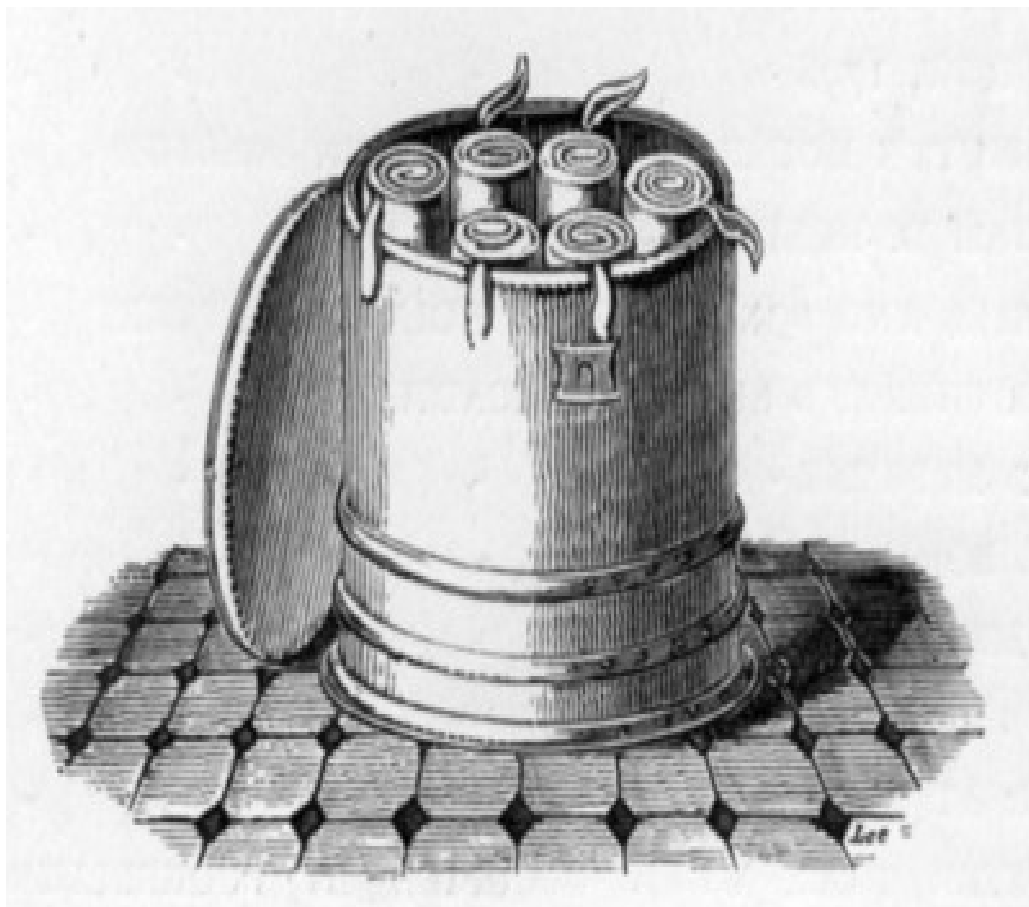


# Library and Information History *Newsletter*



Winter 2008

# **LIBRARY AND INFORMATION HISTORY NEWSLETTER**

The official newsletter of the Library and Information History Group, a special interest group of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)

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## News from the Chair

Dear members,

Welcome to our final Newsletter issue of 2008. As the year draws to a close we welcome our new Group Secretaries, Rob Westwood and Shauna Barrett. The role has grown too big for one person over the last few years, so from this point on, Rob will be dealing with committee events, details and CILIP liaison, while Shauna will look after membership, the Group conference and events. We welcome them wholeheartedly to the committee.

The Group is holding its annual one day conference at Ridgmount Street in March, 2009, and promises a rich offering of papers. The details will be on our website soon and advertised through the usual channels. We welcome all members to register for the conference, which also offers an evening drinks reception hosted by Maney, the publishers of *Library and Information History*. To book a place on the conference, please contact Shauna on [shauna.barrett@ouls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:shauna.barrett@ouls.ox.ac.uk) or at the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine Library, 45-47 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 6PE.

At the end of my first year as Chair may I take this opportunity on behalf of the committee to wish you all a very merry Christmas. We hope to see you at an LIHG event in 2009!

Dr Toni Weller  
LIHG Chair  
November, 2008

## **LIHG Committee Meetings 2008**

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009**, City University, London

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009**, Library Seminar Room, St. John's College, Cambridge

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2009**, AGM and committee meeting, John Rylands Library, Manchester

## **LIHG Members Events 2009**

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

LIHG Annual One Day Conference

“Aspects of Library and Information History”

CILIP, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE

Followed by an evening reception sponsored by Maney Publishing

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

Napier University, Edinburgh

Private tour of the Edward Clark Collection (afternoon)

*“Broadening readership: subscription libraries and mechanics' institutes in early 19th century Scotland”*

Evening talk by Dr Keith Manley, Institute of English Studies, London.

With discussion over wine

**Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2009**

Umbrella Conference

*“Making connections: the power of people, partnerships and services”*

University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield <http://www.umbrella2009.org.uk/>

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2009**

*“Extending information history into unexpected areas: African liberation struggles”*

Evening talk by Professor Paul Sturges, University of Loughborough  
Nottingham University (TBC)  
With discussion over wine

For more information on events, please see the LIHG website:

The LIHG website can be found at:

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/history> and includes online access to the group's newsletter.

The Library and Information History Group can also now be found as a public group on Facebook [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) For those wishing to receive the latest information about LIHG activities please add LIHG to your friends.

### **LIHG Newsletter Copy Dates 2009**

- Spring 2009: Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January
- Summer 2009: Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May
- Winter 2009: Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September

## **Report on a visit to the Royal Astronomical Society Library, November 2008**

### **Peter Hingley, RAS Librarian, ‘Astronomers and oddities: the library of the Royal Astronomical Society’**

The Royal Astronomical Society was founded on 12 January 1820 in the Freemason’s Tavern, a pub in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. The first council and ordinary meeting was held on 10 March, the second Friday of the month, and meetings have been held on the second Friday ever since. In 1831 the Society received a Royal Charter from William IV, and in 1834 moved from accommodation rented from the Chirurgical Society on Lincoln’s Inn Fields to Somerset House on the Strand. The granting of charters to learned societies including the RAS was strongly opposed by Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society, because he feared that the creation of specialist learned societies would leave the Royal Society with no ‘territory’ to call its own.

Banks’ opposition went so far as pressuring the Duke of Somerset to refuse the Presidency of the RAS. The first nominal President was William Herschel but he never took office. Instead, his son, John, was the first active President of the Society.

The RAS was housed in Somerset House until the 1870s. When pressures of space started to force a decision about a move, this society and others rejected government plans to move them to a ‘science park’ in South Kensington, as they did not want to be exiled to a remote suburb.

The government therefore bought Burlington House, on Piccadilly, formerly a private residence, and then thought to be a particularly fine example of architectural principles. Sir Charles Barry was employed to extend the building forwards. He created the striking Victorian court and frontage that is famous today; this was very unpopular at the time, and the cause of ‘saving’ Burlington House was loudly protested.

The RAS moved into Burlington House in 1874, and has remained there ever since. Recent refurbishment work has, however, led to more than a year of disruption, now coming to an end, including the complete removal of the RAS library into off-site storage.

The handsome library on the first floor of the RAS building houses modern books on astronomy and runs of the journals published by, and in

connection with the Society. A separate, air-conditioned strong room houses the special collections, and archives are kept in a basement store. The RAS holds the second largest collection of astronomical rare books in the country (the largest is the Crawford Collection of books and manuscripts at the Royal Observatory Edinburgh). Its largest collection of rare books is the Grove-Hills Collection, bequeathed to the library in 1923. Visitors were shown a small fraction of the library's printed treasures, including:

- Caius Julius Hyginus, *Poeticon astronomicon* (Venice, 1482) - an incunabulum containing numerous charts of the constellations.
- Nicolas Copernicus, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (Nuremberg, 1543) - the first edition of the first work to expound the heliocentric theory of the solar system, one of 274 surviving copies.
- Peter Apianus, *Atronomicum Caesareum* (Ingolstadt, 1540) - a colour-printed book containing a number of surviving and functioning volvels which allow the reader to calculate the position of planets and other objects in the sky.
- Three books by Galileo Galilei, of which two were *Istoria e dimostrazione* (Rome, 1613), *Siderus nuncius magna* (London, 1653).
- Andreas Cellarius, *Harmonia macrocosmica* (Amsterdam, 1708) - a magnificent volume of coloured plates showing the various systems that had been devised to explain the movement of celestial bodies.

Aside from printed books, the library holds many portraits and photographs. Portraits of Sir George Biddell Airy, Sir David Gill, and Margaret, Lady Huggins hang in the ground floor hallway. During the relocation of material for the recent refurbishment work, a photographic portrait of Sir John Herschel by Julia Margaret Cameron dated to 1867 was discovered. The library has many further portraits, formal and informal, of all of its past presidents.

It also has many historically significant astrophotographs. In former times, astronomers, especially amateurs, would send evidence of their discoveries and achievements to the RAS as a matter of pride. As scholarly practices have changed, the RAS has received increasingly few

astronomical images into its collections. However, the historical astrophotographs such as A.A. Common's 1883 image of the Orion nebula, 1860s images of solar prominences and the solar corona taken during a solar eclipse, Isaac Robert's image of the Andromeda galaxy, or David Gill's photograph of the 1882 comet all stand the test of time, and remain remarkably beautiful and interesting items to see. The RAS was notable in the late nineteenth century for embracing the new technology of photography; taking technophilia so far as to sell prints of astronomical photographs to the public.

The RAS has made about five hundred images from its collections - photographs, portraits, and images of books and manuscripts - available online at the Science Photo Library, <http://www.sciencephoto.com>. They can be found by searching for 'royal astronomical society' as photographer in the main search screen.

Mr. Hingley professed that perhaps his favourite items in the library collection are the rather 'folklore-ish' that the RAS has acquired. These include an album of photographs from the transits of Venus across the Sun in 1874 and 1882; astronomers travelled across the globe to observe these events, and, even if they weren't able to photograph astronomical phenomena, they tended to bring back photographs of the native peoples they encountered. Another similar item seen on the visit was the oldest known log taken from Isaac Newton's famous apple tree. It was cut from the tree in 1812 and was given to the library in 1912.

It has not been possible to mention here all of the varied and interesting facts and artefacts mentioned by Mr. Hingley in his talk about and tour of the RAS. It remains only to say that RAS membership is open to anyone with an interest in astronomy for whom one current member is prepared to vouch. Astrologers need not apply!

**Katie Birkwood,  
St John's College Library,  
Cambridge**

## **Library History in Library Schools**

### **Preamble: an apologia**

This article originally appeared in July 2008 as an opinion column in CILIP's *Library + Information Gazette*. Here, you can find a gently expanded version in which I show my workings in the form of some of the evidence collected during my research.

“Research” is perhaps a grandiose term for what was a somewhat lackadaisical process of basic information gathering. Far from an academic literature review, I collected people's recollections of library history being taught at library school. In order to gather this information, I asked around on mailing lists (including our own LIBHIST list) and emailed a few university information faculties at which I had friends or colleagues.

An academic would not be impressed at this level of anecdotal research, even if she were a fan of qualitative information. More satisfactory would have been the consultation of prospectuses from a wide range of institutes and from over a significant period of time. The same academic would also disapprove of my lack of hard analysis and my use of first-person perspective: but of course, the opinion column is the home of “the evil I”.

There is still room for a proper article, perhaps, legitimately chronicling the decline in the study of library history; and better informed recommendations of how or why it could be reintroduced. For now, however, I beg the reader to remain stoic about this piece of homespun detective work and to embrace the postmodernist mantra that “all discourse is good”.

### **Should Library History make a return to the prospectus?**

In 2006 I presented my MSc. Dissertation to the University of Strathclyde. It was boldly titled *The Nature of Librarianship* and took a deeply historical approach to literature review. I wanted to challenge the idea that we live in a time of excessive change by showing that the history of librarianship is riddled with such periods; that we are constantly in a state of developmental flux; but that a thread of intrinsic values has been present from the libraries of antiquity to the modern day service. Some of these values were practical while others were moral or intellectual. With our hands on this balustrade we would see that there is

no particular threat from a rise of “leisure industries” and that HTML should be no more feared or adored than the scroll, the codex, the videotape or anything else one might label as a “paradigm shift”. In recognizing these lessons from history, we would have a moral and practical guide to which to turn when change really does occur.

When constructing the initial proposal, I wasn't sure I would be able to run with this at all. Library History wasn't listed as a research interest by any of the departmental staff. One ray of hope lay in Dr. Paul Burton's interest in “Social effects and impacts of ICT”. I pitched it to him and he caught it. But it was a lucky catch and I was glad for it: I really didn't want to spend three months distributing questionnaires about the benefits of installing coffee machines in public libraries or wondering why SPSS (the statistical analysis software) hates me.

After a bit of research (below), it appears that Library History is largely dispensed with in the modern library school.

## **Evidence**

Here follows some of the feedback I got when asking for recollections of library history being taught in library schools and of enquiring as to whether or not it might be taught in library schools today. Among the respondents were present day and retired library and information scholars as well as currently employed librarians and information professionals.

- "I don't remember getting it at Robert Gordon in Aberdeen but then I qualified 10 years ago so not sure if that helps!!"
- "I think UCL used to but they certainly didn't by the time I got there [in] 2003. I think UCL is the only place still teaching Historical Bibliography and related rare book courses so I'm not sure if anywhere else would still teach Library History. Is it taught by any of the places who do History of the Book type courses?"
- "When I did a LIS MA at Loughborough a few years ago, there wasn't an optional module offered on Library History as such. However, the department did possess a distinguished library historian in Professor Paul Sturges and so people like me were able to do their dissertations on aspects of Library History and I count myself lucky to have had him as a

dissertation tutor. I did a dissertation on the 'History of Libraries in Whitby, 1815-1880' got a distinction, and won the CILIP James G Olle prize, so there was an outlet to learn all about library history in that way."

- "Not as a formally taught separate subject but it survives to some extent within other modules."
- "Not at UCL since Robin Alston retired some years ago. Perhaps Leeds Met?" [Editorial note: Leeds Metropolitan do not appear to offer a particular library or information history module according to their prospectus though it may exist, as some have suggested, as an element of other modules.]
- "Something akin to it might still be on the books at Aberystwyth or RGU, Aberdeen. Other than that, it is merely weaved into the curriculum in places."
- "It was taught at Aberystwyth when I was there (2002-2003)." [Editorial note: I do not see it mentioned on the current prospectus. Possibly included in a module about libraries and society]
- "Not as a formally taught separate subject but it survives to some extent within other modules."
- "I'm a library historian, my [PhD thesis] looked at the social position of librarians in the late 19th/early 20th c. and do bring in my interest into my teaching from time to time, but in Brighton we do not formally teach library history."

### **Surviving Goethe's law**

It is clear that vestiges of the subject survive among academics who once lectured in library history and are still ready to engage with it at the dissertation or PhD level; it also seems to have survived in some slides accompanying 'Introduction to Librarianship' or 'Information and Society' modules. The anecdotal evidence collected, however, suggests that it is in decline. Since universities are the birthing grounds of ideas and future intellectual systems, it is here that library history should be examined. It is a crime to allow for its study only in enthusiastic fringes.

Looking for Library History in the modern library school is much akin to the cultural archaeology practiced by Library History itself. History, if you'll indulge a silly joke, is a thing of the past. Perhaps this is due to the shifted perspective that Library Studies now constitute science rather than art. Or perhaps it is due to a perception that Library History is no longer relevant.

Let us not dwell on the science versus art debate (a subject for another day perhaps) and turn to the problem of relevance. "Our ignorance of history," writes Goethe, "causes us to slander our own times". History is always relevant and what history could be more relevant than that of one's own discipline? We want to know about family histories; the histories of nations and the comparatively short histories of our favourite bands or television shows so why not that of our profession? One could posit that it transcends mere relevance and heads into the territory of the essential: the history of libraries takes on the war against censorship, the proliferation of science, the changing of formats, the rise of open access, the need for social inclusion, the politics of change and the rise of consumer society.

The marketing process and the installation of plasma screens are not what make librarianship an exciting discipline. A knowledge of Library History makes librarianship exciting and consequently contributes to the dynamism and importance of our services.

Bring Library History back to Library School. It deserves its own module and not to be crowbarred into existing classes. A healthy understanding of our history can only lead to a healthy design for our future.

**Rob Westwood**

**Honourary Committee Secretary, CILIP Library and Information History group**

**Outreach and Training Coordinator, NHS Scotland eLibrary**

**Evening/Weekend Service Supervisor, Glasgow University Library**

**LIBRARY HISTORY:  
VOLUME 24, NUMBER 3, DECEMBER 2008**

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**Special Issue Part 3: Making connections between library, book, reading and information history**

Proceedings of the Conference Hosted by Innovation North: Faculty of Information and Technology, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK, 7-8 June 2007

Editors: ALISTAIR BLACK AND AH-LIAN KOR

*Fact and Fiction in English-Language Thrillers with Russian Characters: The 1930s* Jillene Bydder

*Identifying Diachronic Transformations in Popular Culture Genres: A Cultural-Materialist Approach to the History of Popular Literature* Publishing Pauline Rafferty

*Bringing Light to Finland: The Clerical Estate and Enlightenment Literature in Eighteenth-Century Finland* Minna Ahokas

*Conceptualisations of the Book Trade in Lithuania in the Twentieth Century* Živilė Zavadskytė-Zakarauskienė

*Forms and Methods of the Book Trade in Finland in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* Tuija Laine

*How to Observe the Librarian* Laura Skouvig

*How Buddhism Influenced the Origin and Development of Libraries in Sri Lanka (Ceylon): from the 3rd Century BC to 5th Century AD* R.H.I.S. Ranasinghe

## SEMINARS ON THE HISTORY OF LIBRARIES

A series of research seminars, which are freely open for anyone to attend, has been organized at the Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London.

Venue: Senate House, Malet St., London WC1E 7HU.

Meetings will take place on Tuesdays at 5.30 p.m. in Room NG 16, located off the main ground floor corridor of Senate House North Block.

Seminar convenors: Giles Mandelbrote (Early Printed Collections, The British Library, London); Dr. Keith A. Manley (Institute of Historical Research, University of London).

### SPRING TERM 2009

#### **February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009**

Alison Walker (British Library): *Re-creating Sir Hans Sloane's library.*

#### **March 10<sup>th</sup> 2009**

Prof. David McKitterick (Trinity College, Cambridge): *Waste management or selling the family silver?: libraries and the second-hand book trade since the 16th century.*

#### **March 31<sup>st</sup> 2009**

Peter Hoare (formerly of University of Nottingham Library): *Library practices and policies in the British Zone of Occupation, 1945-50.*

#### **May 5<sup>th</sup> 2009**

Graham Jefcoate (Radboud University Library, Nijmegen): *'A difficult modernity': the library of the Catholic University of Nijmegen.*

#### **June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009**

Prof. Richard Sharpe (Wadham College, Oxford): *John Bagford's account of London libraries (1707).*

Information concerning the Institute of English Studies may be found on its website, or email [ies@sas.ac.uk](mailto:ies@sas.ac.uk).

This series of seminars is financially supported by the Library & Information History Group of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals.



# ***PRINT NETWORKS*** **THE BRITISH BOOK TRADE** **HISTORY CONFERENCE**

Council: Catherine Armstrong, Matthew Day, John Hinks, Barry McKay, Lucy Lewis,  
Lisa Peters

## **CALL FOR PAPERS** **& CONFERENCE FELLOWSHIP**

Guest speaker: Ann Thwaite, Whitbread Award-winning biographer, will speak on Edmund Gosse, author of *Father and Son* and sometime Librarian of the House of Lords.

The Twenty-Seventh Annual conference on the History of the British Book Trade will take place at Trinity Hall, Cambridge University on 28-30 July 2009.

Papers are invited on any aspect of the production, distribution and reception of print and manuscript in Great Britain. However, provincial-metropolitan inter-trade connections will be acceptable or on aspects of trade relations with any part of the former colonies & dominions. The theme of the 2009 conference will be Collectors, Librarians and the Book Trade, so papers within that area are encouraged, although others will be considered.

The papers presented will be published as part of the Print Networks series, published jointly by the British Library and Oak Knoll Press.

Papers should be of up to 30 minutes duration. An abstract (of c.300 words) of the offered paper and a brief CV (no longer than one side of A4 in total) should be submitted by 31 January 2009 to:

Lucy Lewis at the following email address: [lch08@aber.ac.uk](mailto:lch08@aber.ac.uk)

The Print Networks Conference also offers one or two annual Fellowships to scholars whose research falls within the parameters of the Conference's brief, and who wish to present papers at the conference. The fellowships cover the cost of attending the conference and possibly some assistance towards costs of travel. A detailed submission of the research being undertaken accompanied by a letter of recommendation from a tutor or supervisor should be sent to Lucy Lewis by 31 January 2009

It is understood that papers offered to the Conference will be original work and not delivered to any similar body before presentation at this Conference. Please be advised that presenting your work at conference offers no guarantee that it will be accepted for publication in the Print Networks series. Furthermore, it is part of the agreement with the publishers that papers will not be published in any similar collection for one year after their appearance in the appropriate Print Networks volume.

## **Forthcoming Events**

**23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> January 2009**

**Reading and the Age of Gladstone**

St Deiniol's Library, Flintshire, North Wales

Part of the programme will consist of the official launch of the Gladstone's Reading Database. The research for this project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (2006-09), has been conducted at St Deiniol's, and the database represents a virtual recreation of Gladstone's library, and a unique and comprehensive record of his reading of each item. For further details about the database, please contact [m.d.bradley@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:m.d.bradley@liverpool.ac.uk).

**Friday March 27<sup>th</sup> 2009**

**CILIP Library and Information History Group one day conference**

“Aspects of Library and Information History”

CILIP, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE

Followed by an evening reception sponsored by Maney Publishing

For more details see the groups website:

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/history>

**14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> July 2009 CILIP Umbrella, Hatfield**

**23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> August 2009**

**IFLA-conference Milan 2009: IFLA Rare Books and Manuscripts**

Section, Preservation and Conservation Section, Library History Section

Milan, Italy

The IFLA Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, the Preservation and Conservation Section, and the Library History Section jointly invite proposals for presentations at the Sections' programme in Milan, 23-27 August 2009.

Following the main theme of the conference 'Libraries create futures: Building on cultural heritage', papers should focus on dispersed cultural collections and their preservation and conservation, reconstruction, and access to them, preferably in electronic form.

- Dispersed cultural collections comprises libraries and other collections formerly held by institutions or private collectors which were dispersed through political events (wars, dissolution of monasteries) or through auctions and duplicate sales, and are today held in various public institutions (libraries, archives, museums) or in different sections of such institutions. The dispersed materials may be in different formats (manuscripts, printed books, archival documents, photographs) and may date from any period. Papers about individual collectors and dealers will also be considered.
- Preservation and conservation deals with aspects of the physical assessment of an object for the better understanding of its contexts, with special regard to provenances. The role of the conservator should be given particular consideration, including procedures for preserving and documenting features relevant for the history of an item during conservation, such as provenance marks and former shelfmarks.
- Reconstruction should cover questions of identifying individual items which once belonged to such a collection; of investigating the survival of historical collections; or of maintaining inventories or archives of collections that have been dispersed. Papers should discuss methods of reconstruction, i.e. through identification of provenances, through matching of historical inventories with surviving items, or through digitization as well as methods for the creation of virtual libraries or databases of dispersed materials.
- Access refers to the questions concerning the needs of target-groups of such projects (from researchers to the general public), the standards applied for cataloguing and presentation and problems of overcoming heterogeneous standards for diverse materials; technical solutions for their presentation; and also raising awareness and funds for such projects.

Papers should place particular emphasis on issues of project management and methodology, e.g. policies regarding preservation and digitization; standards for cataloguing and recording provenances; cross-institutional cooperation (national and international).

Materials presented should be placed in a broader cultural-historical context in order to demonstrate their relevance to a wide range of

(academic) subjects and users, taking up the theme of IFLA president Claudia Lux for 2007-9: 'Libraries on the Agenda'.

Papers can be given in any of the official IFLA languages (English, French, German, Russian, Spanish), but abstracts should be submitted in English. Papers should not be longer than 15 pages. The oral presentation of each paper should not exceed 20 minutes.

The proposals must be submitted in an electronic format and must contain:

- Title of paper
- Summary of paper (250 - 350 words max)
- Speaker's name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone.

Important dates:

- Deadline for submission of abstract 31 December 2008
- Notification of acceptance: March 2009
- Deadline for submission of paper: 1 May 2009

All submissions should be sent via email to: Bettina Wagner, Rare books and Manuscript Section chair, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek ([bettina.wagner@bsb-muenchen.de](mailto:bettina.wagner@bsb-muenchen.de)); Per Cullhed, Preservation and Conservation Section chair, Uppsala University Library ([per.cullhed@ub.uu.se](mailto:per.cullhed@ub.uu.se)); Hermina G.B. Anghelescu, Library History Section chair, Wayne State University ([ag7662@wayne.edu](mailto:ag7662@wayne.edu)). Please send your proposal to all three addresses.

Please note that the IFLA sections have no funds for financial assistance to prospective authors: abstracts should only be submitted on the understanding that the expenses of attending the conference (including travel expenses and conference fee) and registration and hotel bookings will be the responsibility of the presenter(s) of accepted papers. Some national professional associations may be able to help fund certain expenses, and a small number of grants for conference attendance may be available at: [www.ifla.org/III/members/grants.htm](http://www.ifla.org/III/members/grants.htm)