

# LONDON CLIP

Newsletter for CILIP in London



T.S.Eliot (Credit John Gay and Faber Archive)

## In a Bloomsbury Square

An exhibition at the British Library explores T.S. Eliot's work as a publisher. Marking the 80th anniversary of Faber and Faber, the exhibition - 'In a Bloomsbury Square': T.S. Eliot the Publisher - sheds new light on T.S. Eliot's roles as publisher, editor and author.

Bringing together for the first time material from the British Library's collections along with items from the Faber Archive and the Eliot Estate, the exhibition includes original manuscripts, correspondence, artworks and unique audio recordings, some of which have never been on public display before.

In the 1930s and beyond, Eliot used his roles as editor and publisher to promote modernist writing, successfully lending it authority, asserting its significance and making it both respectable and accessible to a wider public. In his long career with Faber and Faber, he exercised a profound and largely unparalleled influence on English literature. As well as being a published author himself, Eliot possessed sound business sense, an acute grasp of how literary reputations were made and a much-envied skill in writing effective publishers' blurbs. Throughout his career, he was indefatigable in his commitment to nurturing those writers whom he believed to be of lasting significance.

The exhibits include journal entries by Ted Hughes as well as letters to T.S. Eliot by W.H. Auden and Virginia Wolfe.

The exhibition, which is in the Folio Society Gallery, continues until 6 December 2009.

## New name for the NPO

The British Library Preservation Advisory Centre is the new name for the National Preservation Office (NPO). The change of name follows the NPO's recent integration with the British Library Collection Care department and heralds the start of a new period of development for preservation services.

The Preservation Advisory Centre will build on the NPO's achievements of the past 25 years, and the successes of the recently opened BL Centre for Conservation, providing a focus for preservation and increasing opportunities for libraries and archives of all types and sizes to equip themselves with the skills and knowledge to meet the challenges of caring for collections in the 21st century.

Offering training, free information services and its unique Preservation Assessment Survey, the Preservation Advisory Centre provides practical support on preservation management issues to address the major threats to the UK's library and archive collections identified in the NPO's 2006 report, *Knowing the Need*.

Activities span a range of free and charged services including: free information resources in print and to download; preservation training courses; Preservation Assessment Survey services; preservation visits; and an enquiry service.

Caroline Peach has been appointed to lead the organisation in its new form. Recently interim Chief Executive of Icon, the Institute of Conservation, she brings experience of working at London Metropolitan Archives, Oxford University Library Services and the London Museums Hub.

## Story of London Festival

Libraries joined with museums and archives in the Story of London Festival. Held during June 2009, the festival was funded through the MLA London and the London Museums Hub grant programme. Some 21 projects covered 20 London Boroughs and attracted nearly 6,000 visitors or participants: The events included exhibitions, family history days, lectures, storytelling, hands-on interactive involvement, sing-alongs and dance. Many new partnerships were created, existing partnerships strengthened and new long-term projects developed.

## Youth Mark award

Wood Green Library has achieved a Youth Mark award following an assessment of its services carried out by young people between April and July 2009.

The assessors found the staff friendly and approachable. They regarded the library as a place where young people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures mixed happily and felt safe and comfortable.

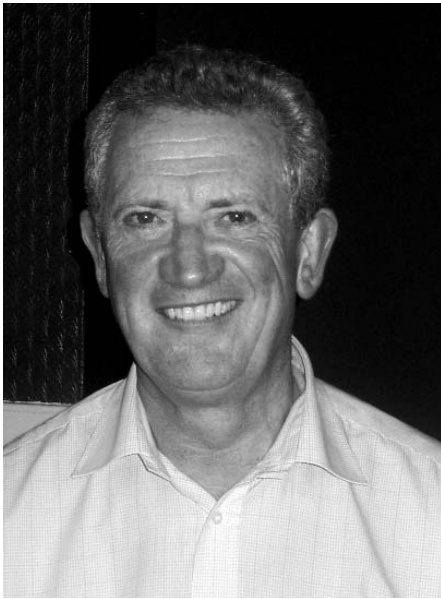
The library has a separate teen section, which the young library users felt was an advantage. They liked the fact that the local Connexions service was next door.

The users recommended that young people should be engaged in helping manage the library's teen-focused website and developing the content.



Wood Green Library YM Presentation

Comedy as Freedom of Expression



*Reports on the Sekforde Arms meeting on 8 September 2009*

Our speaker, Paul Sturges, Emeritus Professor of Library Studies at Loughborough University, gave an entertaining talk with a serious theme, freedom of expression. He started by reminding us that cartoons about Mohammed published in the Danish press had led to riots, loss of life and damage to property. Sometimes, comedy is a serious business.

He had interviewed a number of stand-up comedians as the basis of research that would be published in the *Journal of Documentation*. He reckoned that there was a difference between humour, which he felt was the human response to an anomaly, and comedy, in particular jokes which have a narrative to set up a situation and a punch line. The modern joke is a fairly recent invention judging from the extract from a renaissance joke book he quoted from. It also seems to be culturally specific – the English language seems to be productive of jokes whereas there are few good African ones, as an example from the Zanzibar joke book proved.

Jokes were often the result of hard work and effort and are indeed almost a form of intellectual property. One comedian, Mike Reid, refused to continue his act while a member of the audience was taking notes. They can be researched. Ken Dodd, when he visits Leeds, goes to the library to look at their collection of old joke books. They usually need to be rehearsed and comedians try their material out on each other. Prof Sturges had doubts

whether there was such a thing as improvised comedy.

There can be a conflict between the right of freedom of expression and the right not to be offended. Some remarks that purported to be jokes were not jokes at all - just insults. The Vatican had threatened to sue one Italian comedian who made fun of the Pope. Roy Chubby Brown has defended the comedian's right to offend.

Prof Sturges had found that most comedians did have topics they regarded as off limits, for example race and politics, whereas other potentially hot topics such as religion and paedophilia were acceptable. Comedians had different rules of thumb as to what is acceptable. One had the rule of thumb that if three out of five audiences laughed the joke stayed in the act. In general, Prof Sturges found comedians were rather cautious in what they were prepared to cover. He left us with the question 'How does the information profession cope with what is acceptable?'

*Charles Harvey*

Paul Sturges is Professor Emeritus, University of Loughborough's Department of Information Science and Professor Extraordinary, University of Pretoria. He is well known for his published works in the field of intellectual freedom, privacy and library management, and access to information in developing countries.

Paul's talk 'Comedy as freedom of expression' was based on the article that is soon to be appearing in the *Journal of Documentation*. His talk covered the research he has carried out to discover how stand-up comedians handle controversial topics which he related to censorship within library stock selection.

Paul's first question was 'What is comedy?' He defined it as a human response to an anomaly. Jokes are the vehicle for comedy.

His next question was therefore 'What is a joke?' Jokes come in a number of formats. Familiar types include anything from one-word jokes to highly structured stories, set-ups, catchphrases, riddles and perceived spontaneity. They can be in the form of stand-up, pictures, film, etc. We are more familiar with the modern format for a joke: a set-up followed by a punch line. However, in renaissance times there were no punch lines.

What makes the perfect joke? The comedians that Paul had asked believed the answer was all down to timing. However, Paul argued that timing was only the presentation. The idea of what we perceive to be a joke is highly influenced by our social and cultural status and upbringing. A joke in one country could be seen as hilarious to one population, and not witty at all to the next. He believed that the perfect joke is one that is not culturally tied. His example was 'A man spends the night drinking then passes out in the street. When he awakes he is unsure of his surroundings and cannot tell what the time is. He sees a passer-by and asks – Is that the sun or the moon in the sky? The passer-by responds – 'Sorry but I am a stranger here too'.

What is not a joke? Some jokes are not jokes because they upset particular groups of people. In the same respect, people can intentionally hide insults as jokes to give them licence to hurt others. Sometimes the words can be structured into a joke with a set-up and a punch line but the result can still be an insult.

Is there a right to offend? Freedom of Expression insists that we are all allowed to speak our minds. Comedians do not shy away from this fact, relishing potentially sensitive areas and subject matter that may offend certain members of an audience. They can even see it as their duty to do so. For example, satirists use comedy to expose the stupidity and vices of those in power, maybe even hoping to change the opinions or views of the audience as they do so.

Paul asked his comedians if there were topics which they avoided. Most said that they would avoid race. However he found that religion was a favourite topic for most comedians with gender being a favourite topic for female stand-up.

Finally he asked 'How do we decide what is acceptable?' Paul believes that very little of comedians' work is improvised. A big part of assessing a joke is by trying it out on peers and audiences. One of the comedians Paul spoke to told him that she would try a joke five times, and if it succeeds three times then she would keep it in her routine. Another said he would keep a joke in a routine even if only one person in the audience laughed, although this is quite an extreme attitude. Another extreme response mentioned was to reject a joke even if only one person objects. Here he

referenced the Ross and Brand controversy. He said that approximately 42,000 complaints were received regarding the controversial comedy call they made to Andrew Sachs' answer phone on Brand's BBC Radio 2 show. Whilst this sounds like a huge number, when you compare it to the listening figures of about 3 million, it comes to just over 1% of listeners. Paul asked if it was right that the BBC should have bowed to the pressure of such a minority of listeners by suspending both comedians, resulting in the resignation of Brand from his show.

It was this question that he felt was particularly important in relating to the library environment. He asked if it was more important to maintain a permanent record of information over the risk of offending a minority. Even controversial information should be accessible to all without censorship, with associations such as the ALA (American Library Association) lending guidelines and support to librarians in such fields of controversial material.

After Paul's thought provoking discussion, with both non-CILIP and CILIP professionals, we thought it was also important to mention the delights of the pub grub which always accompanies the meetings! A great reward for all!

*Elizabeth Peagram & Katherine Scott*

## End of year meeting

John Bowman will be the speaker at CILIP in London's end of year meeting. John has created a wiki based on W.A. Munford's *Who was Who in British Librarianship 1800-1985*, a directory of chief librarians and deputies who had died by 1985. It is at <http://newmunford.wikispaces.com/>. He will invite you to join the wiki to help bring it up to date, add new names and widen its scope.

The meeting will be held at CILIP HQ (7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE) on 9 December 2009 from 17.00 to 20.00, with refreshments from 17.30.

If you wish to come (those not members of the Branch are also invited), please (1) notify Edward Dudley at [dudl@btinternet.com](mailto:dudl@btinternet.com) or phone 020 7628 3523, and (2) look at names in the wiki and consider new entries.

## BME LIS staff in London

CILIP membership figures suggest both that there is under-representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff in library and information science (LIS) services and that the problem is particularly acute in London.

CILIP in London commissioned CIBER at UCL to undertake a short study exploring reasons for this under-representation.

### Method and sample

In-depth interviews were used to elicit the issues that may mitigate against BME people as actual or potential LIS workers. Nine such staff from a variety of information environments, including public, academic and specialist libraries, were interviewed about their experiences of being information workers.

### Findings

Findings suggested the following factors were all considered by the various respondents to play a part in creating barriers to actual and potential BME LIS workers:

#### *Qualifications:*

Overseas qualifications may not be recognised in the UK. However, qualifications are not so important at the beginning of a LIS career, although people not originally from the UK, may not realise this.

#### *Alienation from career:*

This includes a lack of books in ethnic languages or information on community activities for specific communities, and of information for BME library users. This results in little with which people can identify. A lack of representation was also noted - staff are predominantly white and middle class.

#### *Cultural differences:*

BME staff may come from cultures or societies where there are fewer libraries and where belonging to or frequenting a library is not the norm.

#### *Lack of support:*

Employment agencies were perceived as not offering enough support, and there may also be a

lack of support and encouragement generally from employment agents and potential employers.

#### *Language barriers:*

Some people are knowledgeable and skilled, but find it difficult to express themselves in English. Being bilingual can be advantageous, however, in providing alternative materials and assisting ethnic library users.

#### *Perceived racism:*

The problem of racism was mentioned by only a minority of interviewees. Others felt that prejudice or discrimination may simply be people's perceptions.

#### *Immigrant rights problems:*

Immigration and visa problems were mentioned by two of the four interviewees born outside the UK.

#### *Added 'life' pressures on immigrants:*

Such pressures include having to study more than might otherwise be the case - the language, or for additional UK qualifications, for example. They are often denied benefits, too, and may therefore need to undertake overtime for the extra remuneration they accrue.

## Conclusion

This study has been small-scale and qualitative, but has raised a number of important issues which provide ample reasons why LIS may not be the most attractive career for a BME person.

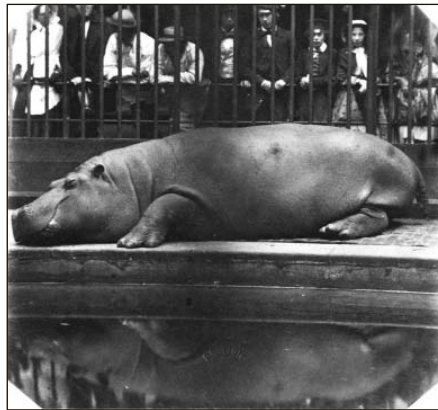
Several questions emerge from the findings, such as whether there are different problems or issues specific to LIS workers from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. If so, the question is raised of how these individual differences might be addressed. A second question is the extent to which the same problems highlighted in this study apply to other areas of the UK. Much still needs to be done to address the issues raised in this report, both in terms of research and possible practical action.

The full report, which is written by Peter Williams and David Nicholas, is available on the CILIP in London website at [www.cilip.org.uk/branches/byregion/london](http://www.cilip.org.uk/branches/byregion/london).

## 19th century photographs

Points of View: Capturing the 19th Century in Photographs is an exhibition of images from the dawn of photography. Over 250 rarely-seen images trace the development of photography from a gentleman's pursuit to a mass pastime.

The exhibition examines the development and influence of photography, from its invention in 1839 up to the growth of a popular amateur market in the early 20th century. Rarely displayed items from the British Library's photography collection will show how photography has played a critical role as the primary means of visual expression in the modern age.



Comte de Montizon, *The hippopotamus at the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, c. 1855* (British Library)



William Henry Fox Talbot - *An oak tree in winter - c. 1842-43* (British Library)



An accompanying events programme includes:

- Late at The Library: Victorian Values (Friday 20 November) - a photography themed, and burlesque flavoured night of performances, sideshows, music and slightly twisted Victoriana.
- Professor Heard's Peerless Victorian Magic Lantern Show (Sunday 29 November) - an introduction to an entertainment massively popular before the advent of recorded sound and moving image.
- Capture Kings Cross (27 February 2010). A mass participation event, creatively photographing the area

around the British Library and the Kings Cross development.

The exhibition continues until 7 March 2010 in the PACCAR Gallery at the British Library.

## FUTURE EVENTS 2009-2010

### EVENING MEETINGS

These meetings are held in The Sekforde Arms, Sekforde Street, London EC1, 6.30pm.

Contact [cilip@london.com](mailto:cilip@london.com)

See website for details

## OTHER EVENTS

27 November 2009

Web 2.0: what it can do for you (Libraries for Nursing Study Day), Royal College of Nursing, London. Contact [www.cilip.org.uk/special-interestgroups/bysubject/lfn/events](http://www.cilip.org.uk/special-interestgroups/bysubject/lfn/events)

27 November 2009

Engaging the disengaged: Developing services to young people during recessionary times, NEETs Executive Briefing, 7 Ridgmount Street, London. Contact [www.cilip.org.uk/training](http://www.cilip.org.uk/training)

30 November 2009

'Doing more with less?' Preservation Advisory Centre forum on skills development, British Library Conference Centre. Contact [www.bl.uk/npo/forum.html](http://www.bl.uk/npo/forum.html)

1-3 December 2009

Online Information 2009, Olympia Grand Hall, London. Contact [www.online-information.co.uk](http://www.online-information.co.uk)

2 December 2009

Managing the library and archive environment, Preservation Advisory Centre training day, British Library Centre for Conservation. Contact [www.bl.uk/npo/environment.html](http://www.bl.uk/npo/environment.html)

2-4 December 2009

5th International Digital Curation Conference (IDCC) - Moving to Multi-Scale Science: Managing Complexity and Diversity, Millennium Gloucester Hotel, London. Contact [www.dcc.ac.uk/events/dcc-2009](http://www.dcc.ac.uk/events/dcc-2009)

9 December 2009

John Bowman on a wiki based on W.A. Munford's *Who was Who in British Librarianship 1800-1985* (CILIP in London's end of year meeting), 7 Ridgmount Street, London. Contact Edward Dudley [dudl@btinternet.com](mailto:dudl@btinternet.com) or 020 7628 3523

10 December 2009

Data Protection 2009, Savoy Place, London (PSCA International conference and exhibition). Contact Mike Agnew on 0161 832 7387

19-21 April 2010

London Book Fair, Earls Court. Contact [www.londonbookfair.co.uk/page.cfm/Action=Press/PressID=3/t=m](http://www.londonbookfair.co.uk/page.cfm/Action=Press/PressID=3/t=m)

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