

An Leabharlann

THE IRISH LIBRARY

Second Series Volume 15 Number 1 1999/2000

- * Public library development
- * Open learning for adults
- * Nurturing individual liberty
- * News
- * Reviews

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THE IRISH LIBRARY

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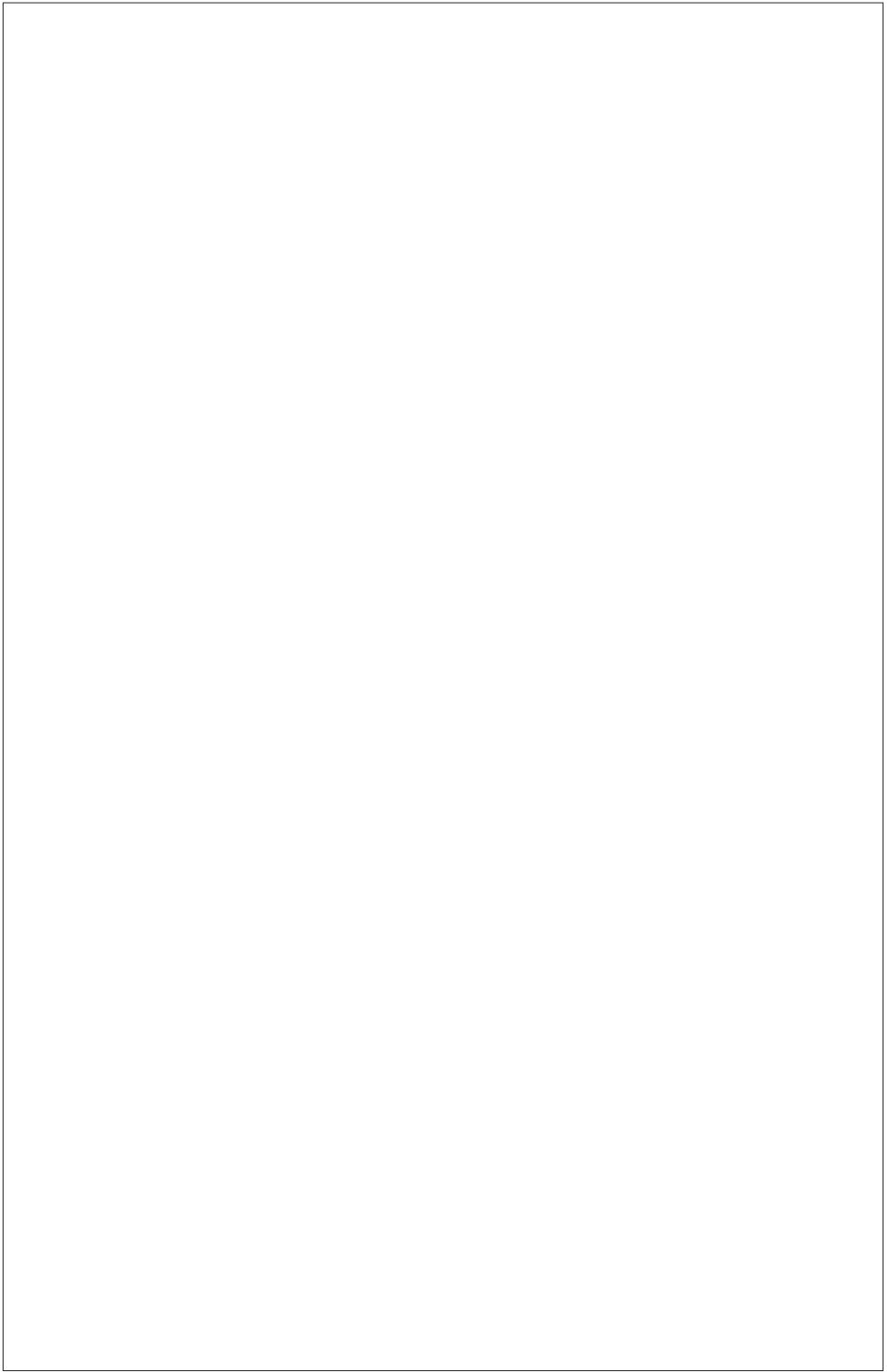
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EDITORIAL

This past year has been a fruitful one for publications on public library policy and practice. The report of the Department of Environment and Local Government, *Branching Out: a new public library service* will undoubtedly inform on public library policy in the years to come. An important addition to the dialogue on public library policy was published in September 1999. *Public Libraries 2000 - National Network, Local Service* is the result of four years work on standards for a modern public library service by the Public Libraries 2000 Working Group of the Library Association of Ireland. This publication illuminates the vision behind the *Branching Out* report. At the heart of these standards is the idea of a network of modern libraries serving every community in the country, a national resource in terms of stock resources, staff and information and communications technologies, but delivered locally, accountable to local authorities and individual communities. So how does this vision of a nationwide network of fully resourced public libraries become a reality? Are the recommendations of the *Branching Out* report adequate? In this issue we publish the practical and considered responses of the City and County Librarians' Section of the Library Association of Ireland to each of the recommendations in this report.

Staying with the practical, Mandy Bryson brings us step by step through the process of establishing an open learning centre at Ballee Library, in partnership with the local community association and the School of Adult and Community Education at the North East Institute of Further Education. Finally, Phil Scanlan's article *Idiosyncratic Intelligence* is a personal reflection of the role of a public library in nurturing the ideal of individual liberty.

Noreen O'Neill and Kevin Quinn
Joint Editors



The Response of the City & County Librarians Section of the Library Association of Ireland to the Issues raised and Recommendations of

BRANCHING OUT:

A NEW PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE

Branching Out – A New Public Library Service was published by the Department of the Environment and Local Government in November 1998. The report, prepared by a specially commissioned project team consisting of representatives from the bodies most concerned with managing and delivering the public library service in Ireland, is a comprehensive review of public libraries and public library policy in this country. The City and County Librarians Section of the Library Association of Ireland met in early 1999 to formally respond to the issues raised and the recommendations of Branching Out. The responses are published below.

Issue One A Better Service in Public Libraries

Developing enhanced opening hours

- The section endorses the recommendation that Library Authorities should immediately commence work on developing a programme of enhanced opening hours.
- The staffing implications of this recommendation present a challenge for Library managers and it is crucial to stress the quality of staffing needed when addressing this recommendation.
- Changes in work practices will be necessary and must be negotiated if delivery of quality library services with enhanced opening hours is to be achieved.

Investing in In Library Staff

- The Section endorses the three recommendations made, and fully supports the development of a staff development programme for staff at all levels of the service.
- The section notes that staffing is the key to the realisation of all recommendations

made in *Branching Out*. Without a trained and qualified staff, with a proper ratio of professional/para-professional grades, it will be impossible to develop a new Public Library Service as aspired to in this report.

- The position of the Chief Librarian in the Local Authority Structure is crucial to the provision of a proper staffing structure within the library service.
- The Section recommends the formal appointment of a Deputy County/City Librarian.
- The role of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna should be expanded to cover specific training needs in Library Authorities.
- As a matter of urgency, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna should be requested to make a detailed presentation on the staff development implications of the report, to a meeting of all Local Authority Personnel Officers to ensure their active co-operation in realising the objectives of the report in relation to staff development.
- The course content of professional library courses should be examined in consultation with University College Dublin to ensure all needs of the Public Library Service are met. A minimum Information Technology literacy level equivalent to the European Computer Driving License should be identified and incorporated into staff training programmes.

Improving equality of access to library services

- The Section welcomes the recommendation regarding co-funding of Optical scanners.
- The Section calls for the development of adequate measurement criteria to reflect actual use of the Public Library Service and to measure the social impact of the service.
- Specific reference to Library Services for the Housebound should be made when dealing with physical and social barriers to library services use.
- The need for marketing of the Public Library Service at the national level is crucial and should be included in a plan of action regarding equality of access. The use of key figures of national standing who actively support the Public Library Service should be investigated.
- It must be recognised that one of the greatest physical barriers to access at present is inadequate opening hours and poor infrastructure.
- The Section calls for the adoption of a strategy that seeks the abolition of charges. The Minister's call for free access for children is seen as a first step in accomplishing this strategy. We extend congratulations to Wicklow Co. Council on their decision to drop Library charges and call on all Local Authorities to follow suit.

Improving Specialised Services

- A Public Library Service policy should be to provide specialised services relevant to need, demand and potential benefit, firstly at local level and then in co-operation with others at regional and national level.
- Specialised services can be costly in terms of staff, time etc, but a value judgement is the only valid measurement.
- We endorse the co-operation measures as laid out in the report.

Developing Life-long Learning Services

- The Section seeks formal recognition from the Department of Education & Science that the Public Library Service is essential and central to life-long learning.
- A submission should be made to the Department of Education and Science "Green Paper" referred to by the project team on the provisions of life – long learning in Public Libraries.
- The Section fully supports the recommendation that the Department of the Environment and Local Government and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna should have a formal relationship with the Department of Education & Science with life-long learning as one of the platforms.
- 100% funding should be provided for technology infrastructure.
- To effectively deliver life-long learning services to the public, specific training needs to be incorporated into an overall staff training and development programme.
- A Public Relations programme specific to life-long learning services will be required if life-long learning services are to be marketed successfully to the widest possible public.
- The section recommends that the Public Library Service should be represented on the National Adult Learning Council.

Issue Two **Providing Adequate Infrastructure**

- The general thrust of the report, the total acknowledgement that the infrastructure is not in place and that the Service is dependant on infrastructure is welcomed by the section.
- The report deals very comprehensively with the needs of the Public Library Service vis-à-vis Information and Communications Technology and this is also welcomed.
- It will be impossible for some Local Authorities to provide 25% of the cost of infrastructure projects as recommended. The financial implications for Local Authorities are very significant:
 - *Local Authorities must find 25% or £38.5 million for Capital Development over 8 years.*
 - *£38.5 million equates with:*
In excess of 1 full year of current expenditure.
12.85% increase in total expenditure per annum.
 - *Once off capital investment should be carried in full by Central Government as the ongoing costs of capital projects are huge and are carried exclusively by Local Authorities.*
- In light of the above, the section questions the ability of Local Authorities to meet targets set in the report.
- There is every likelihood that instead of stimulating development, the infrastructure funding mechanisms outlined in the report may depress it.
- In addition, the infrastructure funding mechanisms outlined may lead to increasing

disparities in the quality of Public Library Services offered by Local Authorities. Even development will be impossible and counties with no major potential sponsors and a poor rate base may be significantly disadvantaged.

- The total capital provision of £93.5 million is inadequate.

Issue Three **Reaching All Communities**

- This section is strongly of the view that judging mobile library services in purely economic terms is short-sighted and flawed. It is important to acknowledge the social importance of mobile libraries. In addition, it is crucial to examine the opportunities provided by: information technology, the range of vehicles available and staffing options in order to find innovative mobile-service delivery methods.
- This section rejects completely the suggestion made in the report regarding the use of local shops as a method of effective service delivery to isolated communities.
- The importance of library staff in the delivery of a quality service must be stressed.
- The opportunity to carry out research in selected Local Authorities and in co-operation with An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and with Central Government is warmly welcomed.
- It is the view of the section that the innovative approach which the Project team recommends regarding reaching all communities could in fact be generated by concentrating on pooling of ideas nationally as well as looking at practices abroad.
- The question of quality service delivery to the Housebound needs to be explicitly considered under this section of the report.

Issue Four **Improving the Range and Quality of Stock**

- There is little in this section that Public Librarians have not been stating for years and there is a fundamental acceptance by the Project Team of the total inadequacy of library stock, with which the Section are in complete agreement.
- The Section welcomes the fact that Public Opinion outlined in submissions made to the Project Team has been taken on board in this section of the report.
- The Section believes it is crucial that the Minister actively works with Library Authorities to achieve and to sustain the bookfund targets set out in the report.
- The Section believes that every citizen should be equally treated in the distribution of the national book grant and that it is undemocratic to do otherwise. In addition the formula for distribution needs to be clarified and made transparent.
- The section believes that the Public Library Services' role regarding primary school children is seriously understated in this section of the report. This service was established in the 1960's and has never been adequately funded.

Issue Five **Improving Local and National Promotion & Marketing of Library Services**

- The differentiation made in the report between promotion, advertising and marketing is useful in that it helps to isolate the different challenges facing Public Library Services and helps to identify the responsibilities which the different players (Library Staff, Local Authorities, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna etc.) need to accept.
- The section agrees with the point made in the report that 'the service must be worth marketing' in the first place.
- The section agrees that research is necessary and suggests that:
 - *The "Brief" must be decided on regarding who and what should be researched, where, when and how it should be done.*
 - *Some level of training in research methodology for library staff is necessary in order to be able to either manage a research project or to critically appraise any consultants work.*
- An Chomhairle Leabharlanna should use a summary of the report as a basis for surveying each Government Department, Arts Council, Heritage Council, etc, as to their perception of Libraries and the extent to which they might be prepared to "invest" in the Public Library Service in return for being able to use libraries to deliver their information/ services.
- The Section questions the recommendation that market research of library user needs should be carried out as part of a market research project of the entire local library authority.
- The report seems to infer that a national promotion campaign around the general concept of Library would be non-productive. This inference needs to be examined. The Section believes that a national campaign could place the library concept in peoples' consciousness and remind them of the existence of the service, the value of reading, the value of the Public Library Services information role, etc. A national campaign could be simple, and if it is cross media, could be very far reaching in terms of audience. Accordingly, a cost-effective national promotion campaign needs to be given serious consideration.

Issue Six **Improving Co-operation with Other Library & Non Library Organisations**

- The Section wholeheartedly endorses the sentiments and the recommendations of the Project Team in relation to improving library co-operation.
- The Section also agrees in principle with the methodology recommended for each library authority to draw up it's own co-operation strategy and to consult as widely as possible with all other service providers in the community. However it is important to note that in practise unless and until the Public Library Service is provided with adequate resources to do this, it cannot happen. Among the key major obstacles to achieving the objective of improving co-operation are lack of Information and Communications Technology Infrastructure and poor staffing levels.

Issue Seven **Improving Schools Library Services**

- The report concentrates on school libraries as a source for developing information skills and as a positive force in the area of literacy and reading skills. The Section feels that greater emphasis should be placed on the role of the Primary Schools Library Service as a means of encouraging and promoting a love of reading and developing a life-long love of literature.
- The Section calls on the Minister of Education and Science to increase the per capita grant for the Primary School Library Service to a minimum of £5.00 per pupil immediately and thereafter an annual increase.
- The Section endorses the views expressed by the Project Team in relation to the development of a Post Primary Schools Library Service.
- The Section strongly suggests that the importance of the Public Library Service role in relation to primary schools should be stressed and actively developed.

Issue Eight **Developing the Library as a Centre of Culture**

- The Section endorses all of the recommendations made in this section of the report. The Section notes that the Public Library Service is uniquely placed in relation to cultural provision and has a long tradition of working with communities in the Arts.
The role of the Public Library Service in relation to the wider area of European culture should be acknowledged and developed.

Issue Nine **Improving the Service through Library Research**

- The Section agrees that the Public Library Service could be significantly improved through Library Research.
- The Section proposes that the consideration should be given to:
 - *Cross Sectoral Library Research*
 - *A significant and meaningful role for the Department of Library and Information Studies, University College Dublin regarding research.*
 - *The importance of research into serving a society undergoing major changes.*
 - *Developing effective benchmarks that can be used by managers of the Public Library Service to develop and evaluate the service.*

The Officers of the County and City Librarians' Section of the Library Association of Ireland for the year 1999 are Chairman: Pat McMahon; Vice Chairman: Donal Brady; Secretary: Josephine Brady; Treasurer: Liam Smith.

The Oasis Centre: an Open Learning experience in the heart of Ballymena

MANDY BRYSON

The Oasis Centre was established in Ballee Library in 1997 offering an informal approach to education. This article describes how one voluntary and two statutory bodies have successfully worked in partnership to promote lifelong learning in an area of social deprivation.

Background

Ballee housing estate in south Ballymena was built in phases between 1971 and 1978 and is an area of relative deprivation (15.3% unemployment – 1996) with poor educational attainment (1% graduates). Ballee Community Association was established in 1977 and has been active in providing employment through Action Community Employment (A.C.E.) Schemes and meeting the needs of the community with pre-school provision, a homework club and other similar services. It has been instrumental in highlighting areas of need, many of which were documented in its strategic review in 1996 “*The Way Ahead*”.

Ballee Library, opened in 1977, has a central position in the Neighbourhood Centre adjacent to the Community Association. The library has suffered from the general decline within the estate – although originally opened for 37 hours per week this was reduced to 29.5 hours in 1983 and, again, in 1990 to the present 21.5 hours. Annual book issues continued to decline over a number of years until they had fallen to just over 19,000 in 1996 – performance figures produced for all services points graphically illustrated that Ballee fell outside acceptable issue, cost and stock turnover levels. At the time I was employed as District Librarian for the Ballymena area and it was clear to me that a more radical approach was required.

The library was arranged with Adult lending stock in an L-shaped main room and the children’s library in a separate room, which made the branch awkward to staff for the majority of the time when it was single manned. The stock was weeded and condensed in the spring of 1996 and the children’s section relocated in the main part of the library. I looked at other uses for the former Children’s library, which would meet a number of criteria:

- Attract new or increase business in the existing library
- Fulfil a need within Ballee Estate and the Community as a whole

- Provide Partnership involvement
- Raise the profile of the Library Service in the Ballymena area

A number of options were explored from a Citizen's Advice Centre to a Job skills Centre but they failed to reach fruition. I had built up contacts with the Adult Literacy Department in the North East Institute of Further and Higher Education (NEIFHE) over a number of months. An innovative adult literacy section called "*Next Step*" was introduced in Ballymena library in May 1996 which allowed the students easy access to up-to-date practical reading materials helping them improve their basic skills and enhancing their self-esteem by developing inter-personal skills. A number of students who came from the Ballee area expressed a need for an informal facility within the Estate, which could help them with basic skills such as reading, writing, form filling etc.

Partnership

I approached the adult literacy tutor in NEIFHE and she set up a meeting with the Head of School of Adult and Community Education. The School was already involved in another community training programme in Ballykeel Estate and was interested in the Institute providing tutoring for basic skills in the proposed centre.

I also approached the Community Development Officer in Ballee Community Association who had recently carried out an assessment of needs in the Estate. This helped confirm the findings of the Library Service and NEIFHE and the Community Association was enthusiastic about forming a Partnership. The Community Association could provide childcare facilities and an information network through their A.C.E. workers, which would be essential in winning goodwill throughout the Ballee Estate.

Each partner makes an essential contribution to the whole: Ballee Community Association provide a distribution network for publicity, childcare facilities for students who use the centre and their A.C.E. workers painted the outside of the building. North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) provide the room, stock, IT support, administration and library facilities and staff expertise. NEIFHE provide tutor support for all courses which is the key to the success of the Oasis centre.

Funding

A possible source of funding emerged in July 1996 – the European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (EUSPPR) in partnership with Ballymena Borough Council. I looked at the feasibility of an application for strategic Theme 1 – Social Inclusion (Improving the Social Environment) in partnership with the NEIFHE and Ballee Community Association.

I made an application for Peace and Reconciliation funding in August 1996 which targeted specific groups and, although based in Ballee Estate which has a perceived Protestant community background, would draw students from across the religious

divide. The initial application was based on a three year project costing in the region of £40,000 – 25% of which would be match funding from our own “partnership” and involved estimates of refurbishing the room, stock, equipment and tutor fees. The application was “vetted” by the Chief Librarian and the Board’s Finance Department. Although the application was planned within a two week period it proved to be sound in concept.

We received an offer of £16,150 in November 1996 – the reduced figure was due to the large number of applications for funding. The figure was to help set up the Open Learning centre and contribute towards the running costs for the first year and the Board officially accepted the “Letter of Offer” at the Board Meeting on 25th February 1997.

The Aims of the Centre

- To meet the learning needs of a deprived area, improve the quality of life within the whole community and empower its members to make decisions for their future
- To provide an open learning service to the unemployed, disabled and women returning to work who may lack confidence to embark on traditional programmes.
- To offer basic skills education and support to those who require it.
- To offer alternative study resources to any individuals within the whole community who wish to upgrade their skills and knowledge.

A project committee was organised on a fairly informal basis allowing each partner to have representation while facilitating the flow of information regarding progress during the refurbishment of the centre. The room was refurbished, security upgraded, equipment and stock purchased and installed ready for business on 1st September 1997. Facilities at the Centre initially included 4 PCs, Television/video, cassettes/CD player with listening facilities and the use of a fax machine in the Library. It became apparent that a photocopier would be required to allow the Course Tutor to utilise the basic skills materials to the best advantage because of the high number of photocopy permissible items. A leased tabletop photocopier was ordered for the library, which could also be used for the Oasis Students.

Courses were student demand driven from the outset. The initial interest was very encouraging and the course tutor spent this early period getting to know people and finding out what type of courses or support they wanted. The official opening by Paul Clark, Ulster Television presenter, on 11th September 1997 provided a good opportunity to network with appropriate agencies and stimulated future enquiries. Demand for courses centred on computer skills, basic skills and interview skills. Courses were arranged to meet these needs: Basic skills in English and Mathematics along with interview skills and techniques started in September, Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) classes started in October and family literacy “Read to Succeed” classes began in November. All classes were accredited.

Monitoring

Monitoring of the Centre was put in place from the beginning and a number of methods were used:

- NEIFHE Student registration forms were able to give information regarding equal opportunities and the geographical spread of membership
- The Oasis Centre log sheet which individual students signed on each visit stating date, name, purpose and any comments.
- The Oasis Centre enquiry sheet was used to log any telephone or request for tutor help while the tutor was off site stating date, name and telephone contact number and message.
- A record was kept of any stock which was issued to the Oasis Students
- A questionnaire was distributed to Basis Skills students in December 1997 to try to measure if using the Centre had helped to improve their confidence or enhance their self-esteem.
- Successful students would receive an accreditation in CLAIT I, Basis Skills (English and Maths) and Read to Succeed

Early indications of the monitoring showed an enormous response from the Community. It was originally agreed between NEIFHE and the Library Service that a minimum of twenty students were required to register to make the centre viable and within the first five months sixty-two students were registered with many more wishing to take up computer courses.

As the courses on offer were totally pertinent to the needs and demands of the students the Centre was well supported and used by the students and the mixture of formal classes and the “drop-in” aspect worked well. Groups used the Centre during quieter periods and this was a good use of resources.

The Centre also provided an important support for students with basic skill needs who had developed their skills and required more support than the four hours per week which the North East Institute’s nearby campus offered. The informal nature of the Centre had meant that the tutors could respond to the students’ needs by either providing more classes or planning for future classes. Indications from the enhanced self-esteem questionnaire were that the students did feel more confident having had the tutor support in the Centre. However, this is a very difficult aspect of the project to measure. I think it would be fair to say the Oasis Centre has had a positive effect on their lives.

The partnership was buoyed by the phenomenal success of the centre in the first year as it easily exceeded all expectations in meeting the criteria set to measure progress. A financial audit and a qualitative evaluation were carried out in January 1998 and the European funding was signed off in April 1998.

Honeymoon period over

Alternative funding and awards were sought to allow the project to progress and develop but with little success. Our phase 2 application was unsuccessful and although we were shortlisted the Ballymena Council partnership had limited funds and decided

not to award to groups who had been successful in phase 1. I continued to make applications: Library Association Community Initiative Award and Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) application for EUSSPPR funding which was passed on to the Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) – neither of which were successful.

A plan of action was needed as we approached the critical time of September 1998 – how could we sustain the centre without extra funding. Well, in truth, it was very difficult but somehow we managed. The courses could still continue but required a minimum of 8 students per tutor. This worked in most cases but jeopardised the welcoming “drop-in” element in the centre. The EGSA application was still pending so the Library Service and NEIFHE agreed to share the cost of providing a course tutor for four hours per week which would allow for administration time to set up courses and talking to new students about their needs. This arrangement is still continuing.

We needed more PCs to facilitate the computer classes and the library service provided low specification PCs, which would run Microsoft Works. These were replaced at the end of this financial year by 4 PCs, which were millennium compliant and a laser printer, was purchased by the library service. A further £2000 was spent throughout the year on additional stock and study support materials.

The present

Internet facilities are available through DERAL (Distance Education in Rural Areas via Libraries) the EU Telematics for libraries project. This is in partnership with the University of Ulster. Ballee library is performing better and increased its issues by 39% during 1998/9 and the Oasis Centre is one of a number of contributory factors.

We are entering a new phase in the Oasis Centre: a stimulating series of courses ran during this summer and the centre has now been included in the NEIFHE part-time study prospectus 1999/2000 as an outcentre. The Oasis is being used as a case study in the *Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion research project* based at the School of Information Management, Leeds Metropolitan University and funded by the Library and Information Commission. We hope to apply for funding through the “access initiative” or “strategic collaboration” funds recently announced by the Northern Ireland Education Minister as part of the government’s Lifelong Learning Policy. The Centre is registered as an *IT for All* site and it is also hoped it can come under the *University for Industry* umbrella.

The Oasis Centre is meeting all the criteria set to measure its success and is being used as a model for establishing other open learning centres within the NEELB Library service. A total of 208 students have enrolled and used the Centre since it opened its doors in 1997.

And the lessons are:

- Have a “project manager” who can oversee grant applications, make sure that the grant procedures are adhered to, arrange regular committee meetings and ensure feedback for partnership members

- Partnerships grow and change – be ready and willing to adapt to any changes, which may occur.
- Plan funding applications well, using the relevant jargon etc. They can be time-consuming but get easier to do with practice!
- Have a back-up plan when funding applications are not successful.
- Ensure the support of parent organisations by keeping them informed of developments – good or bad well in advance. This allows them to plan for needs, as additional resources become available.
- Do not give up hope – projects such as these have ups and downs. I received word at the beginning of the summer that EGSA had more funds. A revised application that includes provision for a development officer is pending.

In conclusion, this is an extract from a booklet, which the basic skills students compiled last year called “*Words, wit and wisdom*”. It clearly illustrates how the Oasis centre has helped to empower the students

“Since going to the Oasis Centre I have done work which I did not think I could do and now I know how to work a computer. The Oasis Centre has taught me a lot. It has taught me to use my mind, how to write properly and how to use new technology.

It is great there are places like the Oasis Centre where people can go and achieve their goal in life. I would not miss the Oasis Centre for all the money in the world”

Mandy Bryson, is Group Librarian for the Ballymena area. She was awarded runner-up in the 1998 Public Library Entrepreneur of the Year for work on the Oasis project.

References

Who values evaluation? Duncan Kemp Open Learning to-day September/October 1997

Further Information

If you would like to know more details of the Oasis Centre please contact Philip Magee Information Librarian in Ballymena Group.

Tel. 01266 664126 Fax 01266 46680 or E-mail philipmag@hotmail.com

Access the Oasis Centre on the Internet <http://deral.inf.ac.uk/ballee/>

Idiosyncratic Intelligence: Information and the Public Library

PHIL SCANLAN

The most fundamental role of the public library is to nurture freedom of thought and expression. We must remain conscious of this primary function because it will determine the nature of the service we provide. It is vital that we consider how to deliver a library service that supports this function.

Today as citizens of a post-industrial, information based society we increasingly perceive ourselves, glimpsed in our social reflection, as rational, logical beings. This is a classic example of the triumph of presentation over content, as our capacity for logic remains infinitesimal. We live our lives governed by automatic responses, the source of which we rarely examine. The inherited assumptions that drive these responses may be less prone to mysticism than before. We may now require them to conform to some logical system, but they remain, as ever, received beliefs. Outside the parameters of the logical system of the moment, the nature of existence is no less impenetrable. Reason is a fragile tool with which we approach the maelstrom of sub-conscious and unconscious impressions, which are the progenitors of everything we believe we know. Even accepting that human nature is inherently irrational there is still something fantastic in our predilection to place at the heart of passionate, tribal, allegiance, ideas in whose subject matter we often have little or no substantive interest. The differences which occasion, either the fellowship we feel when we believe we share a common experience of the world with another, or the unease and hostility when we believe him or her to be intrinsically alien, often appear to offer little more than material for good conversation. Why are we not astounded, for example that theological speculation could serve as an emblem of tribal identity? Religion remains one of the most potent symbols of tribal belonging, with little evidence that this represents any real spiritual engagement.

Political economy is another area of knowledge where divisions of opinion attain iconic status. It is understandable that we should hold strong opinions on, for example the merits of the free market as a mechanism for distributing wealth. However this issue often seems to symbolize far more for us than the subject matter would appear to warrant. Currently in the western liberal democracies the ideology of free enterprise is enjoying resurgence in popularity. The disintegration of much of the communist block has been widely interpreted as a victory for capitalism. The perception that the failure to safeguard human liberties by states, with political systems best described as state

controlled capitalism, in countries with little or no democratic traditions, vindicates the free market as a method of ensuring human liberty represents a quantum leap in logic. The implication of this leap is that what is at issue, is not a question of economic best practice but a symbolic dialogue between the orderly and familiar and the chaotic and strange. This is not to say that an endorsement of the free market represents a lack of critical thought, while approval of state intervention in the market place is evidence of political analysis. My contention is that this question is weighed by a symbolism that refers to matters more profound and indistinct than economics. This symbolism will vary in meaning and intensity from one society to another. There will be a commonality in capitalist societies. The significance of this shared understanding lies in the degree to which it will imbue an economic question with connotations that have no innate connection to it. The ensuing lack of clarity is likely to be equal on both sides of the argument. That is, it is likely that the concept of the free market will be valued, as it will be derided, for reasons, which have nothing to do with economics.

The question of private versus public enterprise, therefore, is accompanied by an emotional volatility that has no substantive connection to it. This has a particular relevance to a public library service, which owes its existence to a belief in the necessity of state intervention in the provision of some services. A defense of that belief needs to be clear-sighted if it is to be challenged or indeed supported by perspectives that are clouded by unrelated, emotional matters. Although it is unlikely that many will believe that a public library service is the first step on a slippery slope to a police state it should be mindful of the need to defend its claim. Any exposition of a library's claim on public funds should take account of the context within which such an exposition is made. It will serve its interests better in the long term if support of its claim is based on the merits of that claim rather than an irrationally conceived support for state provision of services.

In contemporary western society even the most zealous proponents of a market economy are unlikely to aspire to live in a world where there are no publicly funded services. There is a consensus that in the pursuit of a civilised society certain fundamental services should be provided for all, regardless of ability to pay. A public library service competes for public money with services so fundamental to our existence that we acknowledge the necessity of universal provision. The inclusion of a public library service in this company of services is based on the contention that access to information allows us the possibility of a fuller participation in civil society. Exclusion from the knowledge of how a society operates, how decisions are made, who makes them, is to be excluded from the possibility of participating in those decision-making processes. It is not only or even particularly factual information that contributes to our ability to participate in society. Anything that adds to our understanding of human nature serves to increase our potential, firstly to realise we have preferences and secondly to exercise them. Arguably therefore it is in a broader access to literature and art that the greatest challenges lie.

Assuming an ambition to evolve into a more just society, the provision of a public library would number among the essential services. This proviso alone however, does

not require that those services be provided outside of market constraints. A privately administered library service could ensure it provided universal access in some form by devices such as sponsorship, state subsidies, grants, tax allowances etc. The market would set the price of the services ensuring that they were demand driven; the state could then pay where individuals could not. Whether or not we decide the public library service could be satisfactorily delivered by such a system will determine the nature of that service. If we decide that the market can deliver it satisfactorily we are in very familiar territory. The literature is voluminous on how best to identify, nurture and sell to various markets. We know roughly what it is we are doing; there are a finite number of options to choose from in deciding how to do it and, perhaps best of all, we will know if we have been successful. It is simpler to decide how to do something that to discover what should be done.

Institutions that deal with information and knowledge are dealing with the basic building blocks of our psyches. Everything that we are both individually and collectively, flows from what we think we know. Apart from breathing, there is nothing more fundamental than our ability to acquire and decode information, transforming it into knowledge. The degree, to which we can control this acquisition, determines the degree to which we can contribute to the construction of our internal worlds, the foundation on which everything else is built. The question is, can the market place deliver a library service that will facilitate humanity's attempt to exercise this fundamental control over the acquisition of knowledge?

The sales pitch for a market economy model is that it alone can deliver human freedom. In this version of reality, what people need or want is translated into a demand, which inexorably attracts an appropriate supply. Any distortion of the market represents a distortion of people's choices and should therefore be resisted by the true libertarian. For the libertarian freedom constitutes the most fundamental of human values and should be nurtured for its own sake, not for what it may bring about. Our right to make our own decisions should never be predicated on the quality of these decisions. Indeed there should never be a cause for any evaluation of them other than our own. The exception being when these decisions constitute a direct interference in the life of any other individual. A culture reflecting a libertarian ethos will be concerned, not with what people decide, but with maximizing the degree to which authority for decisions is invested in each person. No legal or societal attempt should be made to direct the nature of the decisions made, only to disperse the source of decision-making as widely as possible.

No society lives up to this ideal completely. It would preclude, for example, government provision of information. Some forms of behaviour have consequences so irretrievably destructive for ourselves or for the principles underlying civilization that we feel we cannot refrain from directing others away from them. Nor do we stop at propaganda; there are some choices that are legally prohibited, where justification or interference with the liberties of others is absent. For the libertarian, these defections from a pure application of the principle are problematic because they introduce the concept of *a broad consensus of opinion* that imposes its will on the individual. We should make our own choices no matter

how dire the consequences of those choices. However, there is a justification for some compromise. That compromise lies in an acknowledgement that human liberty is not a naturally occurring phenomenon. It is a product of civilisation and civilisation is a cultural artifact, something we create through institutionally induced values and behaviours. These values impose constraints on us, limiting our choices, but paradoxically without them we would have no concept of human liberty, no real choices at all. There is no freedom in nature even for the powerful; today's predator is tomorrow's prey, as circumstance change. A commitment to freedom requires a large measure of discipline. Out of the constraints we impose on ourselves we create a space for each individual to exercise control over his or her own life. We need however to distinguish between the constraints necessary to create a matrix for civilisation and others which may serve a different purpose. Liberty is not necessarily valued for its own sake but rather as a means to an end. For some it represents the right to make good decisions, its purpose is to provide us with the means to make a good choice, one of the routes by which we can get to a pre-determined destination.

Of course liberty in any form is not necessarily valued. In fact freedom is not at all an easy concept. It is possible that in many instances freedom brings no benefits at all, while an absence of freedom would bring many. There are no guarantees where freedom of choice will deliver us. The only conceivable constant in outcome is a nurturing of individuality. However an appreciation of individuality, like freedom, is not nearly as widespread as one might expect. This is indicated by the degree to which many of us appear to feel more comfortable with the differences between groups rather than individuals. When the virtues of diversity are being extolled they tend to be in terms of the differences between categories of people. These differences can serve far more to emphasise the sameness of all within the group than they do the differences between the groups. If we are all uniquely individual, this implies an infinite, uncontrollable diversity. If an appetite for diversity is rather more finite, how much more comforting to dwell on differences measured by *inter alia*, ethnicity, gender, age and class. The possibility of society preserving human freedom lies in its being valued for its own sake, seen as a necessity rather than a means to produce other benefits. The public library is a product of this commitment to freedom for freedom's sake. The free movement of information is the foundation on which freedom of choice is built. The public library therefore, is far from being a value free institution. We would do well to remind ourselves that freedom of thought and expression are values, not as it is often interpreted, the absence of resistance to any other values. Surely if we accept that the public library brief is to foster the free movement of information, it follows that this would be best delivered by a market economy. After all, this economic device is trumpeted as the sole repository of human freedom. I contend that our faith in the market, even an adjusted market to deliver on this claim is misplaced. The idea that it is the perfect device to empower people's choices is derived from the thesis that our choices constitute a demand. Supplying that demand is profitable and therefore inevitable. Firstly this idea ignores the degree to which our choices are cultural artifacts. What we think

we know is built up instant by instant by forces external to us. The amount of control available to us in this process is dependent on the degree to which we can deconstruct that acquisition of knowledge. We cannot possibly hope to trace the origins of the process by which we acquire knowledge. We can however aspire to make some inroads in this impenetrable process. If we accept that inevitably we will be controlled by one external force or other our best chance for freedom lies in our attempt to exercise some control over those forces. I believe freedom of choice is largely an illusion, nevertheless in nurturing our capacity for independent observation of the controlling forces, we are nurturing a seed of resistance to those forces. A further inadequacy of the liberal market theory rests in the principle of the profitability of supplying demands. However profitable this may be, a demand, which we control, will be infinitely more so. A manufactured demand affords the most scope for control and therefore for profit. If we add to the random determinants that manufacture our consciousness, the manipulations of the market place we recede further from any possibility of resisting control.

Ironically our susceptibility to manipulation seems to increase in tandem with the growth of available information. At a time when more people than ever are literate, and when there is an unprecedented amount of information transmitted by media that require only the ability to look and listen, public discourse is increasingly impoverished. Fashion icons replace ideas; exchanges of slogans replace debate. As our ability to store, retrieve and transfer information grows it is matched by the growth in the advertising and public relations industries. The more information there is available, the more our gaze is directed at increasingly narrow segments of it. Perhaps the more information there is, the more the essentially chaotic nature of existence encroaches on us. The need to discover an order in the chaos becomes more urgent and we cling too tenaciously to any discernible pattern. We are becoming addicted to consensus. With one set of truths proceeded by another. The only consistency between them, the certitude with which this season's doctrines is held.

In order to counteract this manipulation, a public library service must be immune to market forces. It is not enough that it is located outside of these forces but must serve as a counterpoint to them and our willingness to be manipulated. Subverting the market, countering the vast and increasing array of phenomena exerting influence to sell us one idea or another is an immensely ambitious task. However this should not be the limit to a public library ambition. It should aspire to contribute to the unravelling of the infinite number of influences that contribute to the creation of our adult perceptions. It should attempt to serve as a counterpoint, not only to market forces, but to all the forces that determine our acquisition of knowledge, that guide our gaze in one direction or another. This subversive role is particularly important in relation to ourselves. We are our own most effective censors. The fact that this objective may not be realized does not negate the case for it to be at the centre of the public library's brief.

All we can hope to know of anything is through knowledge of ourselves. Everything we know is built from the first instant of consciousness. Even starting from a blank

canvas, we are all infinitely complex and variable. The second instant of consciousness is experienced differently because of the first and so on through all the instants of our lives. How can this be unravelled? How are we to understand anything that is true if we cannot be aware of the ways in which we are predisposed to know one thing rather than another? What is possible is that we may unravel to some extent the infinite variety of ways in which our internal worlds predispose us to perceive certain things and interpret them in certain ways. In order to communicate, indeed in order to think it is necessary to concentrate on one thought at a time. In this process some thoughts are excluded. In order to formulate a coherent sense of self, of everything other than self and its place within that other, it is necessary to permanently attach ourselves to some ideas to the exclusion of others. This reductive process may be necessary but it can become addictive and therefore far more extensive than it need be. For many a re-evaluation of the ideas that underpin our most fundamental assumptions would be too onerous. Nevertheless, if as a civilization, we are to keep faith with the idea that there is a possibility of a genuine pursuit of knowledge that is ultimately true, even if not a possibility of attaining that knowledge, we must provide a space where this value takes precedence over all others. If we are genuinely to subscribe to democracy it must be a space that is accessible to all. This is the role of the public library. That it not to say that the purpose of a public library is to make people uncomfortable, neither to promote one particular engagement with ideas rather than another. The essential role is to subvert the status quo. It should not provide an argument for a particular case but to demonstrate that there is always another case to be made. It should be careful not to exclude ideas intrinsically inimical to the values that underpin its existence. In essence it should work to ensure that the intellectual environment does not represent the results of the latest popularity contest.

In practical terms a public library should be catering not only for minority tastes, but also holding in stock books or other records of human thought that have no market at all. Moreover it should continue to hold such items despite no prospect of future interest. Ideally all records of human experience should be stored. All this effort to circumvent ourselves as our own censors is not inspired by the belief that all ideas are equal. On the contrary all ideas are intrinsically unequal, each by one criterion or another will be superior or inferior to another. But who is to make that judgement? One cannot possibly be free of the constraints that lead us to value one rather than another. One can however, try to disarm those constraints by providing the greatest variety of recorded thought possible. However, critical faculties should not be abandoned. When selecting stock, taking account of range as well as quality represents an attempt to address those imperfections. The greater the range of options that are kept visible the greater the number of people applying their criteria to the question of quality. The selection process should also take popularity into account. An environment that seeks to extend our ability to freely choose cannot be created by overruling current choices. Reducing the authority to make choices will not undermine the degree to which these choices are orchestrated by external forces. We may perceive that our knowledge base is constructed from building blocks of external

determinants, some consciously controlling, most randomly so, but we can only know what we know. To replace our own choices with others, no matter how more learned or wise, would be a regressive step. Freer choice lies in the impulse to examine the origins of our knowledge. The impulse can come only from oneself. The public library must provide an intellectual environment that nurtures that examination rather than hinders it. As long as the public library deals primarily with books, the criteria for selection will remain of crucial importance. However, selection skills may be even more important as advances in technology facilitate the storage of more information, and access to increasing numbers of external sources of information. The public library and library users are likely to be swamped by oceans of irrelevance. In order to combat this public library staff will have to expand their ability to navigate this abundance. These skills of navigation will be required to a greater extent throughout the service rather than in one department.

Local government is currently undergoing a process of re-evaluation and reform. As part of local government we should be examining whether such reform will serve the library's interest. Public service in the western liberal democracies has existed within the framework of a capitalist society. In capitalism value is measured by profit. Where there is no profit at stake there is a concomitant predisposition not to ascribe value. There has been a tendency to perceive the purpose of the public service as the provision of secure employment for those unwilling or unable to bear the cut and thrust of the private sector. This perception has occurred both within the service and outside of it. Insofar as this has formed part of the attitude of people providing the service, it has resulted in a lack of clarity, both in the definition of objectives and their execution. In the public library service this has manifested itself in the absence of a clear sense of the role within society of a public library service. In the current climate this lack of clarity is no longer possible. The public service must question what it is doing, why it is doing it and whether the work is being carried out in the most effective way possible.

On the one hand, a more systematic approach to defining objectives, planning how to achieve them and evaluating the results is precisely what is required to counteract any former lack of focus. However, the devices by which these objectives are to be achieved, mission statements, strategic planning, performance indicators are all concepts borrowed from the private sector. There is no reason why they could not, legitimately be applied to the public sector. The disciplines required in the private sector are fundamentally different from those required in the public sector. There is a danger that rather than adapting these concepts to fit the library service, the service itself shall be made to fit an interpretation of the concepts established by their previous application. This danger is augmented by the underdeveloped state of the existing disciplines and the paucity of controls grown out of the nature of the service being provided. This has left a vacuum we may be over eager to fill.

The value of a public library service lies in a complex interweaving of objectives that do not lend themselves to translation into tangible segments. For example, the public library attempts to create an environment accessible to all. Simultaneously this same environment

must contain sufficient counterpoints to the prevailing wisdom, to fulfill the function of undermining our tendency to reductive thought. The library must avoid anything that would serve to impose choices on library users. The library's role is to create an intellectual environment that will be conducive to an expansion of our ability to make our own choices. At the same time the degree to which these choices are reflected in the stock must be balanced by an acknowledgement of how much all our choices are the products of both conscious manipulation and the manipulation of random chance. How can these objectives possibly be achieved by a series of hard and fast means? It is imperative that the public library service does not compromise in acknowledging the complexity of the task at hand. Any success in achieving these highly ambitious objectives is likely to be a function of latitude allowed in responding in a multitude of ways.

There is a danger that in the current climate, which emphasizes realizable objectives and accountability, that there will be a tendency to concentrate on addressing smaller, more tangible problems. Issues that can be comprehensively described and definitively dealt with. A practice may develop whereby broader more intangible goals, issues which do not have a single solution, if any at all, will not be considered cost-effective. Similarly there may be an increased pressure to respond more to library users perceived demands at the expense of the library's role in providing a space for the greatest possible range of information and knowledge. Responding to library users demands is a more discernible and quantifiable activity, one that lends itself more to the kind of accountability required in a profit-making enterprise. In other words, the service may be provided in the same way as if it were subject to the disciplines of the market place. In effect this would be to undermine the most fundamental function of a public library service, to subvert market forces, to serve as a counterbalance to our tendency to reduce and streamline human experience.

If the public library functions exactly as if it operates within market constraints, why should it be located outside of them? Arguably a market system adjusted for universal access would be a more efficient means of delivering a demand-driven service. It would ensure that, what people want, would be the sole arbiter in determining the nature of the service. This system, however, would not contribute to our attempts as a society to enhance the free movement of information and knowledge and thus freedom of thought and expression. As the technology that allows us to store and transfer information becomes more sophisticated, so does our ability to manipulate the movement of information. In a market driven, cost-effective library service, economics of scale would ensure attempts to capitalise on mass tastes. Responding to minority tastes may prove profitable. Access to more information facilitates the concept of niche marketing. Market research on established tastes would allow the public library to identify gaps in the market that may prove profitable to fill. However the objective of keeping the intellectual environment of everyone stocked with the greatest range of information possible, regardless of the likelihood of this having any effect, will never be profitable. Market research can only be valuable for a public library insofar as it elucidated the degree to which our intellectual worlds exist within very rigid parameters. Its value lies in knowing the enemy

rather than providing a prototype on which to model future action. The tendency to narrowness in our intellectual lives is true of all of us to some extent. This tendency is not just a product of social circumstances but at its most fundamental a product of human nature, which we will always have to contend with. It is the irreplaceable role of a public library to provide an intellectual environment within which we may broaden our intellectual exercise. This is not a role that a market-driven service, by its nature, could ever fulfill. For this reason a public library must of necessity be located outside market constraints.

This paper is not a plea for public library provision to be spared the rigours of defining its objectives and accounting for its efforts to meet these objectives. However there is a need for public libraries to develop their own means of measuring performance. Firstly we should ensure the development of a culture that encourages us to engage with broader more intangible issues in society. The vastness and complexity of our goals should not be denied. Denying the complexity of the task, in order to focus on concrete, clear issues that lend themselves to easy analysis and solution is evidence, not of rigour, but of self-indulgence.

The limitations of our understanding, our inability to make any significant inroads into the universe of knowledge, do not provide us with a reason for ceasing to think. If it is true that the more we learn the more we realise how much we do not know, this should not make us disinclined to learn. The public library's attempt to engage with epistemology represents its most significant contribution to fostering freedom of thought and expression. Thinking is what defines us; to abandon it would be to abandon being human. The vastness of the enterprise does not dwarf the achievements. It is only a trick of perspective that may make it appear so.

Having maintained this broader outlook we should not then be confounded by an evaluation process that does not allow us to convey the complexity, both of what is being attempted, and the nature of those attempts. The term *performance indicator* carries with it the connotation of a heavy reliance on statistics. The number of library users, the number of telephone enquiries, the number of items borrowed, etc. Even by their own narrow frame of reference these statistics tell less than might be expected. For example the category Fiction covers such an enormous variety of works, both in style and substance, that knowing a certain number of fiction books were borrowed tells us very little. With increased computerisation, there will be potential for a more sophisticated use of statistics, however, statistics in themselves are of limited value.

The objectives of the public library service are rooted in the world as it is subjectively experienced. Any evaluation of these objectives needs to be sufficiently subtle to absorb a range of data. The strategies to be evaluated may serve a number of objectives simultaneously, which may often appear to pull in different directions. These objectives are also served by a creative and spontaneous response from library staff as they engage daily with people. Any evaluation of this response should be at sufficient distance to allow staff the space and autonomy necessary for any real engagement. For example if briskness were to become an indication of efficiency this would discourage staff from listening to library users and from

providing people with the time necessary to answer enquiries. There is no reason why evaluation processes may not be exacting. They must also be sufficiently complex to allow reportage on all the inter-weaving aims of a particular project and to measure the degree of success with which these aims are met against the sometimes unyielding nature of the problems being addressed.

A further aspect of the changes taking place within local government is the emphasis placed on the corporate role of the organisation. The benefit of this is a more integrated and rationalised organisation. Duplication is eliminated or at least significantly reduced as each individual service concentrates on the area where it can be most effective, ensuring that tasks better performed by another service are assigned to that service. Each component section is aware of the other parts, therefore a greater amount of information and even services are exchanged between them. Each part shares the objective of the organisation of the whole. The public library is a unique arm of local government, with many requirements and vulnerabilities that are peculiar to it. Above all else independence is a prerequisite. It can only afford one loyalty, to freedom of thought and expression. Though it provides a service, in the main, through a network of local branches, its interests are not rooted in the local but in the universal. The concept of the community library is only valuable if the community aspect serves as a gateway for the individual into the universal world of knowledge. The exercise of reading allows minds to communicate across time and space. Communications, whether by print or electronic media allow a different kind of community, one of ideas. Reading remains the best medium for minds to communicate directly without an intermediary. The library's engagement with people is as individual explorers rather than citizens of local communities. The independence of a public library may be threatened by viewing itself, or being viewed, as a member of a larger organisation. For example, it should guard against becoming in any way an endorsement for information produced by its local authority. It should carry with equal enthusiasm information what might be critical, even hostile to that local authority. Another possible threat to the independence of a library service lies in the process of change itself. Any attempt to bring about orchestrated change, however real and desirable that change may be brings with it the danger of orthodoxy. No endeavour is improved by an absence of real reflection, but a public library should be especially on guard against such a possibility. It owes its existence to the value we place on preserving ideas and facilitating their unhampered movement.

In conclusion this argument may be interpreted as a plea for the banal, the trite and the vacuous to be valued equally with the truly reflective. I would contend that all efforts should be given a place and that this exercise will afford the best opportunity for preserving the worthy and serious as well as the light and ephemeral. This *laissez-faire* attitude may appear at odds with the view the civilised society depends on withdrawing some aspects of the human endeavour from the market place, that human liberty may only be preserved by a judicious use of state intervention. There is, I believe, nothing *laissez-faire* or free about the free market. The first sale may indeed have been a spontaneous response to a real demand. It would not have taken that early entrepreneur long to realize that by exercising a

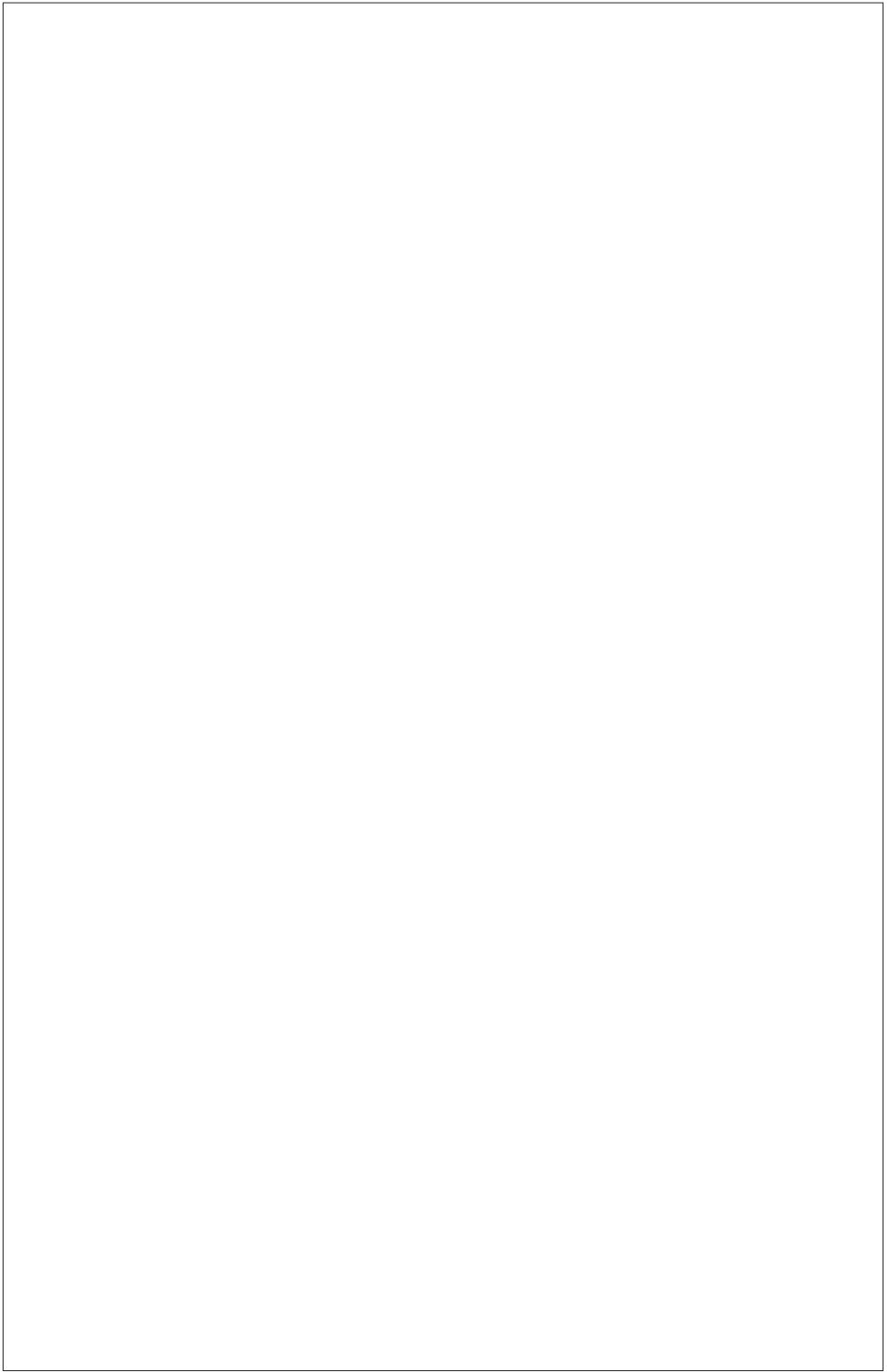
control over the nature of the demand and his or her power to supply it leads to greater profit. This history of the free market is the history of humanity's attempts to exercise such controls. The state provides a space in which the public library may operate outside of a market place so that it is not constrained to manipulate information in pursuit of profit. How ironic then if the public library were to impose those constraints purely as a matter of style.

The ideal at the heart of a public library is to contribute to the expansion of freedom of thought and expression. To preserve as far as possible all records of ideas even those that might threaten to enslave us. It is part of contemporary received wisdom that democracy is an ideal for which we should strive, an unalloyed good. In fact the ideal is individual liberty and even though democracy may be the best means towards this end it is not in itself intrinsically virtuous. Its virtue, rather, lies in the impediment it provides to particular individuals or groups seizing power over others. There is nothing inherently noble about the concept of majority rule. The freedom of the individual is as threatened by the tyranny of the majority as it is by any other tyranny. This idea is only rendered civilized because we have modified it to include the concept of basic liberties that are protected regardless of majority opinion. Socrates dismissed democracy as mob rule. Its justification lies in the impossibility of any prolonged control by the mob. Any alternative decision-making process would contain far greater potential for particular interest to gain control. Nevertheless implicit in democracy is the inevitability of individuals having decisions imposed upon them.

In the intellectual sphere, allowing all ideas an airing poses no such threat. No matter how inimical to freedom an idea might be, it will impose nothing on the individual that cannot be resisted by his or her own intellectual resources. That those resources may be unequal to the task is a constant threat. Nevertheless, the ideals of freedom of thought and expression allow the possibility for each of us alone to defend ourselves from enslavement by ideas nurtured in the name of freedom.

Society must find a balance between safeguarding the conditions out of which we create the space where liberty is possible and the exercising of that liberty. To some extent a public library reflects this dilemma. On the one hand it is the product of the safeguards; without these safeguards and the values created by them it could not exist. On the other hand its reason for existence is the exercise of liberty. The dilemma however is resolved for a public library by the fact that it is one institution within society, one that deals exclusively with ideas and one whose role moreover is to nurture freedom of ideas. It can afford to pursue liberal principles with all possible vigour, secure in the knowledge that there are ample societal forces ready and willing to balance this vigour.

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INFORMATION MATTERS

News and Notes

Please forward contributions to:

- Frances Houlihan, Dublin Corporation Staff Library & Information Centre, Block 2, Floor 1, Civic Office, Fishamble Street, Dublin 8. Fax +353 (0)1 6707901 email dclie@iol.ie
- Mary Kintner, South Eastern Education & Library Board, Windmill Hill, Ballynahinch, Co. Down, Northern Ireland, BT24 8DH Fax: +801238 565072

Recent Publications

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Library File: Making a Success of the School Library, published by the Library Association of Ireland, and edited by Valerie Coghlan, Patricia Quigley and Rosemary Walton (ISBN 0946037361) was launched by the Minister for Education, Micheal Martin, in Dublin Castle on the 12th October 1999. A timely publication in light of the changes taking place particularly at Primary School level, *Library File* deals comprehensively with the setting up, development and running of a school library. It also covers such areas as ICT in the library, choosing the best books and other media, encouraging students to read, policy and planning, maximising the effectiveness of the library, and establishing the school library in terms of furniture, equipment and routines. Valerie Coghlan comments that "The new Primary School Curriculum with its emphasis on independent learning and on the availability of a wide range of reading material have all created a demand for comprehensive and practical information about how to set up libraries in primary schools". Copies of the publication have been distributed to all primary and post primary schools in the Republic.

Public Libraries 2000 National Network – Local Service, Standards for the Public Library Service in the Republic of Ireland, published by the Library Association of Ireland, was launched by the Minister for the Environment & Local Government, Mr Noel Dempsey, on the 16th September in the National Library of Ireland. National Network – local service presents a new vision and a comprehensive set of standards for a modern public library service. The Library Association intends the report "to create a momentum" behind the recently published Department of the Environment & Local Government Report *Branching Out: a new public library service*. Both reports see the public library's role in the new century as being:

- a resource for children and young people
- a resource for learning and information
- a resource for culture and imagination.

Launching the Report the Minister stated that "It is a measure of the commitment, knowledge and wisdom of the Irish public librarians that they have, entirely on their own initiative, produced a report of the insight and clarity of Public Libraries 2000 – National Network – Local Service". The Minister concluded by welcoming "this valuable contribution from the Library Association to the important dialogue on the future of libraries."

Arts and the Magic of the Word a report by the Public Libraries and the Arts Committee was launched by Professor Declan Kiberd on the 25th November in the Long Room, Trinity College. The Report is the result of a three year collaboration between An Comhairle Leabharlanna (The Library Council) and the Arts Council on how to promote the arts through public libraries in Ireland. Brian Farrell, Chairman of the Arts Council stated that "It is a key objective of the Arts Council to develop audiences for, and participation in, the arts. What better channel to do so than through the public library system, which has been serving the public's reading needs for countless generations, and which is increasingly becoming a focus for a wide range of artistic activities within the local community"

Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland Project

Library staff will be kept up to date on the progress of the ELFNI project via a new newsletter. The ELFNI project will eventually replace the three computer systems, currently in operation, with one new ICT service for all five Education and Library Boards. *Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland* Issue no 1 October 1999 is available from Maureen McGaughey, ELF Project Support Officer, Carrickfergus Library, Joymount Count, Carrickfergus.

Tel: 028 93 329164
 Fax: 028 93 360589
 Email: maureen_mcg@hotmai.com

SELB Library and Information Service

Reflections 1999: The Annual Report of the Southern Education and Library Service has been published. The report includes a list of the key dates in the history of the SELB from 1973 onwards. Available from SELB Library

Service, Library HQ, 1 Markethill Road, Armagh BT60 1NR.

Tel: 028 37 525353. Fax: 028 37 526879

LISC (NI) News Vol. 3 (1) Dec 1999 is now available from: Mairead Gilheaney, Executive Officer

Tel: 028 90 705441

Fax: 028 90 401180

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Snippets

.....
The National Library of Ireland has been allocated over £37 million pounds, which will be spent on developing and extending the Library over the next five years. The hope is that the Library will eventually be able to solve its long-standing accommodation problems.

An additional grant of £500,000 has been allocated to libraries to prepare them for future demands by the Minister for the Environment & Local Government. This is a top-up on the earlier grant of one million pounds which was promised last year to the Public Library Service (and has already been paid) in order to facilitate the acquisition of additional stock. The Minister made his announcement in mid-September 1999.

Over 900 Internet PC's are going into Public Libraries throughout the Republic. The Department of the Environment and Local Government has funded this initiative.

The Dublin Region has three new public libraries currently under construction, one in Lucan, one in Cabra and one in Blanchardstown. More news to follow on these in the Spring edition of an Leabharlann.

Galway County Library Service has a number of interesting projects in the pipeline. Three new Libraries are planned for the year 2000.

Oranmore Community Library, due to open at Easter, is a joint project between the local community who have provided over half of the funding, Galway County Council and the Department of the Environment and Local Government. Carraroe Community Library is due to open in the summer and is funded by Uadaras na Gaeltachta, Galway County Council and the Department of the Environment and Local Government. Loughrea Public Library is currently under construction and is due to open in the summer.

Donegal County Library Service has two new libraries under construction with a completion date of early summer, one in Carndonagh, the other in Milford. A new community library opened in Bunrana in mid-December, 1999.

UK Survey

A detailed national study undertaken in the UK has revealed that more than 75% of young adults enjoy reading fiction and long for the time to read more. This is according to the 50,000 people who replied to the first ever detailed national study. These results demolish preconceived notions that reading is on the decline, or has been severely dented by the arrival of the Internet. Waterstones and the Public Libraries in the UK undertook the survey. Jonathan Davidson of the library charity, the Reading Partnership states that "We may talk about a wired world, but for the vast majority of us when it comes to pleasure it is still a hardback and softback world. The results are quite a shock because I think we have begun to take the power and popularity of books for granted. But just look around any bus or train carriage and you will see amazing subjects being tackled at 7.30 in the morning. It's the variety of what people read in the survey which knocks

you flat." According to Chris Smith the UK Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport a substantial number of councils have backed down from library closures after a government warning that planned cutbacks or closures could breach their legal duty to provide comprehensive and efficient library services.

Verbal Arts Centre, Londonderry

Interesting developments in the North West's Verbal Arts Centre. The centre is an educational charity devoted to the advancement of lifelong learning and community development in the fields of language, arts and heritage. Key appointments were made during 1999 and two projects initiated – the EXCEL project and the Language Development Project in Schools and Libraries in Northern Ireland.

The EXCEL Project Amanda Hamilton is the project manager of the EXCEL project (Exchanges in Creative Expression and Learning). The project, funded by Northern Ireland's Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) and the EU, is focused in the areas of Derry/Londonderry, Donegal and Tyrone. The centre is currently offering a course which trains up to 15 Facilitators in the Language Arts (reading, writing, speaking and listening). It is also intended to develop a Network of Verbal Arts Groups throughout Northern Ireland.

The training course, which has already begun, will turn artists into Art Facilitators. They will learn to facilitate creative learning in groups, including groups with particular needs caused by physical disability, learning disability isolation, poverty and marginalisation. The course will provide an accredited unique qualification having achieved accreditation at Open College Network Level 3.

The Network of Verbal Arts Groups intend to source funding to develop key areas of training and to enable them to hold a series of events.

In addition, the EXCEL project is offering free training in Oral History. Starting in January 2000, the training will cover various oral history methods and it includes a visit to the archive of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum to look at examples of good practice. The trainer will be Roy Hamilton, author of the recent millennium publication "*100 Years of Derry*." He is the Chairperson of the Federation of Ulster Local Studies and the North West Archaeological and Historical Society.

Language Arts Development Project in Schools and Libraries in Northern Ireland

Marian Blair joined the Verbal Arts Centre as Language Arts Development Officer in May 1999. The project is aimed mainly rural schools which have little access to the arts. The intention is to promote literacy and develop creative learning skills in school children, provide professional development opportunities for teachers, raise awareness in parents and support professional artists working the verbal arts field. Artists in residence offer storytelling/writing/poetry/drama workshops in schools for a period of six weeks. It is intended that teachers, parents and artists will produce resources which will serve as a model of good practice for the future.

Marian is very keen to bring public libraries into the project.

For further information on either project contact: Amanda Hamilton or Marian Blair, The Verbal Arts Centre, Cathedral School Building, London Street, Londonderry BT48 6RQ.

Tel: 028 7126 6946.
 Fax: 028 7126 3368.
 Email: sam@verbart.demon.co.uk

The Linen Hall Library

Mary Delargy and Terry McBride of the Linen Hall Library are the contacts for *The Languages in Ulster Project* which starts in January 2000 in the Linen Hall Library. The project, funded by the Community Relations Council, will run for one year. It will provide bibliographical services and build up collections of materials in Ulster Scots and the Irish Language. There will be a series of lectures and other events organised throughout the year 2000. For further information contact: Mary Delargy or Terry McBride at The Linen Hall Library, 17 Donegall Square North, Belfast BT1 5GB.
 Tel: 028 9032 1707.
 Fax: 028 9043 8586.
 Email: info@linenhall.com

Linen Hall Library Extension Progress Phase

One of the building work has gone well with the temporary partitioning across the rear of the main floors to insulate the main library from the noise and dirt. There will be no lift in service until March 2000 at the earliest, when it is hoped to have full lift and disabled access to all parts of the extended library. The general lending service is fully operational although there are delays in retrieving Irish stock from the temporary accommodation in Fountain House. The formal opening of the library extension is scheduled to commence on 15th September 2000.

The Tom Hartley Donation to the Linen Hall Library The Northern Ireland Political Collection has been significantly increased by Belfast Councillor Tom Hartley who has

donated his entire personal collection of some 2,500 pamphlets and hundreds of ephemeral items. The new collection expands the NIPC by one fifth. It will be retained as a separate special collection known as the "Tom Hartley Pamphlet Collection, presented in the memory of his parents Tommy and Hilda Hartley".

The Act of Union Virtual Library

LISC (NI) have applied for funding to the New Opportunities fund to support the creation of a virtual library of material relating to and contemporary with the Act of Union of 1801. Most of this material is scattered throughout various Northern Irish institutions and it is the intention to bring the range of material together and make it accessible to everyone. It includes the private papers of Viscount Castlereagh, the papers and pamphlets of John Foster, the last speaker of the Irish House of Commons, photographs and portraits held in the Ulster Museum and newspapers including the Belfast Newsletter and the Londonderry Journal. For further information contact Norman Russell at Queen's University, Belfast.
Tel: 028 90 335020.
Email: n.russell@qub.ac.uk

University for Industry Regional Office in Northern Ireland

The Internet based distance learning organisation, the University for Industry, has set up a regional office in Northern Ireland. The main role of the regional office is to create a network of Learning Centres and Learning Access points throughout Northern Ireland. The Ufi office is keen to engage with

the network of public libraries. Contacts for the Ufi are: Mark Langhammer or Susan Brew (Regional Development Managers).
Email: mlanghammer@ufi.cwc.com or sbrew@ufi.cwc.com

Address: University for Industry,
c/o The Mount Business and Conference Centre,
2 Woodstock Link, Belfast BT6 8DD.
Tel: 028 90 735865. Fax: 028 90 730199

Northern Ireland Reminiscence Network

A Reminiscence Network has been launched in Belfast. The lead person in the instigation of the Network is Professor Emeritus, Faith Gibson of the University of Ulster. The aim is to encourage older people and others to value, share, and transmit their life experience for themselves, their families and communities. It is intended to share best practice in reminiscence work and to promote training, initiate research and writing and engage in partnerships and projects with individuals and organisations sharing concerns for older people. The Network will hold exhibitions and seminars and publish a newsletter at regular intervals. The Northern Ireland Network is affiliated to the UK Reminiscence Network and will be ultimately linked to the European Reminiscence Network. For further information contact: Hilary Glenn, Special Services Librarian, SEELB Library HQ, Windmill Hill, Ballynahinch, BT24 8DH.
Tel: 028 90 566413. Fax: 028 90 565072

SEELB and the Library Association's Public Relations and Publicity Award

SEELB's Library and Information Service received a commendation at the Library

Association's Public Relations and Publicity Awards in November 1999. The award was for the 'Write On' project, a creative writing competition which was held in partnership with Westminster Libraries, London and Terence Blacker, the prize winning author of the popular 'Ms Wiz' series for children.

The project was held in celebration of National Year of Reading (NYR). It began with a series of creative writing workshops for primary school children. Terence Blacker talked about his work and supplied an introduction to a new 'Ms Wiz' story which the children had to complete in class. The two winning stories were used to create a story webpage on the NYR website.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

The first educational PFI in Northern Ireland is underway at the North West Institute of Further and Higher Education in Derry. The foundations for a new building are in the process of being put into place. The new building will include accommodation for the Directorate, arts and business studies, social education and an additional library. The purpose of PFI is to bring private sector money and expertise into the public sector. PFI partners are the Northwin Consortium and the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI).

Association of Independent Advice Centres

The Association of Independent Advice Centres is a voluntary organisation for the independent advice sector in Northern Ireland. AIAC is made up of over 70 organisations throughout Northern Ireland. Advice is available through AIAC and its website in the areas of housing, benefits, welfare rights, debt and bill paying, legal rights. AIAC is also a verified Assessment

Centre for the newly developed NVQ in Advice and Guidance. The qualification is accredited through the Open University.

Further details from Fiona Magee or Kevin Higgins at AAIC
 Tel: 028 90 645919
 Fax: 028 90 492313
 Email: info@aiac.net
 Website: www.aiac.net

Information Society Ireland

Ireland has allocated £7.7m to launch its Information Society programme. Its second largest project (£1m) is for computers and Internet access in public libraries. Other developments will include education, technology and training, an Information Society Commission to promote Internet usage, Web site development and a citizen's database.

Forthcoming Events

Centre for Migration Studies, Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh

The thirteenth Ulster American Heritage Symposium, *The Challenge of Being 2nd, 3rd, 4th... Generation Immigrants*, will be held on the 21-24 June 2000. The Symposium has as its general theme the process of transatlantic emigration and settlement and links between England, Scotland, Ireland and North America. The special theme for 2000 will be the development of changing identities on both sides of the Atlantic with particular focus on the role of language and the revival of interest in Ulster Scots.

The Art of European Emigration – a virtual exhibition

This exhibition will be launched at the Ulster American Heritage Symposium in June 2000

and will be available on the World Wide Web. It is designed to encourage comparative study of European emigration over the last two hundred years. The rituals of leaving the 'Old World' and arriving in the 'New' will be pictured in photographs, drawings and paintings.

The Literature of Irish Exile: An Autumn School 21-22 October 2000

A new autumn school devoted to investigating the rich literature of Irish exile. As well as the works of famous Irish literary exiles, the voices of the less well known exiles preserved in letters and diaries will be included.

Contact details for all events:

Centre for Migration Studies,
Ulster American Folk Park,
Mellon Road, Castletown, Omagh,
County Tyrone BT78 5QY
Tel: 028 82 256315
Fax: 028 82 242241
Email: uafp@iol.ie
Websites: www.qub.ac.uk/cms/ and
www.folkpark.com

CoFHE – Colleges of Further and Higher Education Group of the Library Association
CoFHE's Annual Conference will take place in Cardiff 17th-20th April 2000. The themed conference covers Regionalism; Professional Partnerships and Organisational Partnerships. Among the keynote speakers will be Professor Bob Fryer, the driving force behind the UK Government's Lifelong Learning Initiative and Caren Fullerton, Head of the Library Services to the National Assembly of Wales. The conference will be of interest to colleagues in the Republic of Ireland who work in the tertiary education sector. Cost for full delegate, accommodation and all meals is £280.00 + VAT. Further details can be found on the

Library Association website:
www.la-hq.org.uk/

LAI/LANI Annual Joint Conference will be held on 11th-14 April 2000 in the Grand Hotel, Malahide, County Dublin. Further details from Programme Secretary Janet Blair, SELB, Library HQ, 1 Markethill Road, Armagh BT60 1NR.

Tel: 028 37 525353
Fax: 028 37 526879

New Web Sites

The United Irish Website hosted by the Belfast Telegraph, contains over 300 contemporary sources of the period 1791-1803 which are held in the Irish and Local History Collections of the Linen Hall Library. Readers can search the website free of charge for background information but access to documents is restricted to subscribers only.

Web site:

www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/linenhall

LISC (NI) has a new website which explains what LISC (NI) does and carries details of their new Action Plan. It also contains details of the Executive Committee members and the Executive Officer. In the future the site will contain the current issue of LISC News.

Web site: www.liscni.co.uk

On the move

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Paul Sheehan has recently been appointed to the position of Library Director in Dublin City University following the departure of Dr **Alan McDougall**. Paul previously served as Head of Library Services at the Dublin Institute of Technology.

Agnes Neligan has been appointed Librarian in NUI Maynooth. Agnes was previously Deputy Librarian in the College.

Warwick Price has been appointed Head of Library Services with the Dublin Institute of Technology and plans to take up his new position in April 2000. Warwick is currently employed by the University of Bahrain.

Aidin O'Sullivan has recently been appointed Librarian in the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown. Aidin previously worked in Dublin Corporation's Staff Library & Information Centre, Civic Offices.

Former Senior Librarian **Yvonne Desmond** has taken up the position of Faculty Librarian with the Dublin Institute of Technology; Central Services Unit based in Rathmines. Yvonne previously worked in the Reference & Technical section of Dublin City Library Service.

Anne Wrigley former Senior Librarian with South Dublin Library Service has taken up the position of Faculty Librarian with the Dublin Institute of Technology based in Mountjoy Square. Anne has responsibility for Applied Arts.

Carmel O'Sullivan has been appointed Associate Librarian in University College Dublin. Carmel worked previously in the Library Council and in Dublin City University.

Adrienne Adair, BA (Hons) MPhil DipLis ALA. In July 1997, Adrienne obtained promotion to Assistant Chief Librarian, Public

Services, SEELB on a temporary basis. She has now been made permanent as ACL, following a successful application. As ACL for the East Service Unit, her remit covers the District Council areas of Castlereagh and North Down and Ards, a total of 16 public service points including 2 mobile libraries. Adrienne was previously District Librarian in Tullycarnet, Belfast. She has been involved in the Library Association and is a current member of the North South Liaison Committee, which is responsible for organising the annual LA/LANI Joint Conference. She also is on the board of the East Belfast Community Development Agency and the Castlereagh Arts Advisory Panel.

Linda Houston, MBA BLS DMS ALA moves to Belfast in January 2000 to take up the post of Chief Librarian. Linda is currently Assistant Chief Librarian, Public Services, with the North Eastern Education and Library Board, a post which she has held since 1996. She was Executive Secretary with LISC (NI) 1995-1996 and currently serves as Hon. Treasurer to that organisation. She is also currently a member of the Library Association Public Libraries Group National Committee representing Northern Ireland. Linda participated in the first Young Leaders for Northern Ireland Programme September-December 1995 involving a work placement at the Boston Public Library and studied at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She completed an MBA in August 1999.

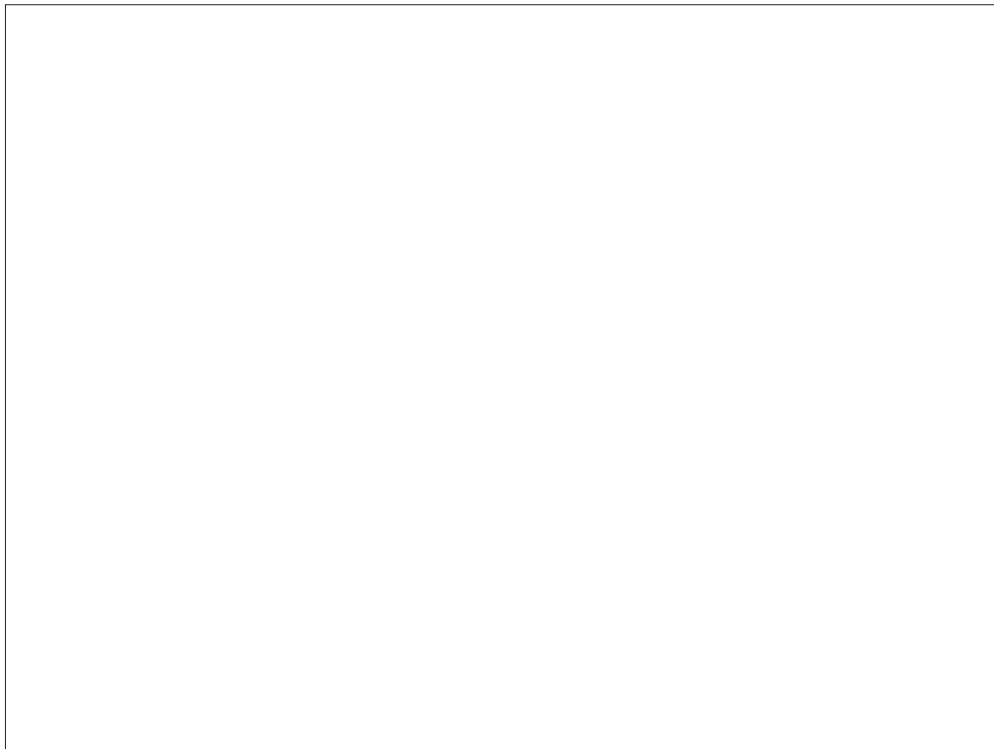
Anne Peoples BA DMS ALA recently moved from the Western Education and Library Board to the North Eastern Education and Library Board to take up the post of Assistant Chief Librarian (Information and Support). As ACL she has responsibility for information services, local studies services, finance, IT and

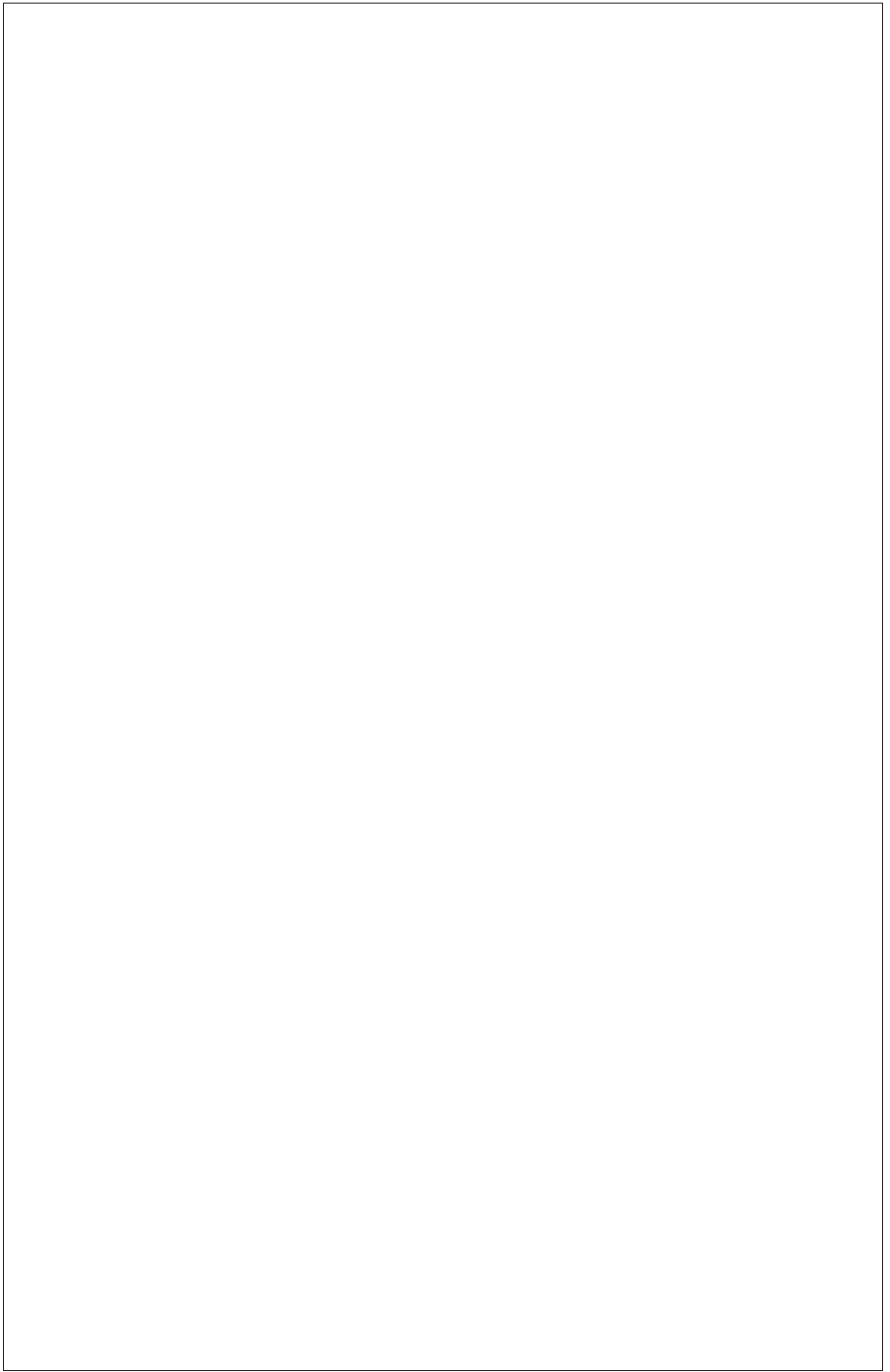
administrative services, health and welfare Library services and stock management services. Anne previously held the post of Divisional Librarian with responsibility for library services in the Londonderry and Limavady areas, Area Reference Librarian, and Local Government Information Officer. She is currently a member of the Library Association Registration Board and at various times a member and officer of the Northern Ireland Branch of the Library Association and of the Association of Assistant Librarians (Northern Ireland Division).

Chris McIvor, BA ALA is moving to the post of Information and Communications Officer for the WELB from January 2000. She will have responsibility for the effective development and day to day management of the Board's information, communications and public relations both internally and

within the public arena. Chris is Librarian, Centre for Migration Studies at the Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh. She is being seconded to her new post for one year.

Debby Shorley, BA ALA Pro Librarian University of Ulster, Jordanstown is the new chairperson of the Library and Information Services Council (LISC NI). She took over from Queen's University Librarian, Norman Russell. Debby is working closely with the new Executive Officer, Mairead Gilheaney, on a number of projects arising out of their Action Plan.





Reviews

An Roinn Comhshaoil Agus Rialtais Aitiuil/Department of the Environment & Local Government. **Branching out: a new public library service.** Baile Atha Cliath, Oifig an tSolathair/Dublin, Stationery Office, 1998.

Try as I might, it proved impossible to resist the temptation to look for parallels in this comprehensive review of the state and potential of Ireland's public library services, with the path trodden by the working group that put together the UK's equivalent document, *New Library: the People's Network* about a year earlier. Admittedly, the terms of reference were different: the UK team was asked specifically to look at the potential offered by ICT for enhancing public library services, whereas Tom O'Mahony's colleagues were charged with investigating the entire state of public libraries in Ireland, with no preconceptions about the nature of the services that they might provide in the future.

However, the key issue that emerged from the consultations in both countries was that, although technology was an essential enabler, stakeholders in public libraries saw the need for change in terms not of technology, but of services. Chief among the identified needs in the Irish study were enhanced opening hours, investment in library staff and improved equality of access – all issues that we in the UK are currently tackling now that the promise offered by the technology has put libraries at the centre of our political stage. Adequate infrastructure, new service delivery methods to benefit areas with low populations and improved quality of stock are among the other identified issues in which technology is clearly implicit but not necessarily regarded as a panacea. Particularly intriguing, too, are the identified needs to improve the service through library research – one to which we as the recent beneficiaries of the former British Library research management team can certainly endorse – and to improve national marketing of library services. In Ireland as in the UK, the public library service is clearly a trusted brand, and this report rightly identifies this as something to shout about.

Wisely, the report aims to position the library service at the heart of the Government's own policy agenda. Its strategic recommendations make clear to the Minister for the Environment and Local Government that the library service should play a key role in its information society initiatives. More specifically, it recommends that investment in library infrastructure and services should form part of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, and that the library service should be at the heart of public delivery initiatives of electronic government. (This is the point, incidentally, where the team drops in the comment that this cannot happen without the installation of the necessary infrastructure.)

Several challenges are offered to An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, the Government's library advisory body. These include working closely with the Information Society

Commission, developing a formal relationship with the Department of Education & Science centred on arrangements for lifelong learning, and marketing public libraries at the national level – all roles that we in the UK's LIC can relate to.

On the money to pay for all this, the team boldly asks for an extra £55 million directly from the Exchequer between 1999 and 2006 for investment in library infrastructure. When our UK team did the same, the Secretary of State indicated that sums of the order envisaged were unlikely to be found from the Exchequer. However he has since directed substantial quantities of National Lottery funding in our direction, and it is interesting to note that this report appears to envisage a much more modest role for Lottery funding, which attracts only a brief mention. Other sources of finance canvassed here include corporate sponsorship and tax relief on donations, in line with that already available for gifts for education in the arts.

The relatively modest coverage given to libraries' role in economic development did come as something of a surprise. There is one paragraph on their potential as a support to business development, followed by a Snap Shot highlighting the South West Action Project, but beyond that, this service is not much mentioned. Cost is clearly a problem with business information resources – in the UK as in Ireland, since the market for business information is a global one and we all pay the same prices. But a more prominent role for libraries in provision of business information might not only help address the issue of employment creation and enterprise, but also be of special value to the isolated communities for which the report envisages innovative solutions being required.

Taken as a whole, though, this report is an inspiration, and all the more fascinating because it has proved impossible not to make comparisons with the UK. Branching Out sets a first rate agenda for change in Ireland and, as we tread parallel paths in our two countries, there will be much we can learn from each other's experiences.

*Tim Owen, Head of Policy and Communications,
Library & Information Commission, UK*

Collins, Peter, **Pathways to Ulster's past: sources and resources for local studies**, The Institute of Irish Studies The Queen's University of Belfast, 1998 158pp £6.50, ISBN 0853896933

How does a librarian assess the reliability of a reference book? A common practice surely is to seek out sections about which he or she has some firsthand knowledge or expertise in order to find out how well the writer has dealt with them. If these are found wanting then it is likely that the rest of the book will have to be treated with some caution.

This was the approach I adopted when given the task of reviewing Dr Collins's book which, according to its preface "*aims to show where local historians, teachers and students should go to obtain the raw material of their work*". I have to say that I was disappointed to

discover that the information he cited for the SELB's resources consisted solely of an abridged version of a publicity leaflet produced some eight years ago. Even a brief telephone call to the Irish and Local Studies library would have acquainted him with the fact that its opening hours have been changed since 1995.

Armagh County Museum's resources would seem to have been given fuller treatment although a number of them were spelt incorrectly as was the name of a past curator, T.G.F. Paterson, a person who made a significant contribution to local studies in this area both in his own writings and by his transcriptions of documents held elsewhere.

The scant attention given to the SELB and other repositories has not just been noticed by those employed within them. Another reviewer, Jack Johnston, a long established local historian with an impressive collection of publications to his credit had this criticism to make:

"The extensive libraries of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal are dismissed in six pages – less than 5% of the total pages claiming to cover the nine counties. By the same token an important repository like the Linenhall Library or for that matter the excellent Southern and Education Library at Armagh are only given four pages between them".¹

Mr Johnston rightly pointed out that the work was *far too much centred on material that is available in the Record Office (PRONI)*. Indeed there are many instances when Dr Collins gave the PRONI reference number for specific items but failed to mention that they can also be consulted elsewhere. One notable example is the 1770 census of Armagh. The original document is actually held in the Armagh Public (Robinson) Library and a transcript can be consulted in the Armagh County Museum. As well, it was included in an article in *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*² which is available in many public and academic libraries

However, in spite of its obvious bias towards PRONI and its sometimes inadequate and uneven coverage of repositories west of the Bann there is still a great deal of useful material in this book, particularly in its descriptions of records. For instance, although the nineteenth century parliamentary papers or blue books contain a wealth of information on a whole range of topics they can be extremely off-putting to researchers mainly because there are so many of them and it is difficult to know where to start looking in them. Dr Collins has simplified matters considerably because he has divided those papers which are most relevant to local studies into broad subject areas and given enough clear and concise detail for easy retrieval. For this alone, Irish and Local Studies Librarians will be indebted to him. At a mere £6.50, even with the shortcomings mentioned above, it is very good value for money.

1. *The Spark: the journal of the Border Counties History Collective*, issue 13, Spring 1999, p.39

2. Glancy, M The Incidence of the Plantation on the City of Armagh, *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, vol. 1, No.2, 1955, pp 115-160

Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Volume 40: Counties of South Ulster 1834-8, Cavan, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo edited by Angelique Day and Patrick McWilliams, The Institute of Irish Studies, The Queens University of Belfast in association with the Royal Irish Academy, 118, 200pp £8.75, ISBN 0853896615

“They make a wonderful Domesday book on life at parish level in the early 19th century, a unique view of the landscape, buildings, antiquities, employment, food, dress, amusements, traditions and way of life of the people”

This claim was made in a press release prior to the publication of this last volume of the Ordnance Survey Memoirs and it is no exaggeration as all forty of these books abound with fascinating detail of individual parishes in the pre-Famine period.

Essentially the Ordnance Survey Memoirs comprise information gathered when Ireland was being surveyed for the making of 6” to the mile maps, which were to be used for taxation purposes. They are written descriptions intended to accompany the maps and contain data which could not be accommodated on them. The person with overall responsibility for the survey, Col. Thomas Colby, had always considered additional information essential to clarify place-names and other distinctive features of each parish. From the outset in the 1820s he authorised the collection of facts relating to communications, manufactures, geography, geology and antiquities.

Later the brief was widened by the assistant director, Thomas Larcom, to include topics pertaining to the people living in the parishes. It was fashionable then among some of the more enlightened, and Larcom was obviously one of them, to gather statistical and other data in the interests of social enquiry. The intention however, was not to create a more equitable society but rather to provide better conditions for an acquiescent and therefore more productive labour force. Unfortunately only the northern half of the country was surveyed before the memoirs scheme was discontinued at the end of the 1830s by the government who deemed it to be too costly both in time and money.

The original idea was to publish the memoirs but only one parish, Templemore, which includes the city and liberties of Derry, made it into print at apparently enormous effort and expense. Apart from a few individual parishes transcribed by local history societies the memoirs remained unpublished until the 1980s. However, now thanks to the Institute of Irish Studies at Q.U.B and the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin where the original manuscripts are housed they are now widely accessible. Special mention must be accorded to Angelique Day and Patrick McWilliams who had the herculean task of editing all forty volumes of the series.

This last volume has got to be essential reading for local historians in counties Cavan, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo. Information is given on both rural and urban areas. In the countryside as well as descriptions of the physical landscape including roads, rivers etc. details are noted of land-ownership, methods of farming and other land-use, mills and manufacturing. Towns and villages which come under scrutiny include Cavan, Cootehill, Kingscourt, Stradone, Ballybay, Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones,

Drum, Emyvale, Glaslough, Newbliss, Rockcorry, Scotshouse, Manorhamilton, Achonry, Aclare, Ballymote and Ballysadare. Regrettably Monaghan town is not recorded. For many of these towns streets are described, public buildings are listed, fairs and markets are noted and the various trades carried out are mentioned. Provisions for the poor are recorded and often lists of schools will include pupil numbers, gender and religion as well as funding sources.

Perhaps the most interesting and provocative section is ‘habits of the people’ which is really the lower strata of society as seen through the eyes of the memoir writers who were mainly military men engaged on the survey and civilians employed to assist them. Their observations on housing, diet, family sizes, life expectancy, leisure activities etc. sometimes reveal as much about their own shortcomings as those of their subjects. They serve to remind us that no single historical source can be taken at face value but must always be weighed against other available evidence of the period.

Just one example of a less than objective approach can be found in the record for Currin parish (area around Cootehill, Co. Monaghan) made by Lieut. P. Taylor. He reported:

“In no kingdom of the universe does so general an appearance of poverty and destitution prevail as in the persons and domiciles of this intelligent, lively but thoughtless community”.

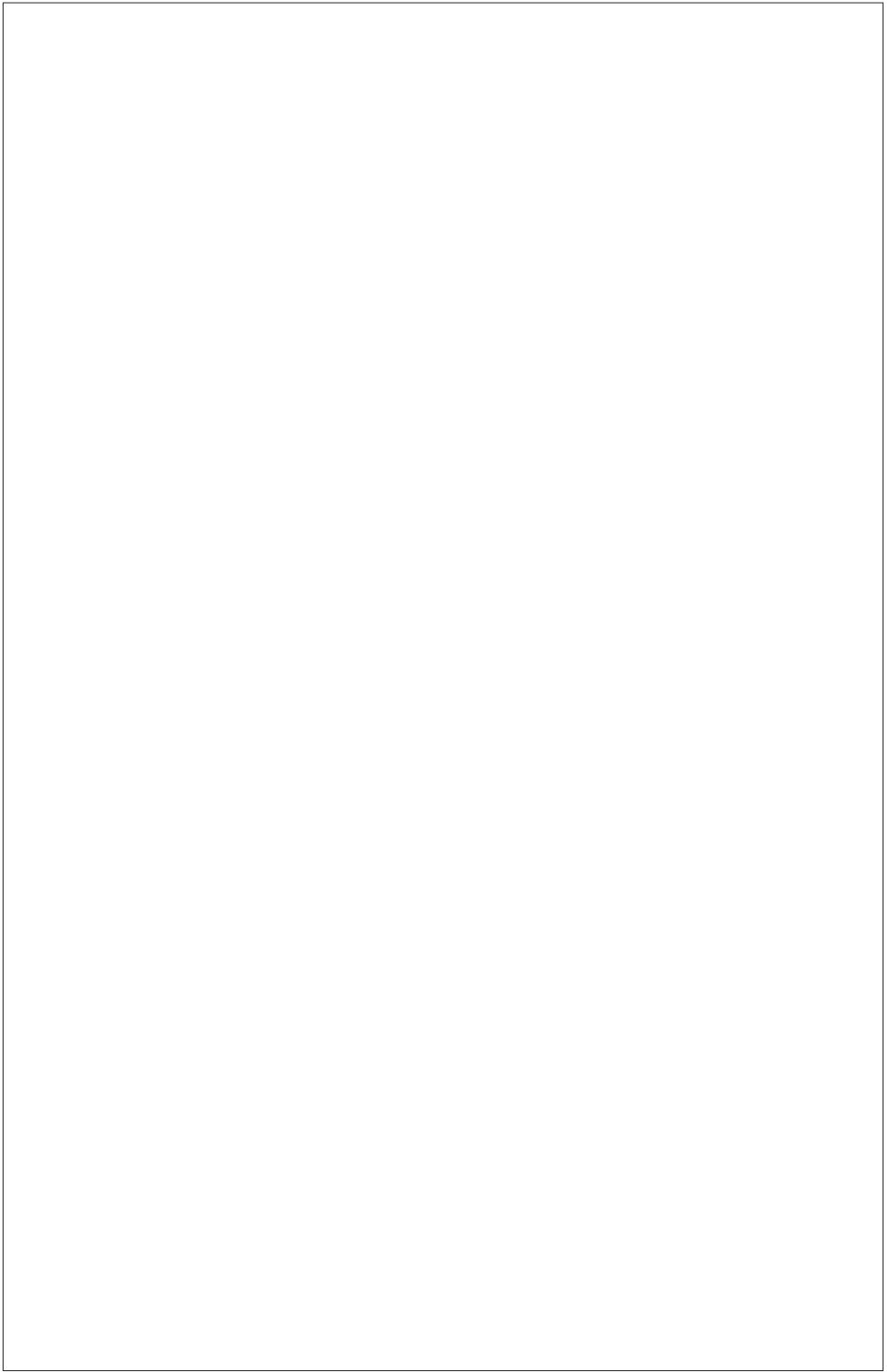
Lieut. Taylor commented the decline of the linen industry both here and in Scotland since the rise of the English cotton trade but pointed out :

“...the persevering habits of the Scot soon applied his energies to the new condition of things, and still contrives, by combined industry, to support his family, whereas in this unhappy country every spirit of enterprise and activity perished with the trade”.

On a lighter note, I was interested to discover that the Shirley Arms Hotel in Carrickmacross was not only in existence in 1835 but Lieut. Robert Boteler considered it to be ‘exceedingly comfortable and well kept, indeed one of the best along the northern line of the road’

It would seem that we can now look forward to being further acquainted with the people who compiled the memoirs because the Institute of Irish Studies is planning to produce a volume of evaluative essays which will include information on them.

Mary T. McVeigh, Irish and Local Studies Librarian, Southern Education and Library Board, Armagh.



Obituary

ANDREW JOHN RICHARDSON 7/2/1955 - 9/8/1998

Trinity College Library and the world of librarianship in general, suffered a grievous loss with the death of Andy Richardson on 9 August 1998 at the age of 43.

A native of Lincolnshire, Andy was a graduate in Classics from the University of Reading. He worked in the library there for a year before going to Manchester Polytechnic, where he was awarded the postgraduate diploma in librarianship in 1978. He worked briefly as a Stock Records Clerk in the Wythenshawe Hospital, Manchester and as a Library Assistant with City of Manchester Cultural Service, before moving to UMIST where he worked from 1981 to 1985. He joined the staff of Trinity College Dublin as an Assistant Librarian in the Cataloguing Department in August 1985. In 1990 he began a three-year career break during which he worked as Systems Librarian in the University Library of St Patrick's College Maynooth, returning to Trinity in 1993.

Although his background was in Classics, Andy's cataloguing responsibility in TCD was for the technological sciences. With the enthusiasm, which was typical of him, he relished the challenge, and the library, in particular his cataloguing colleagues, benefited greatly from the resultant cross-fertilisation of his subject expertise.

His interest in, and understanding of developing technology, greatly aided by his three years as Systems Librarian in Maynooth from 1990 to 1993 and his aptitude for detail combined with the ability to take a broad view enabled him to make a most valuable contribution to the selection and installation of new library systems. In 1986-87 he was a leading member of the cataloguing team during the installation of the Dynix system; and he became a key player in 1995-96 when he was appointed as the Technical Services representative on the systems search and evaluation team which led to the selection of Geac.

Always conscious of the international dimension of librarianship, one example of Andy's initiative was establishing contacts in the Library of Congress, which led to Trinity being accepted as the first library in Ireland and Great Britain to become a member of SACO (Subject Authority Committee of the Library of Congress). He did all the preliminary investigative work, and remained our representative on SACO until his final illness. He undertook specific liaison work with the British Library and with other legal deposit libraries. Following his death, in addition to the numerous personal messages of sympathy received by his colleagues, tributes to his professional excellence came from many people, some of whom knew him only through email and telephone contact; and even those who had never met him in person remarked on the friendliness, humour and wit which were inherent in his communications on even the least inspiring of topics!

Andy (or Rick, as he was known to many of his friends from university days) was a dedicated librarian, but his interests extended far beyond the confines of work. Football, cricket, snooker, music, travel, cooking, organic gardening, winemaking, language, modern poetry, cinema, theatre, all these were not just matters of occasional interest but areas in

which he was deeply knowledgeable. His tastes were catholic. Take music as one example. He could instruct his less erudite colleagues on the overwhelming merits of the group known as The Fall, while also knowing about esoteric classical composers, the finer points of early church music, plain chant, and Irish and other traditional music. He wrote with style and wit, whether the occasion was a report on a library conference, a response to a questionnaire, a summation of the pros and cons of a particular library system or a holiday postcard, into which he could pack more literary allusions, puns and entertaining information than one would have thought possible.

During his three years in Maynooth Andy met and married Regina Whelan, a member of Maynooth library staff. In the apposite Irish phrase, Regina was indeed *bean a dhiongbhála*. Personally and professionally, their was a most happy match of equals; and their two little daughters, Niamh and Aoife, were a further great joy to them both.

Andy's death following an illness of just three months duration was an incalculable loss, above all to Regina, Niamh and Aoife, and to his parents and brother, but also to his many friends and colleagues in Trinity College and elsewhere. The commemorative leaflet prepared for his funeral service in Glasnevin on 15 August 1998 bears the inscription *Pé ní a éigeann maireann an ceol is an grá*. Andy/Rick had both gifts in abundance. We miss him greatly

Colette Ní Mhoitleigh

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