

#LIBDEBATE: 'WHAT ARE LIBRARIES FOR?'

JESS HUMPHREYS

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GOT SOMETHING
TO SAY?

If you would like to suggest an article for Open Access please email the editor, Katharine Widdows at: kwiddows@rocketmail.com



Jess is based at Warwick University Library. Contact her on Twitter @jess_humphreys

Back in September I attended a lively debate on "What are Libraries for?" at the smart "Studio" in Birmingham city centre. It was a joint event, organized by CILIP West Midlands and The Birmingham Salon.

The development of the new Library of Birmingham, due to open in 2013, provided a number of areas for discussion including the

question surrounding future developments of libraries. The great thing about this debate is that it seemed to attract both librarians and non-librarians in equal measure. From a rough headcount around 70 to 80 people filled the room and there was a real buzz to proceedings.

The event began with talks from Brian Gambles, Assistant Director of Culture at Birmingham City Council and Andy Killeen, a local author. Both presented their visions and experiences of Libraries with Brian reflecting on the issues relevant to the development of the new Library of Birmingham and Andy providing a nostalgic insight into his use of libraries throughout his life.

The following debate was very impressive and lively. With the backdrop of a financial

crisis a number of questions focusing on the role of libraries in society were raised. The idea that in some instances buildings may have to be sacrificed to save library services was discussed, maybe more library services will find their way into different buildings, shopping centres and pubs?

Traditional views of the Library as a space for quiet contemplation and reading were discussed alongside ideas of the library as a community space for the exchange of ideas and knowledge. Another area of debate focused on the role of books within libraries, what sort of resources libraries should hold and whether we should rely on technology to find our information.

Getting the balance right to meet users needs is a challenge – libraries need to be centres for quiet contemplation, equipped with both physical and electronic resources, community space, exhibition space, space for learning and discovery, and space for inspiration. No pressure then!

The debate was great in engaging librarians and non-librarians with this issue and did not stay within the four walls – a number of people were following remotely and contributing to the discussions through Twitter. Already there have been lots of issues and ideas discussed in a number of related blog listings and the debate looks set to continue for some time to come.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: CILIP WEST MIDLANDS

The WM Branch needs enthusiastic people able to make a commitment to the future of our profession.

Elections are for Chair, Vice Chair and Honorary Secretary posts and at least 2 committee positions. Committee work is great for professional development, or when chartering or revalidating to boost your portfolio of evidence.

Whatever stage in your career, we could use your help. Commitment is 4-6 committee meetings a year currently held at Birmingham Central Library, and support for events.

Nomination forms: www.cilip.org.uk/wm must be returned by **Friday 26 November 2010** to: Margaret Fuller, Fire Services College, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos. GL56 0RH

Email: mfuller@fireservicecollege.ac.uk

COMMUNITY CONNECTION: A "BIG" PROJECT
HELEN O'BRIEN

"Community Connection" is a Birmingham Library and Archive Services project about the creation or refurbishment of five flexible, attractive library spaces, which will be used to encourage less confident people to become skilled library users.

The libraries involved are Erdington, Frankley, South Yardley, Ward End and Yardley Wood.

Late on in 2007 we heard we had been successful in applying for £1.4 million from the Big Lottery Fund's Community Libraries programme.



Ward End before

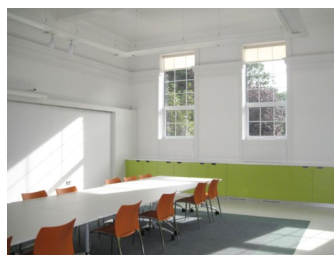
Did we get a big cheque in the next post with lots of noughts? Not quite. I was taken on as a long secondment initially to do

the next steps and then to see the project through to completion in 2011. BIG's funding regime required plenty of work before the cash actually sat in the coffers.

The first step was agreeing the form of words for our four outcomes and milestones, whilst simultaneously working on the business plan and five capital project delivery plans, one for each site. Whilst all this was going on an excellent external consultant, Helen Thomas of Book Communications, was wrestling with the

intricacies of writing a community engagement plan. The deadline was 14th April 2008. Everything was duly completed and several bankers' boxes were hefted into the BIG's Edgbaston HQ before the clock struck five.

So far, so good. Then we hit snags. For reasons which I won't bore you with our building work started nine months behind schedule! This of course means that the whole programme is now running nearly a year behind. The good news is that all our spaces are now completed, look wonderful, have been launched and are enjoying very high use. Volunteers are involved in a variety of ways to add value to the activities offered, but the real stars of this show are the staff, who despite dust, noise and cold have dreamed up



Ward End after

some wonderful ways to engage the less confident. We've had belly dancing and bhangra, mehndi, massage and manicures.

Great support has been gained from the formal Midlands network of grant recipients and the informal friendships that ignited. I feel that we are all learning from one another and trying to pass that learning on. Community engagement is tough!



Helen is the Project Manager for Community Connection, based at Birmingham Central.

"the real stars of this show are the staff, who despite dust, noise and cold have dreamed up some wonderful ways to engage the less confident"

CILIP WM COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS

BLOG:

The CILIP WM blog will keep you up to date on news and events from the committee in between issues of Open Access. We encourage readers to comment and would love to hear ideas from you for potential guest blog posts.

<http://communities.cilip.org.uk/blogs/cilipwestmidlands/>

CILIP EMAILS:

Register with the CILIP web site to get regular email updates including news from CILIP WM committee.

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

SOCIAL NETWORKING:

We are also on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/cilipwm>

And on Twitter. Follow @cilipwm. <http://twitter.com/CILIPWM>

WEB SITE:

Details of up and coming events and the contact details for committee members, along with other news from around the region can be found on our web pages at: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/wm>

WATCH OUT FOR...

Hustings Nov 16th 6pm: Come along to the Birmingham Studio and hear what some of the candidates for the CILIP elections (Vice President and Councillors) have to say—more details to follow on the blog.

West Mids Committee: Elections are happening **this month**, see front page for details.

Members Day 2011: We are currently planning our Member's Day and AGM for early 2011. Keep an eye on the blog for further news.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN WORCESTER?: ROGER FAIRMAN

On the 14th July a small group of people met in the Saracen's Head, Worcester for the first of what we hope will become a regular series of meetings under the title of ..*"What's going on in"* .

The members (and non-member) were able to talk about a range of issues and find out something about the Worcester Library & History Centre, a major library project taking place in Worcester.



Katharine Widdows, Phil Jones and Alison Taylor listen intently as Roger explains.

The minutes of a liaison group set up by the then University College Worcester and Worcestershire County Council record, for the 4th of February 2003, the genesis of the idea for a combined University / County facility. Seven years, and a lot of hard work later the project is well into the construction phase which will embody that vision, shared and nurtured by literally hundreds of people along the way, in concrete, wood and glass; ready to open its doors to the people of Worcestershire in 2012.

The project is believed to be globally unique. It will bring together five information based services with the aim of providing an integrated facility that will combine the main library of the University of Worcester, the Worcester Central Public Library, The Worcestershire County Record Office, the Worcestershire County Archaeology Service and the Worcester City Customer Service Centre (one-stop-shop for enquiries about local government services). Apart from the range of services involved, other significant elements of the project include: the high degree of integration; its desire to inspire users through high

quality architecture to explore services they have not used before; and its stringent environmental targets.

It was funded under the Public Finance Initiative (PFI) and building work commenced in February 2010 and is on schedule for the shell to be complete in May 2011. A live webcam, showing the construction in progress is available at <http://www.worcester-library.co.uk/>

Meanwhile staff from all areas are tackling the considerable challenges of bringing together the different services, to create an integrated customer experience that meets the differing needs of students, academics, family history researchers, children many more. For example the Children's library will have a floor area equivalent to a small (4 classroom) primary school and it is intended to develop a programme of activities that draws on the Public Library's strengths promoting early literacy and the University's depth of experience in early years health and education together with the specialist outreach activities of the Archaeology service and Record Office to offer a truly unique resource for local schools and children.

Further details of the project can be found on the website at: <http://www.wlhc.org.uk/index.html>



Artist's impression of how the Worcester Library and History Centre will look.

"The project is believed to be globally unique."



Roger is Library Services Developer at the University of Worcester & WebMaster for CILIP WM.

DUTCH TREAT : MIKE FREEMAN

During the course of a recent holiday in the Netherlands your International Relations Officer paid an informal visit to the new central public library of Amsterdam, Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (OBA). I say new, but in fact the OBA was opened in July 2007 and it still looks in mint condition. It can be found within the Oosterdok

regeneration area and like the new Library of Birmingham the OBA is squeezed into a narrow space close to the Central Station.



At a cost of 80 million Euros (seems

amazingly cheap to me!) the former Chief Government Architect of the Netherlands, Jo Coenen has devised a remarkably airy, spacious and ultra modern building, complete with stunning views over Amsterdam's waterways and harbour.

One key feature that struck me immediately was how good the internal lighting was, both for reading and general purposes – no scrabbling around with 40w bulbs here! The library utilises vast areas of glass on its 7 floors to take full advantage of the superb views and help general illumination levels.

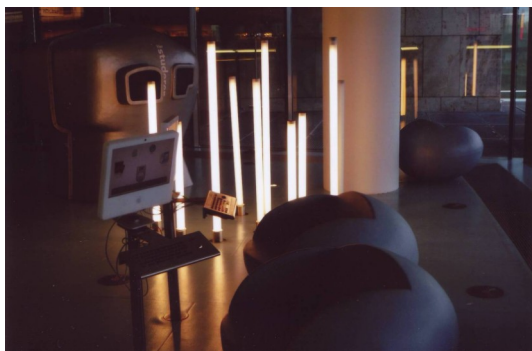


The architect has used a soothing and clever internal colour scheme of red, white and black and the care for the internal environment of the library and its ease of use and comfort is pre-eminent. The OBA is the largest public library in the Benelux and one of the largest in Europe. Lots of things delight the eye – over a thousand seats for readers, lavish IT/PC provision for users, the in-house library theatre, education and

conference rooms, 6 meeting rooms, well placed display areas and (typically Dutch) space to park 2000 bicycles!

Book borrowing and return is fully automated and self-service and the OBA appears to provide Library Advisors on every floor. Interestingly front of house staff wear uniform, a black ensemble with a fetching grey tabard.

Other notable features include the superb children's library, the rooftop terrace and restaurant, two cafes and an extensive international journals and newspapers collection. All this in an atmosphere of calm quiet purposeful activity.



The OBA's mission statement declares "We will become the supercharger of a world class cultural and informational meeting point" – a noble and inspiring sentiment indeed. So, next time you are in Amsterdam add the OBA to your visiting list and see a remarkable "library for the people and for the city" it is an eye -opener!

P.S. have you ever encountered a Central Public Library providing a piano for users in the lobby – so the sounds of Satie, Bach and Irving Berlin float around one's ears delightfully?



"The library utilises vast areas of glass on its 7 floors to take full advantage of the superb views and help general illumination levels"

Mike Freeman is the CILIP West Midlands International Relations Officer.

"Other notable features include the superb children's library, the rooftop terrace and restaurant, two cafes . . ."

YOUR CILIP WEST MIDLANDS COMMITTEE

A FOND FAREWELL TO DAVID VINER

David Viner, Chair of CILIP WM for the last year will be standing down in December after 6 years on the branch committee. David has worked tirelessly in various roles on the committee to support the work of CILIP WM. His wife is now expecting their first baby, and so committee work must make way for exciting new family times. No doubt we will still see him at events and hear from him via his blog and twitter.

The committee would like to thank David for all his work and effort and wish him all the best in his new adventures as a father.

A Few Words From David:

At the end of December I will be standing down from the branch committee. With the Call for Nominations going out at this time I wanted to briefly share with you what I have got out of being actively involved with the branch.

Committee work has given me a great opportunity to learn skills that I simply wouldn't have acquired in my day job.

In my time I've been Webmaster, Newsletter Editor and developed our Web 2.0 presence. One of the most exciting aspects of branch work for me has been organising and attending events, the pinnacle of which was the successful Library Debate we held recently. However, the regular stand we run at Warwick University Careers Fair has perhaps been the most rewarding. It is always reassuring when students make contact with you afterwards to thank you for your help!

That's just a taste of what I've worked on, it's not all about formal meetings! CILIP WM are looking to expand their program of events to provide more social/networking opportunities and want to continue developing and raising their profile online. Could you spare some time to help?

If you would like to help shape your professional body and make a difference to members in your area then joining the committee and offering your time is a great way to do that.

Feel free to get in touch with me or any member of the committee to find out more.



David can be contacted at:
dviner@solihull.gov.uk

“Committee work has given me a great opportunity to learn skills that I simply wouldn't have acquired in my day job.”

COMMITTEE PROFILE: JO ALCOCK—MARKETING OFFICER

What is your role in CILIP WM?

As Marketing Officer, I'm responsible for communication with CILIP West Midlands members. We utilise social web tools such as the [CILIP West Midlands blog](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Flickr](#); I manage those and our group email account. I attend as many relevant local events as I can to speak to our members to see how we can support them. I design fliers and publicise events, and am involved in event organisation. We're a relatively small committee, so there is opportunity to get involved in a number of different activities which is great experience.

When did you join the committee?

About a year ago – I first got involved by helping out on the LIS show exhibition stand last year, and became an official committee member at the beginning of this year.

What do you do in your day job?

I've recently started a new job at Evidence Base in Birmingham City University. My title is Evidence Based Researcher, and I'm

involved in project based research, evaluation and consultancy work for the library and information community. My background is in academic libraries, though I have also worked in public and school libraries.

What are your professional interests?

As a child I always wanted to be a teacher, so I'm particularly interested in information literacy and the role of librarians (public, school, and academic) in supporting development of information literacy throughout education. As a keen blogger (I write as [Joeyanne Libraryanne](#)) and micro-blogger ([@joeyanne](#)), I am also interested in social media, marketing communications, and how libraries can utilise these to engage with users and develop their services.

Any interesting facts?

I used to be a gymnast (Sports Acrobatics like Cirque du Soleil), so my party trick was always the splits. Unfortunately I've lost a lot of my flexibility since I stopped training 5 years ago so I doubt I can still do them!



Jo can be contacted on twitter [@joeyanne](#)

“I first got involved by helping out on the LIS show exhibition stand last year”

**UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES & RESEARCH (UC&R) WEST MIDLANDS:
CHRIS BRADFORD**

Our UCR Networking Event was held at Edmund's bar in Birmingham on the 9th September. It provided a great opportunity to meet committee members in an informal relaxed atmosphere with the added bonus of also chatting to the non-committee members that joined us for the evening. Edmund's provided a great room and good food and it was easily the best way to get to know each other better. Talk of the latest developments occurring in our workplaces was a hot topic of conversation as without exception all present could tell of major projects that were occurring in their workplaces which included some with dramatic transformations. A suggestion from these discussions was that future meetings and get-togethers could include visiting each other's workplaces to learn from these experiences. We will be exploring this in the future.

Future Events:

Lean and Mean Watch out for our half day conference on the 9th December at Aston University. We will be looking at ways of demonstrating value and measuring impact. Full details will be published shortly.

Finally if you are interested in becoming involved with the committee we do have space for new committee members. We are a lively and dynamic group and you'd enjoy it. If interested please contact Chris Bradford at Warwick University on 024765 24476 or e-mail c.bradford@warwick.ac.uk

**CAREER DEVELOPMENT GROUP (CDG) WEST MIDLANDS:
GEORGINA HARDY**

So far, 2010 has been a busy year for the West Midlands Division of the Career Development Group (CDG WM). We had a sell-out Reflective Writing Workshop in April, and a hugely successful "Librarians as Teachers" event in May, organised in collaboration with University, College and Research Group West Midlands and held in the Teaching Grid at Warwick University. This is in addition to our usual activities supporting the Framework of Qualifications offered by CILIP. To find out more about what we've been up to, please read our Newsletter, *Central Issues*, available online at <http://issuu.com/cdgwm>.

By the time you read this, the call for nominations for Divisional Officers to serve 1st January - 31st December 2011 will have closed, but we are always very happy to hear from anyone who would like to get involved in organising events, writing articles for the newsletter, fundraising for the International Projects, or supporting one of our officers with a view to taking on a role in 2012. CDG WM are a friendly, cross-sectoral committee and you can find out more by attending our next committee meeting:

CDG WM Committee Meeting:

Wednesday 24th November, 6-8pm in Birmingham Central Library, Room 5b
E-mail g.c.hardy@aston.ac.uk with any questions about attending

We look forward to meeting you at a meeting or event soon!

**COLLEGES OF FURTHER & HIGHER EDUCATION (COFHE) WEST MIDLANDS:
JACQUIE DAVIES**

- Do you work in a college of further or higher education in the West Midlands?
- Want to have access to reasonably priced training in this area?
- Want to meet colleagues from the same sector?

Then join CoFHE either by making it one of your groups when joining CILIP or by joining CoFHE directly. The West Midlands Circle committee meet regularly & last year provided training sessions on Display Techniques, Performance Management and Managing Student Behaviour.

We are always looking for new committee members. Interested?

For information contact: Jacquie Davies (Chair) jad@wsfc.ac.uk or Sue Bird (secretary) SBird@henley-cov.ac.uk