

# The Local Studies Librarian Vol. 3 Number 1(6) 1984 ISSN 0263-0273

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Cover illustration: A view of Birmingham c. 1886. Courtesy of the Local Studies Department, Birmingham Reference Library.

#### Editorial

Bibliographical organisation is now clearly one of the main topics of concern to local studies librarians. The last issue dealt with some aspects of local bibliography and we return to the subject in this one. The articles in last winter's issue produced two responses suggesting possible ways of producing bibliographies of immediate local value. What is often forgotten, however, is that the material in local collections may have a value to students far beyond the local area. Current bibliographies pick up some local publications, but there is also the question of older material. ESTC, as described by Ian Maxted in this issue, is a national resource which can be greatly expanded by the inclusion of locally published material because so much of this material is not held in our national collections. It is pointed out, for instance, that the Exeter imprints from the Westcountry Studies library amount to almost threequarters of the total recorded for the town in ESTC, and that, of twelve execution broadsheets held in Exeter, none are in the British Library. Devon County Library cannot be alone in holding otherwise unrecorded material: how many other libraries are contributing?

Modern technology makes bibliographical aids on a national scale such as ESTC and the proposed York bibliograpical project possible, but it also has other implications. Most libraries would seem to make in-house indexing systems feasible. So far little has been published, though work must be proceeding in various places, and even if it is, as at Newcastle, only in the early stages of development, the editor would be very pleased to hear of any such initiatives.

The LSG itself seems to be flourishing. More meetings and day schools are being held, and attracting good audiences: a welcome point, too, is that their proceedings are being reported to LSL. It may seem somewhat parochial to report local meetings, but most of these are carefully organised and contain much of interest and value to the many others who were not present. Good examples are those at Exeter and Stamford, as reported in this issue. The London and Home Counties Branch organised a School at the British Library Newspaper Library at Colindale and have made available transcripts of tape recordings of the papers — an initiative which other meetings organisers might copy.

The editor is always happy to receive material for the LSL, whether it be news items, reports of meetings, publications for review or articles. All material for the Winter issue should be submitted by October 12th.

# The ESTC and its importance for the Local Studies Librarian

Over the past four years my late evening duty in the Westcountry Studies Library has had an added interest. On the relatively few occasions when the library has been empty, or occupied by a few trusted regulars, I have cast a furtive glance over my shoulder and slipped into the stacks to search the shelves for items published before 1801. These have had their title-pages photocopied, and these photocopies have been annotated to show shelf-mark, format, pagination, and other relevant details. The annotated photocopies have then been forwarded to the British Library in batches, and I have retained a second copy for information and security purposes. The last of over 1,200 items was returned to the shelves last December, about the same time as the British Library completed the first phase of the project for which the information was intended with the microfiche publication of the first full catalogue of its 18th century holdings.

The Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue Project is not familiar in detail to all librarians and it was decided that the LA Local Studies and Rare Books Groups should convene a meeting in Exeter to encourage others to participate in this project. The meeting took place on 24 January and was attended by librarians and archivists, mainly from the South West.

The first speaker was Michael Crump, assistant editor of the ESTC, who stressed the international nature of the project, which aimed to compile a computer-held database for all material printed in Britain and its colonies and all English language material published elsewhere between 1701 and 1800. First conceived in 1976, the project has catalogued the 150,000 relevant items in the BL in a MARC-compatible format and this base-file has been available for searching on-line through BLAISE since 1982. Over 500 libraries throughout the world have so far agreed to submit returns for incorporation in the database prior to the publication of the full ESTC in 1989.

There followed an on-line demonstration of the database, including an effective example of how it can be used to identify incomplete items. Statistics were snatched from the file at a speed which amazed those who had never seen such a monster in action before.

There were still some present who were somewhat bemused as to where the local studies librarian fitted into this grand international scheme with its use of new technology. These I attempted to win over by explaining not only the methods I had used to submit returns, whether photocopied title-pages or preprinted record cards, but also the sort of material I had found. Some of the more interesting items had been gathered into a small display for the occasion.

It is only for the 18th century that most local collections begin to hold substantial amounts of unique material. The Westcountry Studies Library for example has only about 80 STC period items, and about 290 for the period covered by Wing (1641-1700). Perhaps half a dozen of these are items which are otherwise unrecorded, but it is safe to say that a much higher proportion of the 864 18th century items will prove to be unique. An important factor in this is the spread of provincial printing. In 1700 there were active printing presses in only half a dozen English provincial towns; in 1785 John Pendred listed presses in 120 localities.

The 864 items reported form a body of material about 0.6% the size of the 150,000 items on the current ESTC database. The proportions vary over time from over 1% in 1701-09, the total being swollen by controversial religious tracts, slumping to less than 0.4% in the 1740s and rising again to 0.8% by the end of the century. More significant are the proportions of provincially printed items. The ESTC file has about 9,000 items printed in the English provinces outside London, Oxford and Cambridge. The Westcountry Studies Library has 300, a proportion of over 3%. Coming closer to home the 223 Exeter imprints in the Westcountry Studies Library amount to almost 75% of the 300 in the ESTC file. Let us take a specific example. Twelve execution broadsheets for the second half of the 18th century survive in Exeter collections. The BL has none of these, and the same is true for most of the election literature.

In fact a typical local collection should contain a considerable variety of unusual 18th century material. The thought of interminable numbers of sermons may deter many from contributing. However it is only in the first two decades that religious material predominates in the Westcountry Studies Library, largely because of a series of heated doctrinal controversies in Exeter. For the century as a whole under 30% of items are religious in content; by the 1790s the proportion is under 15%. Other subjects represented are literature (28%, including notable local authors such as John Gay), law (9%, including reports of crimes and executions), politics (9%, including election literature from the 1760s onwards and reactions to the French Revolution), history and biography (11%, including county and town histories, and biographies of the king of the gypsies Bampfylde Moore Carew). Among a small but interesting group of scientific items can be found agricultural surveys and works on navigation, astronomy and medicine, including a group of papers on a form of lead poisoning known as Devonshire colic. A group that can only be described as miscellaneous includes various dialect texts, a book on beards and a leaflet issued by an irate Devon farmer claiming compensation for damage caused when a balloon landed on his crops in 1786.

Jo Cox, a postgraduate researcher at Exeter University, was the final speaker at the meeting and showed the great value of even the present incomplete database. A search by imprint enabled her to examine the output of the publisher John Hinton who was responsible for the *Universal Magazine*,

and by searching on title keywords such as "sentimental" she could trace the growth of a particular type of literature that the magazine favoured, including its representation in provincial as opposed to London publications.

Such keyword and imprint searches could be of equal value for local history research, and it was the realisation of this that made several participants express themselves willing to attempt to make returns for the collections in their care. It was stressed that the project could provide a complete printout of material reported by any location with the bibliographical information enhanced because of the resources available to the project team.

Much material of local interest has a low survival rate, and the ESTC aims to include a wide range of ephemeral items. It is therefore important to researchers that the stray items in scattered collections should be gathered up into a combined database so that a composite picture of 18th century life can be pieced together from the surviving fragments.

Ian Maxted Westcountry Studies Librarian, Devon County Library.

# Local Studies in Newcastle upon Tyne City Library

1984 is the centenary of the City Library's reference service and of its Local Collection. As in Glasgow's Mitchell Library a few years earlier (*Local Studies Librarian*, 2(1) Summer 1983, p. 14), the Library Committee in its first *Annual Report* (1880-81) made its intention clear: it was

anxious to keep in view the desirability of collecting all books, pamphlets and manuscripts, relating to Newcastle and the Northern Counties generally: . . . so that students may have at their disposal the material necessary to assist them in acquiring a thorough knowledge of the numerous industries which have made Tyneside famous over the entire globe.

The industries have declined but our interests and purpose have barely changed: we attempt to acquire at least one copy of all published material relating to the counties of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and Durham.

A new central library was opened in 1968: incorporated in it was the 'Northumberland Room' designed to house the Local Collection. This space soon proved inadequate and a part of the general reference area was appropriated; at present various components of the collection are housed on four different floors of the building. Apart from a number of frequently used books — county and town histories, street directories, for example (all duplicates) — the collection is closed access. There are public author and subject catalogues.

There are about 39,000 books, from examples of the earliest Newcastle printing of the Civil War period to the latest planning reports and books by local authors. Whenever possible, two copies of each title are acquired, one going straight into reserve stock. About 900 titles are added each year — one activity not apparently affected by the present recession is local publishing. The local studies librarian is also responsible for maintaining the central lending library collection of local books, though not those of branch libraries.

We have about 6,000 bound volumes of local periodicals and serials from the *Newcastle General Magazine* of the 1750s to current community, church and political newsletters and the transactions of local learned societies. Some 1,050 titles are currently received; dealing with them occupies one colleague almost full-time, as their publication is notoriously irregular. At any one time 200 of the 1,050 are causing problems — non-delivery, title changes, missing issues, etc.

The newspaper collection of 1,450 bound volumes is one of our greatest treasures and our greatest headache: intensive use combined with decaying newsprint is an alarming problem, only partially alleviated by the use of microfilm. (I dealt with this topic in *Local Studies Librarian* 1(2) Summer 1982,

pp 11-13 and the reader is referred there for more detail). Use of newspaper cuttings saves wear and tear (literally!) on originals. Although we have volumes of cuttings from 1878, most of these are the work of private individuals and it was only in 1969 that we began to keep cuttings systematically: we now have six 4-drawer filing cabinets of these, arranged by subject, and many bound volumes. A cutting is normally photocopied and filed available for use two days after its appearance in a newspaper. There is also a collection of biographical cuttings.

Our collection of illustrations and photographs is now approaching 45,000, including prints from 15,000 glass negatives, most of which are from the Auty-Hastings collection. This firm produced commercial views for the whole of north east England from the mid 1890s to about 1912; even the smallest villages are representated in the collection. In addition to these are some 6,500 postcards, although gifts of these have sadly declined since they became collectors' items.

The collection of 5,000 Ordnance Survey and other maps concentrates on Newcastle and Northumberland, for which we have most scales and editions of the O.S., as well as printed maps from the seventeenth century. One of our few remaining manuscript collections is a series of early nineteenth century estate plans of the Newcastle area. Like the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, we have successfully used aperture cards to save use of original maps and to enable readers to make cheap copies.

With ephemera, we have restricted our collecting policy very deliberately to the city of Newcastle and to the output of regionally significant bodies otherwise we should have disappeared under a welter of paper, very difficult and very expensive to maintain properly. Of early ephemera, there are several excellent collections, mainly of nineteenth century political material. Our collection of Newcastle Theatre Royal playbills runs from 1786 to the present, with some gaps. Other Newcastle theatres and music halls, less prestigious, are less well represented, though some of the gaps are filled by the Clark Programme Collection of 3,600 items, donated in 1932. From about 1880 J.B. Clark seems to have spent every evening in a theatre or at a concert, not only in Newcastle and the north east, but in other major cities and in Europe. So we may have some of the only surviving programmes of the Interlaken Kursaal, 1902!

On a rough estimate, about 60% of our enquiries are genealogical. There is a tendency to regard such enquirers as somehow less important and less deserving of help, but their requests are as important to them as the history of a business is to an economic historian. We have a 606-volume collection of Northumberland and Durham parish register transcripts, many of which are indexed and therefore heavily used, the Northumberland and Durham volumes of Boyd's *Marriage Index*, and the *I. G. I.* for the same area. These, the collections of newspapers and directories, and the fact that Newcastle is the

point of arrival for most visitors to the north-east, impose heavy demands on materials and staff.

We have two special collections which merit a note: the Bewick Collection and the Thomlinson Library. The first comprises all editions of all books illustrated by the Newcastle wood engraver Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) and his pupils, including proof copies, along with almost a thousand wood blocks, a few watercolours and his tool-box. Dr. Robert Thomlinson (1668-1748) bequeathed his personal library to St Nicholas' Church (now Newcastle Cathedral) in 1736 to form the basis of a public library for the town. After the usual vicissitudes suffered by such libraries — books lost, stolen and sold — it was transferred to the city library in the 1880s. While mainly theological, the collection of over 7,000 titles contains early historical, geographical and natural history texts. The content is not local, but the whole is an interesting local example of both an eighteenth century gentleman's library and an early public library. The books have recently benefited from British Library grants for cataloguing and for some rebinding.

There are now no major archive collections. Like most public libraries, Newcastle collected such material from the beginning, but it has been transferred to the appropriate local record office. In some instances, microfilm copies have been retained.

We have an active publications programme, ranging from 'users' guides' to books, postcards (both 'historic' and contemporary colour views) and reproductions of maps. We were extremely gratified (and relieved!) to see our first attempt at a calendar using old photographs sell out in the week before Christmas.

Newcastle has a rather idiosyncratic structure for its reference and enquiry services by which colleagues assigned to local studies work do not spend all their time in local studies, but may work at general reference and city information service points. Bearing this in mind, we have a staff of five, with clerical support. Opening hours are 0900-2100 Monday - Thursday and 0900-1700 Friday - Saturday. We have about 2,400 personal enquirers, 150 phone calls and 35-40 letters per month.

Several exciting prospects are in view. In 1985, after a staff restructuring, we will have a local studies department in which the staff will be exclusively assigned to the subject. There will also be a physical move to occupy half of one floor of the building, of  $583 \mathrm{m}^2$ , where all the parts of the collection can be brought together.

We are currently involved, in conjunction with community groups, in the planning of a 'Local Studies Centre' in the west end of the city which, we hope, will bring about a closer contact with local people to the benefit of both parties.

The possibility of a computer-based index to local photographs is in the early stages of investigation: this will satisfy the increasing number of subject

requests, especially from the local media, with which our present filing system cannot always adequately cope.

Over all this, however, hangs the threat of government legislation on ratecapping: the maintenance of the collection already stretches available funds to their limit and beyond. It would be tragic for Newcastle and the north east if after maintaining the first Library Committee's objectives for a hundred years, we should now be forced into decline.

> Frank Manders, Local Studies Librarian, Newcastle City Libraries.

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#### Notes and News

The North West Branch of LSG is to hold a one day school on photographs in local studies collections. The programme includes contributions on techniques of photographic recording and photographic copying, with practical demonstrations, and papers on family photgraphs and aerial photographs for the local historian. The venue is the Manchester Studies Unit, Manchester

Polytechnic. The date is Wednesday October 3rd, and the fee is £5. Full details available from Diana Winterbotham, Lancashire Library, 143 Corporation Street, Preston, PR1 2TB.

The London and Home Counties Branch recently held a day school on newspapers at the British Library Newspaper Library at Colindale. Among the papers were 'Newspapers as a historical source' by Dr. Michael Harris of London University, and 'Newspaper librarianship' by Geoffrey Whatmore. A full transcript of these talks is available on receipt of a 9" x 4" S.A.E. from B. Curle, Central Library, Phillimore Walk, London W8 7RX.

# La Memoria Lunga — a local studies conference in Sardinia

The first telephone call came when I was away from the Cambridgeshire Collection. The message taken asked whether I would accept an invitation to speak at a meeting in Sardinia; it seemed so unlikely it could only be a joke. The second call came when I was on my own in the Collection during a busy lunch hour — "had I decided to come?" I asked for written details. The letter when it finally arrived included a programme: my name was on it, one of four foreign participants invited to 'La Memoria Lunga', a joint meeting of archivists, curators, archaeologists, historians and librarians from all over Italy which was to be held from 28th April to 1st May in Cagliari, capital of Sardinia. The aim was to discuss the problems that have evolved since interest has changed from the pseudo-learned style of 'local history' to 'local studies' with the need to collect, keep and organise materials so as to make them fundamental means for teaching and research. One part of the congress dealt with the materials from both a theoretical and practical point of view while others dealt with proposals for an assessment of all sources for local history and to attempt to achieve some form of integration of the three main providers of such material.

The foreign participants were from institutions — in the words of the programme — 'traditionally held in high repute as far as the organisation of public libraries, in particular the collections of local history, is concerned'. Apart from myself, the contributors in this section were Manuel Romero Tallafigo from Seville, Ivette Weber from Lyons and Reinhard Oberschelp from Hanover who unfortunately was unable to attend although he had sent a copy of his paper.

Following our papers, which were on the situation in our own libraries, questions were invited from the delegates who enquired about the cataloguing procedures of the Cambridgeshire Collection and especially about our 'S.D.I.' system and about the training given in Britain and France for local studies librarians. The organisers had arranged a team of translators for these sessions, and with their help I was able to understand the questions, and hopefully they were able to understand my replies. Later in the session, unfortunately after the translators had left, there was further debate. The first speaker clearly quoted something I had said as the basis for his observation; he was quickly attacked by another delegate and demanded the right of reply. At the time there was no way of knowing what it was all about, but it later transpired that this was part of the continuing debate over what to keep — whereas librarians try to collect every scrap, and archaeologists label each piece of pottery they find, archivists often discard large numbers of documents which might in the future have some

value. It was frustrating to be present at such an important debate yet unable to understand what was being said. However, with the help of Sicilian delegates, the main points of this and other debates were gathered. They included the fact that in Italy many local history publications are financed by banks and other corporations, allowing magnificent productions to be produced at minimal charge. Another point made was that in Sicily their local radio broadcasts local history programmes which are very popular, but their libraries do not have a local collection.

We inspected a magnificent exhibition of early printing, well displayed, and it was touching, for example, to see the pride in the delegate from Sassari that some of *their* items were chosen for display. If such pride in our own collections was more common in Britain local studies librarianship would enjoy wider support and encouragement.

This was an interesting and important Congress. The way in which discussion was joined between the professions who together face the problems of the present and the future's need for historical and contemporary information shows its value. The debates were of considerable interest and the Proceedings when published should be translated into English and made widely available. The organisers are to be congratulated — even if their choice of speakers is still a mystery!

Mike Petty, Local Studies Librarian, Cambridgeshire Libraries.

#### Local Studies and the Schools

The Local Studies Group of the Library Association organised this second day school at Stamford on 9th May, 1984 when the theme was schools' use of local history and how it could be frustrated, contained or even encouraged.

Three speakers from within the education system addressed the meeting. The first, Ray Acton, history adviser for Lincolnshire, explained how since 1969 history classes in schools had been taking an especial interest in their own community, especially for the period from the 1940s and 50s (for which there are no sources except newspaper cuttings maintained by local collections). This type of study has now spread throughout the history syllabus, from the 8 - 13 age range where he expected interest to increase strongly, through the 14 - 16 age period where half the pupils take history (although few take up the optional project and only half of these take a local project) at C.S.E.: he felt there was disillusionment since the projects seemed to have no aim and here pressure might not grow. The projected 16+ examination might contain an option of a personal topic which O-level never had, whilst some A-level history examinations envisaged a 25% weighting based on document work.

In addition to problems with pupils there was the difficulty of the non-specialist teacher who inherited local history as part of the curriculum. Sallie Purkis, who trains teachers at Homerton College Cambridge was adamant that, despite the librarians' problems in meeting the demands already experienced, she would continue to encourage her teachers to use local materials; libraries could not shut their doors to school children and library management should recognise the tremendous increase in this aspect of their responsibility and make staffing and resources available. She urged publicity for the local studies departments and political activity to obtain the necessary funding. Schools' use of local materials would not cease just because libraries did not recognise it.

Jim Brown, a history teacher who has had a term seconded to the Cambridgeshire Collection described the ways in which his own enthusiasm for local history in the classroom had been encouraged and frustrated; he described the potential of local studies departments, especially in the newspapers and cuttings files they maintained, and how it was important for librarian and pupil to work together to make use of the stock. He echoed points made by the previous speakers that many teachers now instructing pupils in local history have not had training, had not undertaken projects themselves and did not appreciate the difficulties; librarians should hit back at schools and teachers who sent pupils in without instruction and preparation. David Hayns, field officer for the British Association for Local History reported that in one

centre in Cheshire teachers were only allowed to use the local material provided they spent as much time there before the visit as they would with their class. The last speaker, Patrick Baird of Birmingham Local Studies Department described what had been achieved in his library in the last ten years.

In the course of discussions various points arose, Iill Crowther from Hull reported that when she had approached one teacher who had instructed 200 pupils to visit the library, she was told that without her material the pupils would fail their examinations and that the teacher would tell them this would be because the library service could not be bothered with them. Lecicestershire held material in branches which was not in their central collection: they were therefore not inundated by parties from all parts of the county since they would descend on libraries nearer their school. They had recorded an increasing number of subject requests for local studies projects. Cambridgeshire Libraries Schools Librarians echoed the point that project requests were getting out of hand. They were unable to supply books about a specific settlement, and referred such enquirers to the local collection. Nottinghamshire is establishing collections of material in some local libraries, with the central local collection as the backup, and has appointed a schools adviser. Lincolnshire have a basic collection in each library, while some branches such as Grantham had material collected by previous enthusiasts and received many requests from schools. At present Lincolnshire does not have a local studies librarian, though the work is being maintained to some extent by the Central reference library staff.

Throughout the day discussion was concerned with local history projects: everyone acknowledged that geography presented more problems. It was a most interesting meeting and brought together specialists from seven counties, each of whom benefited from the experience of colleagues. The county librarian of Lincolnshire attended the morning session and his presence was a compliment to the LSG and the participants. The lasting impression is that local studies is one area of librarianship where our work can and does make the difference between a child's success or failure — can we be bothered with them?

Mike Petty, Cambridgeshire Libraries.

# Local and Regional Bibliography — two responses

#### The Essex Bibliography.

I was most interested in Mr. Sturges' article on local and regional bibliographies in the winter 1983 issue of 'The Local Studies Librarian'. I was impressed by the diversity of organisations involved in this work. To the list of universities, public library authorities, regional library bureaux and/ L.A. branches, I should like to add that of the Victoria County History.

In Essex the Victoria County History took the initiative in the first attempt at a comprehensive county bibliography in the nineteen fifties. Information was supplied by the twelve library authorities in the ancient county at the time, by the Essex Record Office, the Essex Archaeological Society, and several private contributors. The Essex Bibliography edited by Mr. W.R. Powell, was published in 1959 as part of the V.C.H. Essex series. It comprises three sections; Part I the county by topic; Part II, biography and family history in alphabetical order of surname; Part III, individual places and regions in alphabetical order.

The continuance of the bibliography has been complicated by the reorganisation of London government in 1964 and of Local government in 1974. The ancient county now comprises five London boroughs and the reconstructed Essex County Library service. In the 1970s the V.C.H. of Essex undertook to prepare a *Supplement* to the *Essex Bibliography*. This work, much assisted by the library authorities and the Essex Record Office, is being edited by Mr. Frank Sainsbury, vice-chairman of Victoria County History, Essex. Preparation is now well advanced and it is hoped that the *Supplement* also will be published as a Victoria County History volume. For the future, the county local studies library has assumed responsibility for maintaining a file of slips for new material as acquired and for the indexing of county periodicals.

Philip Gifford, Local Studies Librarian, Essex County Library.

#### The Kent Bibliography.

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In his article on local and regional bibliography in the Winter 1983 issue of the Local Studies Librarian Paul Sturges states that 'fine published bibliographies, such as those for Kent, and Norfolk, are there to be seen'. But Kentish librarians had had to be patient.

23 years before the bibliography was published, in December 1954, a meeting was held to consider the possibility of compiling a 'list of early Kentish material'. Organised jointly by the Kent Sub-Branch of the Library Association and the Kent Division of the Association of Assistant Librarians, it was chaired by Mr. M.S. Crouch, Chairman of the Kent Sub-Branch, and those attending included representatives of the County Archives Office and the Kent Council of Social Service as well as interested librarians. The minutes are now of historic interest and, I think, of practical use to others considering embarking on such a project. They include the following points;

a. The desirability of a new bibliography of Kentish material was discussed and it was agreed that such a work was of first importance. (The word 'new' is there because there exists a county bibliography published in the last century).

b. The question of a 'pilot scheme' to test the possibility of a full scale bibliography was discussed and it was finally agreed to do preliminary work on the subject of Kent agriculture, including material in book form (including substantial material in books not wholly devoted to Kent) and in periodical form.

c. The necessity of full bibliographical details of older books was stressed, and it was agreed that the inclusion of such details for material published before 1800 was desirable.

d. It was decided to prepare a scheme to circulate to all libraries who could contribute to the scheme, so that no material should be overlooked. The necessity of contacting libraries outside Kent but known to have important Kentish material was stressed.

e. It was felt to be too early to discuss the ways and means of producing the printed list, and it was agreed to leave this matter in abeyance until more was known of the extent of the final work.

Despite this brave beginning, a decade later the scheme had lapsed. In November 1967, however, the Chairman of the Kent Sub-Branch wrote to the County's chief librarians as follows:

"As you will know, the Kent Bibliography project was revived last year by the Kent Sub-Branch and considerable progress on its compilation is being made under the very able editorship of Mr. G. Bennett, ex-librarian of Sevenoaks . . . . At this stage the project is being financed by the London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association".

Sadly George Bennett did not live to see the work published in 1977: it was Mrs. W.F. Bergess, the County Reference Librarian, and Mr. C. Earl who presided over the final stages of the project. However, the work did not cease then: Mrs. Bergess was kept busy in retirement editing a supplement. This was published in 1981 and includes not only books published after the cut-off date for the original work but also those items which were, inevitably in such a project, not included in the 1977 bibliography.

Both the original bibliography and supplement are still in print and local studies librarians in Kent and some London boroughs are continuing to send me data on their additions.

David S. Cousins, Secretary, Publications Sub-Committee, Kent Sub-Branch of the London and Home Counties Branch, Library Association

# An Open University History Society-Local Studies Group Link

Nowadays the Open University possesses a wide range of societies — one being the Open University History Society. An OUHS proposal to establish a co-operative link between the Library Association LSG and itself has been approved by the group. Local OUHS personnel are making contact with the Local Studies Group branches to carry the association into practice. In Scotland, LOCSCOT will work alongside our regional branch, OUHS in Scotland. Here is a short account of the Open University History Society and various proposals on the format of the link as the society envisages it.

The OUHS, in brief, comprises a central administration with regional branches holding meetings for the membership in each locality. It aims to promote research into all areas of historical interest and to encourage members to present their findings to the society. We hope that published works will appear from time to time. The society, in addition, seeks to foster interest and discussion about the study of historical methodology. It also maintains contact with a growing number of kindred organisations around the country. Conferences and visits to places of note are held at intervals. *Open History*, the journal of the OUHS, is published at quarterly intervals during each year. Membership is available to all students, graduates and staff of the university.

Clearly, there is an opportunity within the collaboration for the LSG and the OUHS to exchange *The Local Studies Librarian* and *Open History* magazine articles. The LSG could supply essays on local studies resources in libraries or record offices for *Open History*, while the OUHS could provide discourses on current research for *The Local Studies Librarian*. It may be possible to share our meeting rooms. Our branch meetings and conferences, as well, could be opened to members of the other society. Perhaps, at some juncture, the OUHS and the LSG will carry out corporate local history projects. These joint schemes might include oral history surveys.

The OUHS can welcome the LSG on its excursions to historical places. Our visits are usually made during the summer months. It is obvious that we should be able to give LSG members access to the Open University course history projects. Case studies in disciplines such as A305 History of Architecture and Design 1890-1939, D301 Historical Data and the Social Sciences and A401 GB 1750-1950: Sources and Historiography explore all sorts of local matters. One course has formed a project archive comprising some 2,200 dissertations — mostly on microfiche — in the Open University library at Milton Keynes. The branches of the OUHS might have their historiographers

working with the LSG and its members in the production of local history books and pamphlets. Library publications could also be sold at our various functions.

On the opposite side of this association, the LSG membership is, naturally, in a position to supply the OUHS with a current awareness service on acquisitions to archive collections held by libraries and record offices. It would be a most useful research facility. Through LSG members, we can learn about the role of information technology in historical enquiries. You may consider, too, giving lectures on maps and other remarkable history source materials at OUHS meetings. Exhibition halls controlled by the LSG membership could be made available to the OUHS. Generally, this accommodation is leased to societies on request.

The Open University History Society looks forward to working with the LSG — the many kinds of possible activities should be very worthwile. A cooperative alliance between us can only be mutually advantageous. The Local Studies Group, of course, will have its own views on how to develop the matter. These notes from the OUHS stance at least provide a starting place. We hope the link will be a successful one.

Anthony J.J. McNeill, Branch Supervisor, North East of Scotland Library Service; OUHS in Scotland Regional Co-ordinator.

# A national information resource for local studies: the York University local bibliographic project

Local bibliographies have traditionally been of interest primarily to the historian and antiquarian. They have been individually compiled area by area, unrelated to each other in range of contents or in style. All have hitherto been produced by conventional printing methods, are expensive to publish, and necessarily are out of date on the day of publication. Indeed many parts of the country have no record of the printed works (books, pamphlets, reports, etc.) that describe and record their affairs.

The University of York is seeking financial support of the order of £200,000 to establish in the University Library a Bibliographic Office with adequate computer resources to hold a national data-base of printed publications in local studies, to supply the editorial control needed for such a complex bibliographic project, and eventually to provide a commercial on-line information service in the subjects and materials included. The feasibility of the method ology has already been proved and two pilot projects are well under way. The first, a Bibliography of the City of York, should be ready for publication in 1984. Other counties are ready to join the project when resources become available. The proposed system is economical in design, cheap to maintain (as each local area is responsible for its own data) and is only dependent on the establishment of the central resource.

The York proposal differs from previous bibliographic projects in many ways:-

#### 1. Contents

"Local studies" nowadays encompass a wide range of subjects relating to business and industry, the social services, planning, etc. as well as history and topography. Most significantly, however, the publications of local government bodies will be included. These are now virtually untraceable, although in size and importance they are the equal of central government publications, and are a unique source of environmental, social and economic information.

#### 2. Standardisation

Each county or city co-operating in the scheme will collect its own data according to the bibliographic criteria established by the editorial office at York. That is, coverage, style of entry, subject arrangement and indexing terms will be standard for the whole system so allowing the development of the data-base as a national information service.

#### 3. Locations

Up to 99 locations will be held for each entry, so that not only will the existence of a work be recorded, but access to it will be facilitated. In the hard copy versions of the bibliography up to 9 locations for each entry will be printed.

4. Currency

Currency will be maintained by the continued addition of newly published, or newly found, material.

#### 5. Publication Forms

Both hard copy and microfiche editions would be produced, area by area, from the whole of a county to individual towns. Laser printing from magnetic tape is being considered for reproduction of hard copy editions. Current bibliographies could then be produced virtually on demand so avoiding the cost of type setting and the commitment of large sums of money to the printing of long editions. Microfiche versions (with hard copy indexes) would be produced at even less cost.

6. The data-base, held on computer at the University of York, will eventually provide an on-line information service, capable of being searched on any section defined in the subject arrangment of the bibliography, on any subject term used in its index, and on any word used in the author, title or note fields of each entry, either throughout the whole of the data-base or in any specified topographical area.

#### **PROGRESS**

#### Stage 1

The University of York has supported development by a grant of £2,750 from its Research Priming Fund and is providing computer resources on the University's main frame for this first stage. The systems design has been based on work already done for the University Library's own systems and the same development team is involved.

Two pilot projects, bibliographies of the City of York and the County of Warwickshire (excluding Birmingham) are well advanced. In York a grant of £36,000 by the Manpower Services Commission has provided a microcomputer for data entry, and a team of eight transcribers and a professional librarian as supervisor for data capture. The Oliver Sheldon Memorial Trust has made a grant of £750 towards eventual publication.

In Warwickshire, work is proceeding under the editorship of David Kelly, formerly Deputy Librarian, University of Warwick. This is based at present on the works held by local libraries, the County Record Office, the County Museum, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and Birmingham City Library. Warwickshire County Library hopes to obtain an M.S.C. grant for their work on the project.

Work began in March 1983 and, with over 10,000 entries in the data-base taken from both areas, the methodology of the system has been proved. Samples of hard copy output, produced both by high quality line printer and by laser printing, are available for inspection, as is the on-line index.

That the scheme identifies a weakness in information resources, for which hitherto no practicable solution has been offered, is provided by the response of those bodies and individuals concerned with local studies. A number of libraries — special, public and academic — have already indicated that if the scheme is established they would wish to supply data. Examples are Manchester City Library, Lancashire County Library, Lincolnshire County Library, Leicester University Library, The Guildhall Library, and Birmingham City Library.

Stage 2.

Before any additional areas can be accepted, sufficient computer and editorial resources must be ensured for the next four or five years. If these can be guaranteed, another six counties could be accepted. With stage 2 successfully completed, the creation of a unique national resource would be well within reach.

Margaret Evans, York University Library.

#### **Recent Publications**

Hart, V. and Marshall, L. Wartime Camden. Camden Libraries and Arts Dept., 1983. 36pp. £1.50 + postage. ISBN 0-901389-40-4.

This is a well-illustrated record of part of London during two world wars. The text is based on the reminiscences of local inhabitants, originally submitted for a Camden History Society essay competition, while the illustrations, mainly from Camden Local History library, were brought together for an exhibition on the subject in 1980. The text largely allows the contributors to speak for themselves, with carefully thought-out linkups by the compilers. The illustrations are varied and include reproductions of photographs, notices and local newspheets.

This is a well produced booklet, worth its modest price, and is a good example of the kind of work which can be achieved when a library cooperates with other organisations. The compilers comment on the problems of acquiring material on this kind of topic, but the publication should help to stir memories and hopefully lead to the discovery and preservation of more information about what were obviously important events in the history of the community.

Below is a comment by Malcolm Holmes, Camden's Local History Librarian, on some of his experiences in promoting the publication.

'Wartime Camden' is available at all Camden libraries and at many bookshops around the Borough. The print run was 10,000 copies and from its publication in late November to May 1984, around 1,600 copies have been sold to bookshops or newsagents or through libraries. The largest single outlet so far has been the Museum of London, which has taken 200 copies. We hope to recover production costs within the first year.

We had widespread publicity in all of the local papers except the Kilburn Times — the only paper I can never get any publicity into, although Local History had a regular feature in the paper at one time. The Camden Magazine carried a feature on it and has already resulted in a number of postal sales, and an interview on Radio London was repeated throughout the day and night and also produced a good response.

Sales through some bookshops are very high but I felt a number of bookshops showed little imagination or courage. I was offering to them *on sale* or return, at one third discount, a well produced publication, well below the

cost of many similar publications and with certain local publicity and yet they would sometimes only wish to take as few as 5 copies. In one street a few yards from a well established bookshop which only took 10 copies I have already sold 70 copies to a small newsagent. He is so enthusiastic about the sales that he is now stocking a range of Camden History Society publications and will gladly sell anything else we produce.

It was only in the Holborn area that I had a more limited success as a number of bookshops were not really interested in stocking anything on the locality. However, Holborn Lending Library is helping to make up for this and is the record library sales outlet.

Library sales seem very encouraging although I was very surprised and disappointed to learn that two libraries decided not to put up any publicity as they were too busy and as a result had nil sales. In a number of libraries some of the staff were not aware they had copies for sale weeks after stocks and publicity were distributed and some did not know where their stocks were housed.

I found it fascinating going round the Borough with stocks of the publication but I am grateful I don't have to act as a salesman all the time. Every bookshop seemed to have a different policy as to purchases. In some, like Dillons, subject departments or individuals have delegated authority to purchase books and it was a pleasure dealing with them. In others, I was treated as if I was flogging the Crown Jewels and only the Manager could decide. In Foyles, for example, I spoke directly to the General Manager as clearly the acquisition of £10 or £20 worth of stock on sale or return would put the whole empire at risk. He was so busy he clearly wasn't interested in anything outside of his existing paperwork and I still haven't got an order from Foyles.

British Association for Local History. Field Officer's report for September 1982 — November 1983, by David Hayns. BALH, 43, Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP. £1.85 including postage.

In September 1982, the newly-formed British Association for Local History (BALH) appointed a Field Officer, Mr. David Hayns, whose brief was to "travel throughout the country to co-operate in developing interest, work and projects in local history among individual groups". It was decided by BALH at an early stage, based on information contained in an initial report by the Field Officer, that a county-by-county survey of England and Wales should be made, indicating the range of local history activity already taking place.

The resulting report has now been published by BALH, and makes very informative reading. David Hayns has consulted a wide range of people in the course of his survey, including local history societies, individual local

historians, librarians, archivists, museum staff, teachers, extra-mural tutors and educational advisers. Information on all these groups and their current activities and services is given. A section of the report deals with special subject areas, such as vernacular architecture, industrial history and family history. Finally, the role of BALH in local history is briefly considered, with outline suggestions for implementing proposals made in this connection in the report.

The value of this report to those with local history interests is two-fold. Firstly, it is an excellent survey of the wide variety of local history activity already existing in England and Wales; a range of activity which is impressive and encouraging. Secondly, it is an admirable stimulant to those seeking new ideas which can be used in the extension of work already being undertaken in a locality, for the user can draw on the examples of projects being undertaken in other areas. This is the most unusual form of publication — a report which is both interesting and useful.

Diana Winterbotham, Local Studies Librarian, The Lancashire Library.



# Correspondence

Dear Sir,

In the Summer 1983 issue (vol 2 number 2(4)) you published a fascinating article on the resources for local studies in the Mitchell Library. I share Mr Fisher's anxiety about the deterioration of his newspaper files on inferior paper.

However, he despairs too much in describing his files of the *Govan Press*, *Partick Star* and *Pollokshaws News* as 'unique'. The national newspaper collections at Colindale contain substantial runs of all these titles. Perhaps this offers comfort only to Southern Sassenachs and suffering expatriates, but I would hazard a guess that the Newspaper Library's copies are in a better condition than those of the Mitchell Library, by virtue of less concentrated and sustained use. Thus at least there should be a reasonably sound file available for microfilming when the time comes.

Stephen Green Head of the Newspaper Library, The British Library.

#### Notes and News

Wiltshire Library and Museum Service has announced a Wiltshire History Competition. Intended to be the first of an annual series, the theme is the county's villages, and entrants are invited to write a history of some aspect of a Wiltshire village or group of villages. Towns are deliberately excluded as they will be the subject of a later competition. The closing date for entries is October 1985, but potential entrants are asked to notify the organisers as soon as possible so that they can be sure that their proposed topics are eligible. The competition is open to amateur historians, either individuals or groups, and cash prizes will be awarded, the top prizes being £100. The Library hopes to publish some of the best entries, and copies of all entries will be placed in the County's local studies libraries for use by future researchers.

The competition is sponsored by Lloyd's Bank, which is awarding the cash prizes, and is a follow-up to the successful photographic competitions, also sponsored by Lloyd's, which have been held in the past. An attractive promotional leaflet is available and further information may be obtained from Dr. John Chandler, Local Studies Officer, Wiltshire Library and Museum Service, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wilts, BA14 8BS.

The Oral History Society is hoping to include an on-going feature in its Journal on developments in and additions to, oral history collections (however small) in local studies libraries throughout the country. Of interest would be the subjects and also information regarding public access and the name and address of the person to contact, whether the tapes have been transcribed, and catalogues, if any. Please send details to: Angela Hewins, 7, Knightlow Way, Harbury, Leamington Spa, Warwicks, CV33 9NB.

Promoting the library service through local studies: a one day School Taunton, September 27th 1984.

This School is jointly arranged by the LSG and the LA's South Western Branch. Papers to be presented include: library publishing policy, urban local studies, local radio and the local author's view. The venue is Taunton's Municipal Hall (built 1622), adjacent to the Norman castle housing Somerset's main local history collection and museum.

Further details from Robin Ansell, Yeovil Reference Library, King George Street, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 1PY (0935 21910) or John Loosley, Westonsuper-Mare Library, The Boulevard, Weston-super-Mare, Avon, BS23 1PL (0934 24133).

## Labour History and the Local Studies Library

The preparation of a bibliography on the Merseyside labour movement (1) highlighted for me the problems facing Labour historians when researching the history of trade unions and the Labour Party in their area using local studies collections.

The problems, and the improvements which could be made by libraries, can be divided into five parts.

Due to an almost total lack of co-operation between public libraries and the labour movement, many works published by trade union branches or constituency Labour Parties are not available in local studies collections. Local material is notorious for being difficult to trace in the BNB or BBIP, but clearly greater communication with unions, CLPs and 'radical' bookshops can ensure that little material of local interest is missed. Similarly, the reminiscences of former union activists would enhance any oral history archive.

Secondly, care should be taken to ensure that analytical entries are provided for material that may be held in other library departments. This requires a scanning of all journals received by all sections of the library to ensure no relevant article is 'lost'. This point is very important when one considers the inadequacy of the indexing of the *British humanities index*, the only very recent improvement in the only specialised index to local labour movements — the bibliography in the *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, and the poor local coverage of Smith's *British labour movement to 1970: a bibliography*'.

Thirdly, although only apparently discussed in any detail by a Danish writer (2), the Dewey Classification is a disaster area when dealing with material on the British labour movement, due to Dewey's adherence to the American concept of 'labour movement' as being merely a synonym for trade unions. Trade unions are strewn around 331.88, the Labour Party is at 324.24107, and as no number is available in the schedules for the wider term, 'labour movement' is traditionally dumped with socialism at 335.10941. Clearly, Dewey will diffuse related material to an unacceptable degree.

Fourthly, as much of the research which is carried out on local issues will never be published, librarians should be prepared to ask researchers (whether PhD students or schoolchildren) to deposit copies of their material to ensure it is freely available.

Finally, librarians should publicise their holdings to a far greater extent. The fact that only one trade unionist mentioned the public library when enquiring about material on the Liverpool labour movement, despite Liverpool City Libraries' fine collection of Trades' Council and Labour Party records, only strengthened my view.

References

The labour movement on Merseyside 1870-1980: a bibliography. B.A. thesis, Liverpool School of Librarianship, 1983.
PETERSEN, E.S. Public libraries and the history of the labour movement. Bibliotek. 1979: 70 (9), 262-264. In Danish.

Rodney Williams, Library Assistant Welsh National School of Medicine, CARDIFF.

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#### Committee matters

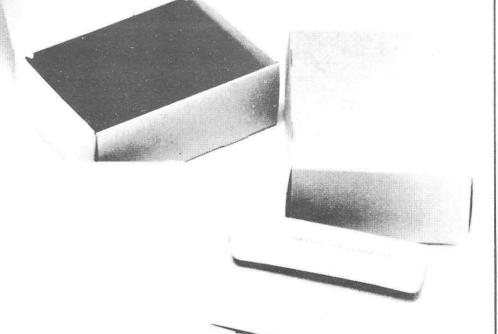
The LSG committee met at the Library Association on 28th March. Among the items discussed were the following:

- 1. LA Membership Services Committee Study Group. This body, which had recently been established 'to study the financing of branches and groups...' had sent a questionnaire to the Group. The draft response compiled by the Hon. Secretary was discussed at length by the committee.
- 2. LSG Weekend School '85. The London and Home Counties branch are to host this. To be held at Wansfell College, Epping Forest, in the autumn of 1985, it will take 'Local studies and education' as its main theme. It is hoped that the weekend school can be firmly established as a biennial event on the LSG calendar.
- 3. Eighteenth century Short-title Catalogue. It was reported that this Exeter meeting, organised jointly by committee member Ian Maxted and the Rare Books Group, had been a success. A report appears elsewhere in this issue.
- 4. Local history directory. An approach had been made to the Group regarding the publication of such a directory, to include societies, journals, libraries, record offices, etc. It was felt by the committee that the libraries section might be a possibility, but that the rest was really beyond our scope.
- 5. Sardinia Branch? In an attempt to disprove any suggestion that your committee might be thought to be too parochial, it was reported that committee member Mike Petty had been invited to speak at an Italian local studies gathering in Sardinia in May. This is also reported elsewhere.

Robin Ansell, Assistant Hon. Secretary.

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