



Annual Report 2008/2009

**For presentation to 2009 AGM
To be held on 11 November 2009
At the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester**

This has been a positive one for the LIHG. This year, 2008/2009, has mainly been one of refocusing the Group's strategic direction and aims for the future, and we hope that these developments are becoming evident to members. We are taking steps to address the declining membership problem that has been an issue for many CILIP special interest groups by increasing publicity and raising our profile. We have increased the number of events we run each year and are continuing to develop on regional meetings to ensure as many members as possible can attend and benefit from Group activities. We are in the process of rejuvenating the LIHG website and our online presence on Facebook continues to be a useful resource for capturing younger members and promoting the Group. Relationships with like-minded bodies have continued to be developed, including a mutual promotion of events with SHARP. We have been active in scholarly events and projects this year and continue to be so into 2009/2010.

NB. The annual returns period covers only until the end of March 2009, but since the AGM is being held later this year, the report will also mention developments to the Group since that period.

Continuing aims of the Group

- To act as the historical conscience of CILIP
- To raise awareness of the importance of library and information history both in Britain and abroad
- To promote activities – conferences, regional meetings, lectures – in support of all objectives
- To communicate research and publication in library and information history

The LIHG aims to emphasise that although library and information history is about historic libraries and collections, it also covers:

- How information and knowledge were used and thought of in the past
- How information is preserved and collected in contemporary society
- How new technologies may be changing the way we interact with the past and how we safeguard the modern record

Areas of concern from last year's annual report

Lack of strategic direction
 Falling membership
 No email distribution list of members

Committee changes

The Group had a change of Chair in June 2009 with Toni Weller stepping down after a year and a half in the role, after moving to editor of the Group's journal, *Library & Information History*. She was succeeded by Kathryn McKee.

Since Kathryn was the existing Treasurer this necessitated an election for this position. We had two excellent candidates, but after the membership voted, Kathleen Ladizesky was elected into the role.

Anna Jones stepped down as Secretary after a very committed period in the role. It was decided that since the activities of the Group had grown so much that the role of Secretary should be split into two: a Committee Secretary to deal with committee meetings and CILIP business, and an Events Secretary, who would deal with the Groups conferences, social events and membership. Rob Westwood and Shauna Barrett have filled these roles and the new arrangement is working well.

Nicola Smith and Geoffrey Forster each stepped down from the committee after several years in their respective roles.

Membership

In May 2007 membership was 621, plus four non-CILIP members. The Group had 656 members, as of 31st March 2008. In August 2009, CILIP membership stood at 600, total membership 612. While it is disappointing that the number of CILIP members has fallen slightly, we are delighted to have recruited 12 new subscribing members as a result of the annual conference.

The Facebook Group set up at the start of 2008 continues to be a useful resource. As of October 2009 it has 58 members, up from 35 members last year and has helped stimulate interest regarding new committee members and conference papers. If you are a member of Facebook – or know anyone who is – please do add LIHG to your 'friends' list to be kept informed of upcoming events and points of interest.

There are currently (as of October 2009) 293 members of LIS-LIBHIST, its highest level ever, compared with 267 members in 2008, 256 in 2007, and 253 in 2006. The site is fully archived, has discussions going back nine years to 1998 and forms a strong research resource.

Publicity

The Group now has a monthly email to members of its news and forthcoming events. This is hosted by CILIP and is a good interim measure until the Group has its own membership mailing list, on which we are working. The number of members receiving the monthly mailing is steadily increasing, from just 135 when the Group first used the service in May, to 242 by September.

The website is still undergoing renovation as CILIP changes their content management system.

We have regular mailings of events via LIS Lib-hist and SHARP-L and also via the Facebook group. We are in the process of establishing publicity material that can be used at events and conferences (LIHG and other).

The conference in March served as good promotion, as did the election for Treasurer which allowed hard copy mailing of the year card and other literature to all members. The year card is something with which we plan to continue along with the annual mailing since feedback has been positive.

Newsletter

Only 28 of our members still subscribed in hard copy in 2008. The change from paper to electronic has had a significant and positive effect upon the Group's finances. Although we are now publishing online there is still work to be done in ensuring the style and format of the Newsletter is as 'online' as possible. As always we welcome contributions from Group members.

Library & Information History

The journal has managed its transition from Library History to Library & Information History well, under its new editor of Toni Weller, who succeeded Alistair Black at the end of 2008. Alistair continues as North American editor. A new books reviews editor, Karen Attar, has also joined the revamped editorial board.

The journal continues to be well supported by its publishers, Maney, who sponsored an evening reception for the LIHG conference and were in attendance to promote the journal. There will be a special issue of the journal based on the LIHG conference in early 2010.

Unsolicited contributions continue to be sent at a steady rate but there does need to be sustained efforts to increase this volume without decreasing quality. This is being done by regular reminders for calls for papers to the usual distribution lists, plus promotional material from Maney and a more active editorial board.

Awards

Library History Essay prize 2008:

We received five excellent nominations for this Award. One of the judges declared that these were the “best collection of entries which I have seen since the prize was initiated 10 years ago”. After much thought the judges chose two essays to share the Library History Essay Award for 2008:

Alistair Black, “‘Arsenals of scientific and technical information’: public technical libraries in Britain during and immediately after World War I”, *Library trends*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Winter 2007), 474-89.

K.A. Manley, “‘The road to Camelot’: the circle of learning and the ‘Circulatory’ Library of Samuel Fancourt”, *The Library*, Vol.8, No.4 (December 2007), 398-422.

Ollé Award for 2008:

Unfortunately we have not been able to make this award for 2008 due to a lack of entries.

The criteria for awarding both the Library History Essay Prize and the Ollé Award have been changed slightly in the hope that we will attract more entries. Full details can be found on the LIHG’s website.

Events

LIHG Conference, March 2009. This was a one day conference held in London, featuring eleven speakers plus a plenary roundtable discussion, chaired by Peter Hoare, featuring Toni Weller, Alistair Black and James Raven (winner of the SHARP DeLong Book History Book Prize 2008) which discussed *Future Directions for Library & Information History*. Several of the papers from the conference will be featured in a special issue of the journal, *Library & Information History* in 2010. The Group sponsored one student bursary, who consequently wrote up the event for the Groups’ Newsletter.

The conference was finished with an evening reception in UCL’s cloister rooms, where Maney publishing kindly sponsored wine and nibbles for all delegates. Sponsorship of events is something that we have done twice this year with positive results and are planning to tie into more events, where possible, going forward.

The committee are currently in discussion for a possible further Anglo-German conference to be held in collaboration with our German equivalent group at Wolfenbüttel in 2010. There is also the possibility of another one day conference to be held in London.

In July, the LIHG was represented by three committee members at the last ever Umbrella Conference at the University of Hertfordshire. The theme of the conference was *Making connections: the power of people, partnerships and services*. This year the Group offered only one presentation at UOU, although it was one of the conference’s best. It was chaired by John Crawford and entitled “Books, buildings and social engineering: the design of early public library buildings (1850s to 1939) in Britain from past to present. Alistair Black and Simon Pepper, both professors, reported on the outcomes of their joint Arts and Humanities Research Council funded

study which sets out to rehabilitate the early public library building and review its modern social role as about 65% of them are still in use. This was an outstanding joint presentation and noteworthy for content, analysis and interpretation. Their work rests on a database of about 1000 buildings. Alistair described the social forces which brought about the public library building and influenced its development while Simon described some classic case studies including the famous circular Manchester Public Library building. Their work is now the subject of a book published by Ashgate (see below under Publications).

In terms of social events, the Group also held two evening lectures. One at Edinburgh Napier University in May 2009 where a private tour of the Edward Clark Collection preceded a talk by Keith Manley to promote his new book, *Broadening readership: subscription libraries and mechanics' institutes in early 19th century Scotland*. The event was sponsored by the Scottish Centre for the Book. The event was well attended and written up in the LIHG Newsletter.

The second event was an evening talk by Paul Sturges in September 2009 at Bromley House Library in Nottingham on *Extending information history into unexpected areas: African liberation struggles*. Despite good publicity, the event was less well attended than hoped and raised some questions about the importance of timing and location for scholarly lectures as Group events.

Publications

Several members of the committee - John Crawford, Peter Hoare, Alistair Black, Sarah Bromage, Toni Bunch – are involved in a project with Edinburgh University Press on the History of libraries in Scotland, following from the success of *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*.

The Group was delighted to see the publication of *Books, buildings and social engineering: early public library buildings in Britain from past to present*, by Alistair Black, Simon Pepper and Kaye Bagshaw, based on an AHRC project which has produced a database of over one thousand pre-1939 public library buildings. This project was originally sponsored by the LIHG, with a steering group made up of members of the Committee offering advice in the critical early stages of the research. Options are being considered regarding where to house the electronic database of pre-1939 public library buildings generated by the research. These options include a non-CILIP website funded by the Group and AHRC's own electronic repository.

Meetings Report 2007-2008

The Group continued with its regional venues for committee meetings, but for the first time ran other events separately (such as the evening talks above) in order to maximise time and opportunities for speakers.

Three committee meetings were held in 2009 – one in March at City University, London, one in June at St John's College, Cambridge, and one at John Rylands Library, Manchester in November (preceding the AGM).

Future direction of the Group

To build on valuable work already underway in developing the regional activities of the Group. We now have a committee structure in place which enables us to devote more resources to organising successful events throughout the country, with the aim of attracting new audiences as well as our existing membership.

To work with other organisations in the UK and beyond to broaden awareness of library and information history. We have established links with the USA, Germany, and Scandinavia, a track record of collaboration with the Historic Libraries Forum, and now also have official representation in SHARP.

To make effective use of electronic means to keep members informed, to publicise Group aims and activities, and to provide resources for those with an interest in library and information history.

To continue to support research and publication in the field, through bursaries and awards, and other appropriate assistance.

Dr Toni Weller

LIHG Chair, October 2008 – May 2009