeting and a one-day event, focusing on the creation of a specific element of e-learning. They use the wider course team, including the library staff.

Educational technologists direct the initial meeting and try to identify what the team wants to achieve and the resources required; they establish the specific team for the one-day event. In order for the day to be a success, it needs very clear aims.

The role of the librarian at the one-day event is to give an introduction to the library - showing what it can provide and the assistance that can be given. Librarians' advice is most often welcomed as they have a very good knowledge of the resources available. Additionally they can help with the navigation of these resources, copyright information and also offer constructive criticism!

The academics treat the SeSL days as a learning opportunity and as such it has meant an increase in communication between the various parties involved. The course team does, however, need to be realistic as to what can be achieved within a single SeSL day and, as such, planning the day and having clear objectives is essential. Librarians have seen an increase in the part they play in the whole e-learning process and have developed a greater understanding of course development. It has been a chance for them to learn and to promote themselves outside their department. There has been a knock-on effect on their own teaching methods to the students. Overall providing support to the days is seen as a key part of the subject librarian's role, building closer relationships with teaching staff. Although support for e-learning may have originally been seen as an add-on service within the work of the library's subject teams, it is now seen as core work.

Throughout their experiences of SeSL, the librarians have had some varied encounters: filming on location in Kingston with the Live Arts team, using maps for testing linguistics students on regional accents and assisting in obtaining copyright clearance for illustrations from a 1950s manual that was to be put online.

The key to the success of the SeSL project is good communication. It has strengthened the relationship between the librarians and academics. They have improved their links with all faculties and the library. Above all, the status of the library staff has been enhanced and they are now more likely to be regarded as key players in e-learning development.

A Phoenix for the Millennium

Ralph Adam describes the Branch outing to Norwich

How did you spend the balmy day of 16 August? In Norwich? If you weren't there, you missed a real treat, for that was the destination for this year's CILIP in London August trip.

The visit to Norwich centred on the Millennium Forum: it rose from the ashes of the former Central Library which burnt down in 1994 with the loss of 170,000 books. This was a great chance to go 'behind the scenes'.

Designed by Sir Michael Hopkins and opened in 2001, this striking building provides a focal point for the city and contrasts with the ancient castle. It was the major Millennium project for the East of England - a partnership of the private, public and educational sectors. Administration is by an independent, self-financing charitable Trust.



Norwich Millennium Forum

The spectacular structure forms a horse-shoe and has a very unusual all-glass facade. It is much more than a library, incorporating tourist, adult education and council information services and a learning centre as well as state-of-the-art BBC studios. The Forum also hosts concerts, jazz brunches, open-air films and stand-up comedy nights.

We met up in the Forum's open-air coffee bar and were immediately whisked into the Library. Robin Hall, the Trust's Chief Executive, gave a fascinating account of the building's history and the complex financial and political relationships between the City and County Councils underlying its development. Of the £31.5m lottery grant (matching support came from local authorities and business), Mr Hall said: 'Without it the Forum could not possibly have been built.'

Next came Gary Standley, a former radio reporter, who is now a producer at the BBC's Voices multimedia centre (housed in the

Forum). His hope is for the centre to be used by people of all ages in exciting ways (recent projects have involved school-children recording stories of Norfolk life-boats, digital autobiographies of local Filipino workers, a fan's-eye view of Norwich City football club and a proposed stall-by-stall film detailing life in Norwich Market). Gary emphasised the important role of libraries in the BBC's activities nationally.

The third speaker was Area Librarian Jan Holden. The Forum is Norwich's fourth library in recent times. While Robin had covered the theory, explaining how the Forum was designed around the library, Jan took a more practical approach, giving us a librarian's-eye view of running a trust-administered library. She explained such things as how the fire had re-focused the library's role and the rationale behind its stock balance.

We were then taken on a swift tour of the library, with stops in the Heritage Centre (local history), children's library (which accounts for 25% of total issues) and the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library - founded in memory of the US servicemen stationed locally during World War II. I was impressed by how well the building's learning and council information services are integrated with the library.

Our final Forum stop was at Origins, an 'award-winning' experience, promoting itself as 'Norfolk's most amazing attraction'. It is an interactive multimedia local-history museum.

We still had some energy left for a brief visit to Norwich's splendid Romanesque cathedral and cloisters (the close is England's largest and is much-filmed) before heading for well-earned refreshments in the Compleat Angler, an atmospheric riverside pub.



CILIP members in Norwich

Perhaps you've got suggestions for future ideas for Summer trips. If so do, please, let us know.

A longer version of this article appears on our website at www.cilip.org.uk/branches/byregion/london/events/previous

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Nevertheless, the projects have taken some seven months to come to fruition due to the long work involved. The four libraries chosen are: Lakshman Thabrew Memorial Public Library in Balapitiya; Vidyaloka Vidyalaya School (Science) Library in Galle; Thambivilul Maha



Batticaloa Library

Vidyalaya English Library, in Thirukkivil, Ampara; Batticaloa Public Library (Children's Library) in Batticaloa District.

These libraries had minor damage to buildings but needed to be cleaned, painted and repaired.

The collections that were damaged by water or washed away needed to be replaced. Books in the Sinhala, Tamil and English languages belonging to the following categories had to be acquired: children's literature; reference materials (print & electronic formats); general reading; leisure reading; and supplementary materials for schools (relating to classroom teaching). There is also a commitment to provide ICT training and put library expertise back into the communities. All of this has taken considerable time since communications have been understandably difficult in the country as has securing the finances for the projects.

Needless to say the work has barely begun and we applaud the work of CDG and other library bodies in seeking to assist the affected countries. CILIP in London is collecting donations at each of our meetings (see report elsewhere in this newsletter) towards the CILIP fund-raising campaign (www.cilip.org.uk) and will be discussing what more we can do by way of mentoring, twinning libraries and assisting with training. The devastation has affected the cultural and professional knowledge (as well as human life) and these need to be built back and sustained over the long term. For more details about the SLA project visit their website www.nsf.ac.lk/slla/.

Tsunami Collection

CILIP in London continues its collection for libraries affected by the Tsunami. The meeting of 13 September raised £20.46. This amounts to a total of £113.88, including the £93.42 previously raised.

Holistic Internet Searching

From Ed Chamberlain, Systems Assistant - The London Library

I read your article on Internet searching and the work of Alison Stacey with interest, but must take issue with some of the detail in the final paragraph.

You are correct in your statement that the open source web browser Firefox is an alternative to using bundled browsing software such as Internet Explorer (although this was never stated in the article), and is currently estimated to be in use by 10% of web users in the UK alone (source www.spreadfirefox.com/?q=node/view/17468). What I must take issue with is the statement that 'The computer programming language Python must be used to run Firefox and that this can be downloaded from various locations'.

I've been using Firefox since version 0.6 and have never once encountered a need to run or understand the Python programming language purely for web browsing. I fear your article may give some people the impression that it might, and would put them off from trying a simple, free and easy to use piece of software. If this was specifically in relation to automated searching and the use of Python scripts for form entry and data retrieval, then it should have been clarified further. You also referred to Firefox and its use with regards to 'overcom(ing) issues of bias' but did not specifically the nature of said issues. Further clarification would be most welcome.

Alison Stacey responds

Your correspondent is absolutely correct in taking issue with the statement in the final paragraph of the report. Python is certainly not needed to run Firefox and I did not intend to imply that it was. I do not want to put anyone off trying Firefox. I mentioned Firefox merely as an example of a program which through its tabbed browsing feature enables the computer to take on the burden of some of the work involved in searching the web, leaving the user free to get on with a

different task. I talked about Firefox in the context of illustrating that much of the computer's processing power is being wasted when we use it for Internet searching. We can harness that power to expedite our own Internet searching, and the Firefox illustration was one simple example of this which led on to my brief discussion of writing one's own programs to automate aspects of the searching process.

The final paragraph of the report implies, perhaps unintentionally, that Firefox can help resolve some of the issues of bias. Your correspondent asked for further clarification. Unfortunately there has been another misunderstanding here. In my talk I mentioned that writing one's own automated scripts (using the Python programming language or another programming language) can help to address issues of bias in Internet searching. I did not mean to indicate that using Firefox may resolve issues of bias. Writing programs to spider the web and/or analyse retrieved data from the web can assist in resolving issues of bias in a number of ways. For example, such programs help to address issues of 'user-imposed bias' (that is, the bias which results from the choice of certain search terms or choice of certain links to follow etc), since the precise procedure for searching is specified at the outset. This does not eliminate user-imposed bias but it does at least make it transparent. Automation (e.g. with a Python program) also addresses the issue of bias in the sense that it enables much more comprehensive data-retrieval from the web than would be possible using a 'by-hand' approach. Clearly the more data one can gather pertaining to a research question, the less likely one is to be unduly influenced by any particular biased view. There is much more detail on automation and dealing with bias and inaccuracy in Chapters 3 and 4 of our book (*Effective Information Retrieval from the Internet: an advanced user's guide* by Alison Stacey and Adrian Stacey, Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2004).

A full version of both these letters can be viewed on the CILIP in London section of the CILIP website.

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