

Bulletin

No. 115 Autumn 2009

Editorial:

Firstly, another apology that there was no Summer 2009 issue, again owing to a lack of copy.

As regards articles promised in the last issue: Lee Bryant's Learning Resource Toolkit article was published in Update ('Get your kit on for quality', *Update*, October 2009, pp 42-3) and the book review section is still awaiting its first contribution.

Instead we have coverage of the 2009 CoFHE conference held in Edinburgh. You will find two reviews of the conference, one from conference stalwart (and former Bulletin Editor) Steve Cropper and the other review from a first time conference attendee: Jo Alcock.

Looking forward to the joint conference with UC&R in Exeter in June 2010, there is a 'flier' on the back page detailing the conference themes. A number of workshops and speakers are already lined up – check the CoFHE website for updates – and the conference delegate fee has been kept well below the £400 mark.

This is my final issue as Bulletin Editor, having been in the role for two and a half years it is now time to hand over the reins to a new editor. From the Spring 2010 issue the Editor will be Samantha Gavaghan of Redcar & Cleveland College.

Contents	Page
Mostly sunshine but some deeply strange showers....	2
CoFHE Honorary Membership	3
CoFHE Conference 2009 – first timer's experience	4
'Managing Up, Down and Sideways'	5
CoFHE UC&R Conference 2010	6

So, another plea for copy for the next issue and please use the Bulletin to advertise events going on in your local CoFHE Circle and to submit write-ups of events that you have participated in. Please send submissions for the next issue to Samantha at sgavaghan@cleveland.ac.uk

Good luck to Samantha in her new role as Bulletin Editor. I will be retaining my links with CoFHE as our representative on CILIP's Policy Forum and I hope to see many of you in Exeter in June at the conference.

Mostly sunshine but some deeply strange showers.... A review of the CoFHE Conference, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh 2009

The organisers of the CoFHE conference 2009 are to be congratulated on a tightly-run event, within a compact timescale, which kept us all busy, allowed plenty of opportunities for networking and retained a pleasantly relaxed atmosphere throughout. While I regret the loss of the more leisurely event with sightseeing trips on Tuesday afternoons, the need to keep costs within reach, and minimise days away from the office makes the more intensive approach attractive to many delegates.

The LRC at QMU is a truly stunning building, and in the opening plenary session, Fraser Muir, QMU's Director of Information Services and Learning Resource Centre, gave us a fascinating account of the sustainable design principles which underpinned it. With half of the delegates present involved in new build projects, this was timely, and left many of us envious of the long-term thinking and investment in quality (as opposed to short-term expediency) behind the project. It has truly placed the LRC at the very heart of the university. The experience of voting in a lecture was novel too!

After a brief break for tea and scones (well we were in Scotland!) two workshop sessions. I attended Chrissie Turkington's session on Shibboleth, as I don't feel I have really got on terms with this yet in my own institution since adopting it last year. It was then off to join Andrew Eynon in "presentation" mode for our own workshop on the new self-assessment toolkit. Our two workgroups each asked one (brave) delegate to submit their own service to an honest examination using the toolkit. What emerged was that so often, colleagues are too self-critical and not always gaining credit for the good practice they already have.

We claimed our room keys and made off to our accommodation, where we had our first encounter with the amazing QMU 1 minute "verticoffin" showers. (You had to be there...)

These provided much mirth over the course of the event, and a fine mime act from Bidy Fisher in her conference dinner address.

Thursday dawned with a leisurely breakfast, followed by what for me was the stand-out session of the event on an unlikely topic. Jason Miles-Campbell from JISC Legal Services, splendidly attired in his kilt, (with what he claimed was a wireless-enabled sporran!) gave a bravura performance on copyright law, subtitled "ten tips to make you top". Jason demonstrated that knowledge alone does not make a good plenary, and his sheer enthusiasm for his subject shone through and brought the subject alive.

Workshop three for me was Rachel Van Reil's session on building customer-centred spaces using observation of customer behaviour in libraries. Drawing on knowledge gained in the retail sector, Rachel led an excellent session on looking at how customers use libraries and how we can better promote our stock. I took many practical ideas away from this session and her book is now on my desk. The central message was that we are locked into a 19th century mindset of how books are stored and displayed, and need to learn from the retail sector and use more innovative display techniques to engage today's customers with our wares.

Following a buffet lunch, enlivened by a parade of swans and their cygnets outside the windows, it was on to plenary session 4 from Sheila Cannell, Director of Library Services at the University of Edinburgh. Sheila's theme was the timely one of managing in tough economic times. In her address she gave a clear-eyed overview of the risks all our services face if recession deepens, and some strategies for managing the risk. Removing unnecessary costs, seeking economies, generating income, punching your weight in the institutional politics and saying "no" or demanding a contribution all came under scrutiny.

While some of us in an FE audience may have felt we had been doing some of these things for years, Sheila's point that we stop innovating at our peril, and that we as managers set the tone for creativity in our teams was well made.

Workshop four was Jon Purcell's session on planning the new library at St Andrews University. Jon's account of the problems inherent in running a brutalist concrete blockhouse of a library at the heart of the UK's oldest university, including floods, draughts and the high-maintenance legacy of 60s and 70s (so-called) "iconic" architecture reminded us all that we should treat the pronouncements of trendy architects with scepticism, and insist on building solutions which are sustainable, adaptable and affordable long after the architects have gone. The beauty and utility of the original historic library at St Andrews reminded us that our ancestors left us facilities that have endured, and are loved by users centuries later. This is something few of today's architects seem to achieve.

The final act of Thursday was to hold the AGM, which was briskly chaired by Alex, and where Glynis Platt was presented with honorary life membership of the group for her services to CoFHE over many years. This was long overdue and well deserved.

And so to the conference dinner. Although held on campus, the university staff rose to the challenge, and an excellent meal accompanied by plentiful wine ensured that we passed a convivial evening. The pre-dinner drinks reception gave an opportunity for delegates to mingle, and Bidy Fisher, our CILP Vice-President gave delegates a brief but thought-provoking address, and joined delegates in the piano lounge for drinks and socialising afterwards. As the time to vacate the building drew nigh, some brave souls went off to Edinburgh clubbing until the wee hours, while others continued the evening in their kitchens, to remind themselves of what student life was like all those years ago!

All in all, I enjoyed conference 09, although at times I did feel as if I was always due to be somewhere next, and would have welcomed more time to visit the suppliers' stands. However the economics of running these events are such that some compromises are inevitable if an event like this is to be packed into two days and nights, and the organisers delivered an excellent conference at an affordable price.

Steve Cropper, Learning Resources Manager, Wirral Metropolitan College.
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Citation for CoFHE Honorary Membership, awarded at the conference in June 2009

'Few people can have given as much over so long a period to this group as Glynis Platt.

Glynis's work on behalf of CoFHE, and the wider profession has been tireless. She was treasurer of the (then) LA NW branch throughout the 1990's and was Branch President in 1999. She served on the LA Council as CoFHE Representative from 2001-4, and has also served on the CoFHE National Committee. Glynis has also been a stalwart of the CoFHE North West Circle, which in her own words, she has chaired for more years than she cares to remember.

In terms of promoting professional activity and delivering events like this one, Glynis's record is similarly impressive. She has attended every Umbrella conference except the very first, and served on the organising team which built up and developed Umbrella in its Manchester years. Glynis has also served on the organising team for the 2006 and 2008 joint CoFHE/UC&R conferences. As Chair of the conference team for the 2008 conference, I can personally vouch for Glynis's total reliability and sheer hard work in helping to make these events happen. If Glynis is given a task to do, you explain it once, and it is as good as done. That is a priceless asset to any conference organiser. This award is long overdue, and richly deserved.'

CoFHE Conference 2009 – first timer’s experience

After an eventful journey, I was relieved to meet others on their way to the conference for the last leg of the journey to Queen Margaret University near Edinburgh. We made our way to the registration desk where we were met by members of the organising team who were very welcoming. The registration process was smooth and I settled down to something to eat before the conference began.

The theme of the conference was “E-libraries and Green libraries: exploring accessibility and sustainability”; many of the presentations and workshops addressed current issues such as sustainability, book recycling, dealing with the recession, using new technologies, and copyright.

The keynote address by Fraser Muir, Director of Information Services & Learning Resource Centre at QMU, focused on the sustainability of their new campus. Fraser spoke about the physical buildings (e.g. insulation, ventilation, lighting and water management), as well as the sustainable approach to the utilisation of space and IT.

The plenary sessions included an upbeat presentation on copyright law by Jason Miles-Campbell from JISC legal, a presentation on managing in tough economic times by Sheila Cannell, Director of Library Services at University of Edinburgh, and an introduction to the Encompass scheme for encouraging workforce diversity by Ayub Khan, Head of Libraries (Strategy) at Warwickshire County Libraries.¹

There was a good mix of workshops; I attended sessions on Shibboleth, e-books in FE, building a customer centred space, Library 2.0 and Web 2.0 in FE, and iTunesU and podcasting.

My personal highlight was a really inspiring session by Rachel Van Riel; she spoke about how libraries can learn from retail industries and should observe our users to guide decisions about our services.

There was plenty of opportunity for networking, with refreshment breaks throughout the conference held near the exhibitor’s space. The catering was fantastic, and we had a quiz on the first evening (which I enjoyed although contributed very little to my team’s efforts!), and a wine reception and gala dinner on the second evening with a speech from Biddy Fisher, Vice President of CILIP.

The venue was excellent; I was particularly impressed with the ease in which I could access the wireless network during the conference. As the QMU campus is also fairly new (built in 2007), it was also a great opportunity to get ideas for new builds/refurbishments, and we were taken on a guided tour by Jo Rowley, Head of Library Services at QMU.

It really was a worthwhile event in terms of both content and networking opportunities – I met some fascinating people and it’s always interesting to share experiences with other librarians. It was particularly good to be able to meet in person people I know via Twitter, and meet others users through the conference Twitter tag, #cofhe09.

Many thanks to CoFHE West Midlands for providing sponsorship to enable me to attend. If you would like to read more information about particular sessions, please see my blog posts at: <http://www.joeyanne.co.uk/index.php/tag/cofhe09>.

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¹You can view some of the presentations at <http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/cofhe/conference/Conference09.htm>.

'Managing Up, Down and Sideways'

I recently attended CoFHE Mid-West Circle's AGM and Summer Event, which took place at the very picturesque Harcourt Hill Campus of Oxford Brookes University on Tuesday June 30th 2009. For those that remember that far back, it was a very warm and sunny day.

First Impressions: on arrival the committee members were friendly and welcoming and the organisers had selected training rooms that overlooked a pleasant quad area, where students sat idly sunning themselves. The effect was a restful backdrop for the day's events and an opportunity to network with colleagues in a pleasant environment.

The event, *Managing up, down and sideways*, was presented by speaker Sheila Ritchie who has effectively demonstrated her experience of working in public, academic and special libraries since 1965 and her particular specialism of building effective relationships at work.

The day's events included general discussion and activities on team performance, forming teams, understanding how to harness the positive and minimise the negative forces within teams and how personal perception and behaviour can influence work relationships.

Sheila shaped the dialogue to meet the needs of the audience, with the main emphasis of the discussion on downwards management, changing work roles and managing interpersonal conflict, on which Sheila offered practical advice.

The two practical activities, based on staff motivational analysis and a teamwork activity, were divided by a sumptuous lunch in the college restaurant with a crême brulée for dessert. The activity before lunch, known as the *motivation inventory*, is a management tool designed to identify areas that motivate individuals in the workplace.

The inventory appeared to be a useful tool to help managers decide how to best motivate their staff and thereby promote individual productivity.

The afternoon session was a practical exercise in project management. We were given the task of building a paper structure to the greatest height possible within the limited time frame. Additional criteria included physical stability and aesthetic concerns. Accounting for a resource budget was also a part of the required process. Individuals were required to take different team roles and then work together to achieve the desired result.

Although at first glance this seemed to be a fun and frivolous exercise, it very quickly demonstrated the difficulties of team and project management, particular when the team is newly formed.

Personally, I found the day to be helpful and insightful, and it was a great opportunity to be able to discuss issues and concerns with other librarians dealing with similar circumstances.

Rachael Lockwood, Senior Learning Resources Assistant, Oxford and Cherwell Valley College

CoFHE Cymru Conference 2010

Building on the very successful conference held at Coleg Glan Hafren, in Cardiff, in 2009. CoFHE Cymru will be holding its next annual conference at Glyndwr University on Tuesday 27 April 2010.

The conference will focus on the marketing and promotion of library services and facilities. This will include talks on library design, information literacy and promotional activities.

For more details please contact Elaine Edwards, Coleg Sir Gar, Elaine.Edwards@colegsirgar.ac.uk



The Fifth CILIP CoFHE and UC&R Joint Conference

**The academic library as indispensable to
21st century learning and research
Exeter University, 21-23 June 2010**

The 2010 conference will examine the key role that academic libraries and their staff play in the learning cycle of the student and the wider demands of their institutions. The event will be packed with a wide range of workshops led by experts and plenaries from the profession's leaders.

Themes will include:

- the library's role in Digital Britain
- managing a service during recession
- libraries as central to their institutions
- marketing and advocacy
- cross sectoral, organisational and other partnerships
- learning, research and information literacy
- the student experience
- employer responsiveness
- mobile learning

Cost - £350(VAT inclusive) to CoFHE or UC&R members

Put the date in your diary now!



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Deadline for next issue: 12 February 2010

Please email copy to the editor in MS Word format.

Articles should be concise (c600 words in length) and acronyms should be used in full on the first occasion of use. Source documents should be referenced.

Capitalisation should be minimal.

Please remember to include your correct job title, full name of organisation, email address and daytime telephone number.

Letters not for publication should be marked as such. The decision of the editor is final.