

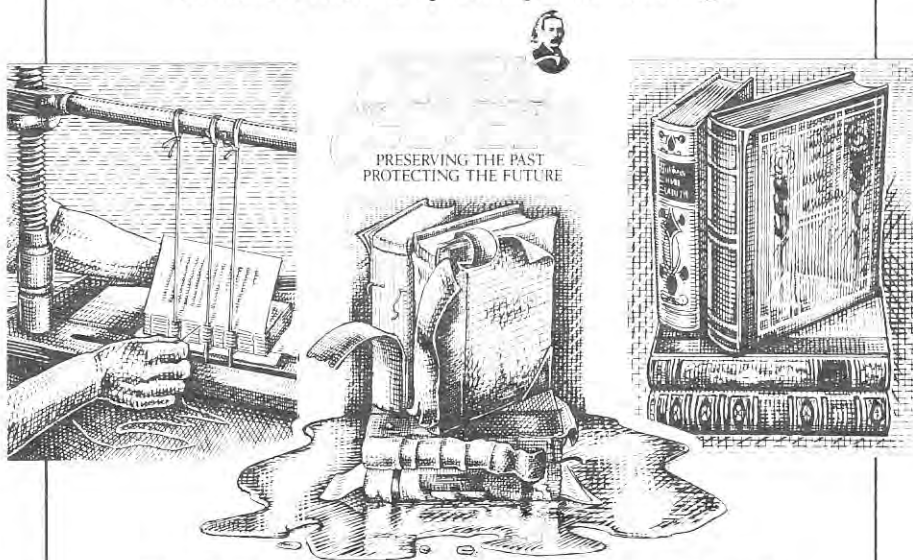
The Local Studies Librarian



Vol. 15 No. 2 Winter 1996

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Cover Illustration

Merthyr Tydfil, 1820. Courtesy Merthyr Tydfil Public Library

1991

950

1993

1,148

1995

1,452

1997

?

Umbrel LA

***More and more
people are
discovering the
biennial meet-
ing and market
place for the
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The Library Association

Editorial

This issue has something of an international flavour, with articles on and from Hungary and on the Group's latest contact, Latvia. Both are countries with a sense of history and are struggling to build up local history collections in libraries and are developing their own equivalents of LSG, which incidentally is highly regarded by them. We wish them well.

We should not, however, forget our own concerns. Though small in comparison with those of the countries like Hungary and Latvia, local collections at home are having problems, with cuts in staff, opening hours or bookfunds. Even so, improvements in service are being made. Digital systems for maps and photographs, such as those in Durham and Hackney and interactive CD-ROMs like Gateshead 1900 are being provided. The public can support collections too, as at Norwich where public donations are helping to replace material lost in the fire.

Potentially, one of the outside sources of finance for local collections is the National Lottery though, as is well known, there are considerable problems in libraries making bids at present. Local collections, however, do seem to be in a good position, as the Heritage Fund is prepared to support developments which make collections more accessible, whether these be buildings, as in Surrey and at the Bishopsgate Library, or for improving information systems. Matching funding is necessary but, as the notes elsewhere in this issue show, the Fund is prepared to accept various ways of doing this, from straight funding as at Surrey to "volunteer time" as with the Society of Genealogists. Despite the costs and time involved in meeting the stringent requirements for the presentation of proposals, perhaps it is worth a try if you have what seems to be a relevant project.



The Group itself continues to flourish, and next year sees our twentieth anniversary. Obviously there should be celebrations, but what? The Committee has some ideas, but would welcome more - if you have any suggestions please contact the Editor or our Secretary. The *Local Studies Librarian* does not go so far back, as this issue marks the completion of fifteen years (its predecessor was a newsletter edited by Brian Hall). However, we too welcome comments, news items and offers of articles. Do get in touch!

Finally, this issue will reach you as LA subscription time comes round. Please remember to stay with us - and encourage others to join. LSG is an active Group and, apart from LSL and meetings, makes representations to various LA and outside bodies on your behalf. We are worth supporting.

PS. Don't forget UmbrelLA 4!!

THE DURHAM RECORD

Iain Watson

Barnard Castle, (?) Durham Light Infantry. c.1930.	
	Procession with DLI soldiers lining street, possibly in Barnard Castle, about 1930.
No. 6 of 121 found by search. This Photograph by photographer - unknown	
Durham Record No. DR20178	
Item held at Durham City Library, Local Studies	
Touch SEE LARGE PICTURE to see the picture full screen. If your search produced more than one picture, you can use the NEXT and PREVIOUS buttons to see other pictures from the list. If LOCATE PICTURE ON MAP appears you may touch it to see a map showing approximately where the picture was taken. PRINT PICTURE gives the option to print out this picture with or without the information about it.	
<div>DURHAM </div>	

The Durham Record

Introduction

The Durham Record is an interactive database of electronic copies of historic photographs, Ordnance Survey maps and archaeological records. It is not a presentation or an interpretation of selected evidence; it is a tool to access primary sources in bulk. To draw an analogy with pre-electronic media The Durham Record is like a room full of photographs maps and site records, with cabinets of catalogues and indexes, and a friendly librarian to show you where everything is.

The combination of the following features makes The Durham Record unique:

- County coverage of Modern and Historic OS Mapping The complete County at 1:50,000 and 1:10,000 modern mapping plus complete county coverage for the first three editions of the 6":1 mile OS for about 1860, 1898 and 1923 (involving scanning of approx. 450 historic maps).
- The bulk of the Department's historic photograph collections. The initial database contains 10,000 images with ongoing capacity to eventually total over 30,000.

- The whole of the County Archaeological Sites and Monuments Record.
- A user-friendly public-access touch screen operated system, needing no user training whatsoever to operate, and available at multiple locations through the county, with the facility for users to print copies.

Aims and objectives of project

The project has succeeded in its aims and objectives of improving access to collections, providing a means for users to obtain instant low-cost copies of photographs, preserving and protecting sources by limiting the need to use the originals, providing an image bank which can be used by researchers and encouraging users to lend material for inclusion in the system.

Functionality, software and hardware.

During the initial stages of the project the required functionality was clearly defined:

- A database capable of quickly handling large numbers of records that could also be linked to software displaying images.
- Software that could be customised to be very easy for non experts, or the computer illiterate to use. To use the jargon, a user-friendly front end or GUI (graphical user interface)
- A GIS (Geographic information System) for handling computerised maps that could be integrated into our user friendly package.

Following successful in-house pilots written by staff within Durham County Council's IT Department, the software for the full scale project was written by COMSULT of Bedford, who as a result of an agreement with Durham County Council are now marketing the software as a generic product.

At the present time there are not sufficiently fast and reliable data lines to transmit data such as large image files to all the required locations, and in the first instance therefore there are four stand-alone units at locations across County Durham. There is the option to provide further units elsewhere at a later date, either stand - alone or networked. Each full workstation for the Durham Record consists of:

- Pentium P75 PC (16 Mb RAM; 2 Mb video RAM)
- 17" touchscreen
- 10 Gb hard disc
- 8 Gb internal DAT drive
- Hewlett Packard HP 5P printer (4 Mb memory required for high quality, 600 dpi printing)

Using The Durham Record

We hoped, as has proved the case, that people who had never used a computer before would be able to walk straight up to The Durham Record and, without training, find the information, or image they required. We therefore had to think through all the search routines very carefully - we needed to provide power whilst keeping any complexity hidden from the user.

The system allows the user to search, using 'buttons' which appear on the touchscreen in the following ways:

- Search for photographs by place names; by subjects; by names of people actually in the photographs; by looking at a map of an area; or by a combined AND search. Having found an image, the user can then have the option to see a map of the area it depicts or where it was taken.
- Search for maps by pointing at a map of the County, or by place name. The maps allow seamless panning N, S, E or W and there is the ability to swap, at the touch of a screen button, between current and historic maps

and to display two maps of the same area, of different dates, side by side, and to scroll both together.

- Search for SMR records by place, by period, by site type or by combined AND search.

Most photographs and all maps and SMR records can be printed out using a coin-operated system. Photographs are printed in under 1 minute, maps generally in under 2 minutes.

The Durham Record computers are mounted in specially designed housings so that, without a key, the user can only access the touchscreen. Staff have a key to get to mouse, keyboard and floppy disc drive. To increase security the software boots up a special screen in place of the normal WINDOWS screen and, without the password (entered on the touch screen), it is impossible to do anything other than load the public access system.

A2V

Choose subject for combined search

AGRICULTURE
ANIMALS & BIRDS
ARCHAEOLOGY
ARMED FORCES & DEFENCE
ARTS & MUSEUMS
BUILDINGS
BUSINESS & COMMERCE
COAL MINING
COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA
COSTUME
DOMESTIC LIFE
EDUCATION
EMERGENCY SERVICES
EVENTS
FOLKLORE & TRADITIONS



HELP

SEE
KEYWORDS

BACK TO
COMBINED
SEARCH

SEARCH
ANOTHER
WAY

BACK
TO
START

Touch the list above to highlight a main subject area that interests you. You can touch the arrows to move through the list. When you have highlighted the main subject area you want, touch SEE KEYWORDS to see a list of detailed keywords for your subject. Touch BACK TO COMBINED SEARCH if you do not wish to add a subject to your search at this stage.

DURHAM



Search Screen

Administrative system

Running behind the public access version of the software is a suite of administrative programmes which allow staff access to restricted data (e.g. donor name and address), allow more powerful searching (by use of keyboard and mouse) and monitor use of

the system - usage of the various photograph, SMR and mapping routines and events and error logs.

The system has a built-in time out which returns the screen to a rotating slide show of selected images from The Durham Record.

Data input - image text

Like many other collections the material to be included in The Durham Record was not all catalogued to a uniform standard. Data entry therefore required not just keyboarding skills but considerable skill and knowledge, for example when dealing with items with no date or place specified. It is possible to index one hundred photographs per day for the better catalogued sections of the collections; a more realistic average is 60 per day. Experience proved that this task could not be delegated to junior staff and required an experienced and knowledgeable local historian with cataloguing skills.

The use of touch screens constrained us as to how we could achieve useful subject indexing. Our aim was to provide keywords for all significant elements of every image, without assigning particular images to single general subject areas. We achieved this by defining 39 main classes. When keywords are entered by the indexer they are assigned to one or more of these main classes. When searching the user first picks one of these main classes and then gets a manageable list of keywords to pick from. For maximum flexibility each photograph can have any number of keywords from any number of main classes, and the same keyword can belong to any number of main classes as appropriate.

Data input - images

By a combination of mathematics and empirical testing we decided on a series of different scanning resolutions for images of different sizes. To some extent when dealing with bulk images this will always be a compromise between size of files, quality of screen display and quality of printout. It is very important before starting a large scanning project to determine what is your primary aim and optimise your scanning resolution to achieve this. We chose to scan at a relatively high resolution: another option would be to scan at a lower resolution, optimised for screen display, so that the images CANNOT be inadvertently used for publications without being rescaned.

Data input - map scanning

Current maps were already available to Durham County Council via a service level agreement with Ordnance Survey who agreed to their use on The Durham Record. The large physical size of the historic OS map sheets (up to almost AO) meant that scanning in-house was impractical and we therefore decided to seek a specialist contractor to carry out this work.

We had two options for scanning, either binary scanning (where each pixel on the screen can be black or white) and greyscale scanning (where each pixel on the screen can be one of 256 shades of grey). After some initial unsatisfactory experiments with monochrome scanning which failed to capture the very fine detail of engraving on some areas of the County Series maps, particularly in urban areas, we carried out some tests using greyscale scanning and generated files that were too large for normal PCs to manipulate and even crashed the network of a major scanning bureau.

Finally we opted for greyscale scanning at lower resolution, approx. 200 dpi, and even found a bureau who would bring their scanner to the County Record Office, allowing maps to be scanned without being removed from site.

Data input - sites and monuments record

All English counties maintain an SMR which is the primary archive of archaeological sites in that area. Data from the Durham SMR, held on Superfile, were transferred to ORACLE tables on the County's network, and then to the ACCESS database used for The Durham Record. As not all of the information on the Superfile database was suitable for public access (e.g. administrative records relating to site visits, land ownership, planning consents and other legal matters) the data was edited thoroughly before being made available to the public.

Public response

To monitor the reaction of the public to the Durham Record users were given self completion questionnaires and asked to complete them and return them to the library reference desk. Thirty seven completed questionnaires have been returned:

- 100% of users found the system 'easy to use'.
- 27% of users used the system for school/college/university work; 24% for personal research; 24% for family history; 24% for local interest.
- 73% of users looked at pictures; 84% looked at maps; 35% looked at sites and monument records.
- 46% of users printed pictures; 41% printed maps; only one user printed SMR records.

In general, the responses indicated a high level of public satisfaction with the system. Comments made include:

"Excellent quality printout."

"The system is a brilliant addition to the library. It was a great help with my research"

"A very useful resource. A great addition to the library."

"I really enjoyed using The Durham Record and think that it is a fine addition to the library's facilities."

Conclusion

The Durham Record project is now complete although there is scope to update records and to add images. It provides touch screen driven, public access to photographs, maps and sites and monuments records. It is hoped that other authorities embarking on digitisation projects will be able to benefit from work carried out for the Durham Record.

Acknowledgments

This project was carried out with funding from the Secretary of State for the National Heritage through the Public Library Development Incentive Scheme. PLDIS is administered by the British Library Research and Development Department on behalf of the Department of National Heritage.

For further information:

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LOCAL COLLECTIONS IN HUNGARY: problems and solutions of collection development.

Janos Kappel

I am here as the delegate of the Local History section of the Association of Hungarian Librarians. In the name of the nearly one hundred members of our section I thank you for your invitation.

The relationship between the local history Groups of Hungary and of Britain was established in 1992 when Elizabeth Melrose and Erzsébet Gancs played important roles. Since then we have got to know each other's work through frequent correspondence and personal contacts. The aim of my present study tour is to get closer to each other and to find out more about each other's activities. It has been a great help to us to see your *Guidelines for local studies provision in public libraries*, and we could well utilise some of the recommendations. We also regularly receive copies of *The Local Studies Librarian*, which have given us many good ideas: as an example I mention the 'Village outlines' project, because there have been efforts to put it into practice in Hungary.

Before beginning my lecture, first let me tell you a little about myself and where I come from. I have been a librarian for almost twenty years and I work in the Chernel Kálmán Town Library in Kőszeg, where I am a deputy director. My main field of work is collection development and cataloguing, so I am in charge of the acquisition, bibliographic description and classification of local documents. My place of work is a public library in one of the smallest towns in Hungary: Kőszeg is in the western part of Hungary, near the Austria-Hungary border, 20km from the county seat Szombathely, 250 km from Budapest and 80 km from Vienna. There are many old buildings in Kőszeg, among them a mediaeval castle, which played an important role in stopping the Turkish troops on their way to occupy Vienna. The library, with an area of 1340 square metres, is accommodated in a historic building in the centre of town. It has three sections, one for adults, one for children, and a music library open to all. 17% of Kőszeg's population of 12.000 are users of the library.

Our local history collection is about average in size and level of cataloguing among libraries of the same size, and has much the same problems, so now I'll try to summarise the opinions of leading local history librarians.

First of all I ought to say something about those recent political and economic changes which have had an impact on libraries. Two of them are particularly important. Local patriotism has become livelier, and the role of local events has become more important. Alongside the widening of democracy have come more and more enquiries about local public life and events, which now play a larger part in life.

From these changes come the second main problem: there is a twofold pressure on the collections, with the need for stock renewal on one hand and the increase in numbers of users on the other. While day after day we can feel the significant increase in demand for information, we also find that it is difficult to obtain the

documents required in order to provide a complete collection. Fortunately our libraries realised early on that it would be necessary to change their old acquisition practices to meet the new situation, and this brings us to the very middle of this second problem: current acquisition has become much more difficult than it was in the past.

Finding out about local publications requires a lot of energy and time on the part of the librarian and in addition they are much more expensive than before. Thus those libraries (the majority) who are in a poor financial situation have difficult decisions to make: whether for instance to buy books or periodicals, or whether to acquire a whole document or just photocopy the relevant parts of it. A major problem in current acquisition is that following the privatisation of publishing there are many more printers and publishers than a few years ago. Many of these firms are short-lived, some of them having been set up just to issue a few books: many of them change their names, and it is very difficult for librarians to cope with these problems. Often there is a long delay in getting to know about them: sometimes we never do. Again, many publishers deliberately do not submit the obligatory copies, while others simply do not know that they have to do so. It also takes a lot of time and effort to trace local items published outside the county, or even outside the country.

Another difficulty is to trace those publications which are not sold through the book trade, and then, if they are traced, to find out where to get them from. It would be a great leap forward if the counties would inform each other about items published in their own territories, but which are really for the collection of another county. Maybe they could transfer them to each other.

The number of periodicals has increased greatly since the change in the political system, and this is another headache. A great number of associations, companies, schools and communities publish periodicals which are of importance to the community, but it is very difficult to get hold of them all. One problem is that there are often changes in titles and frequency, and cessation of publications. All this takes up a lot of time and attention.

Another difficult task is the acquisition of documents published in foreign countries. Unfortunately the best national bibliographical tools ceased in 1989. We can order the publications of neighbouring countries, but delivery is doubtful, while purchasing on the spot without personal contacts is almost impossible. In the case of Western countries high prices are the main obstacle.

It is difficult to acquire minor publications, too, because of the huge increase in their numbers. There is a great variety in type and in the information provided. Those which are published in advance of or simultaneously with events, are important sources of everyday information. To find out about them and to acquire them needs a good deal of effort including keeping up personal contacts: the latter is much easier in the smaller towns, while in cities it can be almost impossible.

Another difficulty in acquisition which has not been solved is the problem of semi-published documents. Libraries usually receive documents of public meetings of

local government, but very rarely the reports of committees, though it is very important for democracy that everyone should be able to read those documents relating to all the local inhabitants. There is similar uncertainty about the publications of political parties, county publications of the Central Statistical Office and about research reports. Sometimes it is debatable whether they belong in the library or the archives. At the moment the best solution might be agreements to exchange information about newly issued documents.

Having looked at the problems, let us now turn to possible solutions and look at the opportunities for libraries for acquisition.

In Hungary the collection of local history material is the responsibility of the county libraries and one of their basic services is helping the work of the smaller town and village libraries in this field. One of the most important sources of acquisition for the county libraries could be, in my opinion, the deposit copy. An order from 1986, which is still valid, states that over and above the deposit copies sent to the National Szechenyi Library publishers have to send copies of local publications to the relevant county library as well. This applies to all publications where more than 70 copies have been produced. In fact, however, this does not always happen - some publishers do not submit copies even after warnings. One solution might be a new legal system for deposit copies, either as an independent Act, or perhaps within the Library Act: the new government programme promises the introduction of Acts for the professions. There have been two proposals to solve the acquisitions problem. One of them looks only at the national library, while the other interprets it more broadly and wishes to protect or even widen regional activities.

For publications not issued through the book trade, libraries can obtain copies through Könyvtárellátó (Book Supply Co.), although sometimes the bibliographic description and note they supply does not make clear the local connection. Because some publishers do not give their publications to Könyvtárellátó other sources, such as prospectuses, publishers leaflets, articles in periodicals and so on, have to be used as well. It is important to have good contact with the local bookstores. A big problem is that the most important tool for book selection, the Hungarian National Bibliography, often has a delay of several months in recording publications, and by then they are often out of print. In addition, because of the neglect by publishers, a significant proportion of publications is not included. The advantage of the national bibliography, however, is that it collected works are analytically described, so that it is easy to find out whether there is a local connection.

Another source for acquisition is buying books from second-hand bookshops, which is important for retrospective collection development. Important publications appear in book auctions, but the limited financial resources of libraries means that they are unable to compete with private collectors. The exchange of publications between public collections and libraries is not yet fully exploited as a way of acquisition. Gifts of publications from authors or publishers is, of course, a further way of acquiring material.

A further, and newer form of acquisition is for libraries themselves to produce

publications or source material. For instance our county library has its own serial bibliography, and the town library of Sopron collects oral history. In several places photographs are taken of local events, but in most places there is no time or money to do this kind of thing.

The collections can also be enriched by sound and video recordings of local events such as meetings or concerts, and there is an opportunity to copy TV and radio programmes. There is a need for a central agency to copy locally important excerpts of films held in film archives. Only a few libraries collect films: bibliographic control is a problem and old films are difficult to obtain even in the form of copies. The spread of cable television produces a lot of material, but acquisition is a problem, and a lot depends on cooperation. My own library is the preserver of the local television station's archive.

Cuttings can be acquire by libraries through subscription. MAHIR-OBSERVER (Media Observer Ltd) is a commercial enterprise. With its help libraries can save substantial amounts of working time, but its services are expensive and often incomplete. Microform is another way to obtain volumes of journals and the national library is very helpful. Technical developments in photocopying have allowed its increasing use in collections.

Nowadays a lot of libraries collect not just documents but public information relating to local events, people, institutions and companies. In some places computerised versions have also appeared. My library, for instance, compiled an information guide to the town and its surroundings, and this has appeared in print as well. We have also prepared a database of companies.

Finally, let me summarise what I have said. While the radical changes which have recently taken place in Hungary make collection development more difficult, we can also see encouraging signs, for instance in the renewal of collections, the implementation of new services and the spread of computer applications. We hope that this will continue.

Janos Kappel is Deputy Director, Chernel Kálmán Library, Kőszeg, Hungary.

This is an edited version of a talk given to the International Group of the LA at UmbrelLA 3, Manchester, 1995.

LOCAL STUDIES GUIDELINES

A small working group is currently engaged in the task of updating *Local Studies Libraries: Library Association Guidelines for Local Studies Provision in Public Libraries*, the first edition of which was published in 1990. LSG members with suggestions for amendment of the first edition, or fresh ideas for the new one, should approach the working group as soon as possible. The contact person is Alice Lock, Local History Librarian, Tameside Local Studies Library, Trinity Street, Stalybridge, Cheshire, SK15 2BN. Speed is of the essence, for it is intended to complete preparations for publication of the new edition by mid-1997. LSG members will also be given a chance to contribute ideas at a consultation meeting, to be held shortly.

LOCAL STUDIES AND THE LOTTERY

It is the general opinion of librarians that applications for National Lottery funding are complex, time consuming and in themselves something of a gamble, while of course not all library operations are eligible for funding. So far the Heritage Fund seems to have been the most successful avenue for librarians, and a number of grants have been made, so all is not doom and gloom. Below are some notes on organisations related to local and family history which have recently been successful in their bids. It should be remembered, of course, that matching funding has to be found by the grantee: this can be done in various ways.

Surrey History Centre

Surrey County Council has been awarded £2.74 million to add to the £3.65 million it had already committed to the establishment of a new, purpose-built, Surrey History Centre in Woking. The new 30,000 sq ft Centre, which will be completed in 1998, will bring together the collections of the Surrey Record Office and the Surrey Local Studies Library. Between them, the two services attract over 14,000 visitors a year, and the new joint Centre should be able to provide an enhanced service for enquirers. It will also provide a base for the rescue and preservation work of the county's Archaeological Unit, as well as exhibition, lecture and education facilities.

The Linen Hall Library, Belfast

Established in 1788, this is the oldest library in Belfast, and is now the only subscription library in Ireland. As an independent library it is widely used by all sections of the community in Northern Ireland, and is best known for its historic Irish and local studies collections, including newspapers, street directories and genealogical material. There is also its major Northern Ireland Political Collection, which was started in 1966. The library seeks to encourage the widest possible understanding of the diverse aspects of Irish civilisation.

The grant of £255,188 is to help the library complete the first stage of an improvement project by acquiring a long lease on two upper floors of neighbouring premises. This will increase space for users, collections and education programmes, and will improve access to readers with disabilities. The remainder of the total amount of £319,958 needed for this phase of development has been raised by the library itself. It is expected that the lease for the new premises will be signed at the end of November, and a second bid will then be submitted to enable the completion of the project by fitting out and equipping the new accommodation.

The Bishopsgate Reference Library

The Bishopsgate reference library, which is part of the Bishopsgate Institute, obtained a grant of £245,000 for restoration and enlargement. Founded in 1894, the collections were largely built up by Charles Goss, who was librarian from 1897- 1941. Apart from important collections on, for example the labour movement, trades unionism and the Cooperative movement, there is a major London Collection covering London as a whole. This now contains over a million volumes as well as maps and

illustrations, and a long and important run of London street directories: for the area immediately round the Institute there is very detailed coverage. All this material is available to bona fide researchers.

The lottery grant will be used to restore and improve the existing library and to create a new gallery for the reference material, some of which has been stored in the basement. Original furnishings will be restored and fittings such as lighting will be copied. To complement the grant, the Institute has had to raise £80,000 in matching funding.

Society of Genealogists

The Society has been awarded £152,400 towards the total cost of £203,260 it needs to fully computerise its library catalogue and to provide online public access. The work, which will entail the employment of three professional cataloguers, is expected to take three years. The Society's library is unique in this country: no other library in the UK offers readers with such a wide range of genealogical sources under one roof and on open shelves. It includes copies of about three-quarters of parish registers, as well as copies of tombstone inscriptions, census indexes, school registers, and important collections of poll books and directories. The library is freely available to the Society's members and to the general public subject to search fees. In 1995 there were about 27,000 visits by members and about 4,600 by fee payers.

The increasing bulk of the original card catalogue has caused many problems and a start on computer cataloguing new accessions was made in 1991. As a result of the grant the Society will shortly have subject and shelf lists readily available, as well as a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced database for public access.

As with all such grants, an element of fund matching is expected. The Society has made a deal with the Heritage Lottery Fund by which the value of three man-years work by volunteer cataloguers (valued at about £36,000) may be counted: thus the Society does not have to find matching cash.

The Walter Mason Trust

The Walter Mason Trust, Selkirk, was awarded £16,950 to finish conserving a collection of old legal documents which give a vivid picture of Borders life. The 10,000 assorted records include seventeenth century wills, marriage settlements and crime reports. Originally privately owned, they passed into the hands of the local authority, and the Trust was set up to maintain them. Its fund-raising efforts have been successful, producing a total of about £100,000 by the time the project finishes. The early papers are almost impossible to read, so full transcription by an archivist was needed, together with computerisation of the records, as well as conservation of the papers themselves. The collection is held in the museum in Selkirk.

LOCAL STUDIES IN LATVIA:

The Public Libraries of Latvia Local Studies Conference, August 1996

Elizabeth Melrose

I took part in this Local Studies Conference at the invitation of the Library Association of Latvia. The adventure started at Gatwick. Sitting next to me on the plane were two boisterous Russian schoolboys of ten and twelve going home to Latvia after a month's stay in England. The elder boy's father had recently been transferred back to Moscow, but his family were staying on in Riga. Another Latvian fellow passenger was returning at last to relatives that he had been unable to meet since he had left the country thirty nine years before. His English wife knew no Latvian but was coping gently with her husband's nervous excitement as he lapsed continually into his native language. Two instances of changing times in a newly independent country.

The conference was held in Preili, a town in the Latgale region - "the land of blue lakes" - in the south east of Latvia. Latgale is said to be one of the poorest areas in the country, but the scenery was magnificent. I stayed in a wooden house on the shore of one of the many lakes and checked my lecture notes for the next day by candlelight. Preili itself is a town of about nine and a half thousand inhabitants and is the headquarters of the District Council. The councillors are keen to bolster the economy and reduce unemployment by encouraging tourism. Valentina Brice, Secretary of the Council, came to welcome the conference delegates and assure them of her continuing support for the work of the local libraries. The ensuing official dinner was rounded off by an expert troupe of folk singers in national costume who entertained us with traditional songs and dances in which we all took part.

The conference attracted around fifty Latvian librarians and there were six sessions with speakers, held in the Preili District Main Library. The keynote speech at the first session came from the President of the Latvian Library Association, Sylvija Linina. She spoke about the role of local studies in the history of public libraries, saying that it had been local studies in Latvia that had upheld the sense of the national consciousness during the Soviet occupation. But she also reminded local studies librarians that those past years were as much part of the local history of the country as the present time of new-found independence and should not be forgotten. Later Inta Sallinene, Head of the Latvian Library Association Local Studies Section described the present activities of local studies librarians in promoting community history, activities similar to our own.

I was one of two foreign guests. The other was Tuula Martikainen, head of the Public Library Service in Tampere in Finland, who discussed the work and extensive services of her ten year old library which includes the Moomin Archive of the celebrated Finnish children's author Tove Jansson. I gave a paper on local studies librarianship in Britain, referring to the changes necessitated by the phasing of local government reorganisation. My interpreter from the National Library had asked me not to stress our concerns about dwindling finance, as being insensitive to Latvian librarians who are trying to stretch minuscule budgets, so I emphasised the many examples of good local studies practice in place throughout our library systems. Throughout the entire conference both Tuula and I were assisted by the interpreters and without them we would have understood little. Latvian being a singular language allied to no other European dialect. Thanks to the interpreters we learned much about the history and the country and about the hopes and achievements of our colleagues.

Other highlights of the conference included an excellent exhibition of postcards of the region funded by Preili Museum and the National Library; a very enjoyable open-air lakeside dinner, and a visit to a working potter, one of the crafts of the region. On one occasion we walked to the Museum and examined the decaying facade of a once imposing manor house and stables situated in a park behind. Lack of funds is distressingly evident here and it is uncertain how long these structures can stand up to the weather without restoration. In contrast, we went on an excursion to the wealthy eighteenth century Shrine at Aglona, visited by the Pope three years ago. Before his arrival what had been a simple monastic church was extended, and the gardens surrounding the basilica levelled to make a vast courtyard for the crowds. On the bus journey back to the city of Riga we passed several bands of pilgrims walking from all parts of Latvia to take part in this year's August Catholic Festival.

For a couple of days before and after the conference I stayed in Riga in the University guesthouse, bypassing a new McDonalds in the main street in order to visit the Freedom Monument and the museums of the Old Town. Staff at the National Library showed me around the Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection. Since its foundation as the Latvian State Library in 1919, the National Library has collected manuscripts and archives detailing Latvian culture and the social and economic history of the country from the fourteenth century. There are also over two thousand early Latvian publications including a church manual printed in Riga in 1615. The special Letonica department holds the collection of national literature in all languages, published in Latvia and abroad. I was able to examine the permanent exhibition, the History of the Book, with around five hundred items demonstrating the development of book production in Latvia from its beginnings in the early seventeenth century, through all the periods of foreign occupation including that of the Swedes in the eighteenth century when education was encouraged. This exhibition displayed the Soviet black book of censored authors and titles, once on the proscribed listings and now available to all readers.

On another marvellous trip to the Brivdabas Open Air Museum, containing farmsteads and dwellings from the eighteenth to the twentieth century and recreating Latvian farming and fishing life along with folk craft displays, we heard a memorable organ and singing recital in one of the country churches.

I took with me several copies both of the *Local Studies Librarian* and of the *LA Guidelines for Local Studies provision in public libraries*. These were accepted by the Head of the Latvian Local Studies Section and will be discussed at future meetings. Since returning to Britain, I have kept in touch with my hosts and have received an account of the conference which appeared in a Publisher's Magazine - in Latvian! I felt honoured at being selected to attend and came back with much admiration for the enthusiasm of Latvian local studies librarians and with some idea of the specific circumstances that their country has survived. I do intend that our contact should be maintained as there is much that we can mutually learn in the field of local studies librarianship.

Elizabeth Melrose is Information Services Adviser, North Yorkshire Libraries, and Chairman of the Local Studies Group.

HUNGARIAN LOCAL STUDIES:

A national conference of local studies librarians.

Penny Ward

As readers will know, there has been for several years a link between Hungarian and British local studies librarians, and visits have been exchanged. This year I was nominated by LSG to attend the third national conference of Hungarian local studies librarians at Tata, with the brief to give a talk on 'local monograph writing'. My visit, which included a study tour, was from 15 - 21 July, with the conference in the middle.

For Hungarians, 1996 has been a very special year. Hungary has been celebrating the 1100th anniversary of the foundation of the country or the Centenary of their Millennium. During my visit, I quickly came to learn how important the state of nationhood was for a small country in the centre of Europe. The Local Studies Group of the Association of Hungarian Librarians had organised their 3rd conference in Tata to reflect the significance of the anniversary. To honour the connection between the two Local Studies Groups, the Hungarians were very generously inviting a British librarian to take part as a guest of their Association.

As my part of the bargain, I had to seek some sponsorship for expenses and research and write a 20 minute paper on local history monographs in time to send it to Erzsébet Gáns for translation into Hungarian. Elizabeth Melrose, Chairman of LSG, wrote to the Director of Kent Arts & Libraries and to my Group Manager, Hazel Halse, to tell them about it, so I received official support. The Kent Sub-Branch of the London & Home Counties Branch of the LA also sponsored me by providing copies of their Kent bibliographies, most appropriate for the occasion.



Double Act: Penny Ward and translator Erzsébet Gáns

After consulting Ian Maxted, an earlier Conference speaker, I felt more sure of what was wanted of me on the theme of local history monograph writing. Had I known of 'Maxted's' reputation as a Local Studies Librarian and imbiber of Hungarian beer, I might have thought more than twice about my ambassadorial role.

Having faxed my speech, posted the Bibliographies ahead of me, prepared a presentation edition of the speech and gathered a selection of Kentish gifts, I flew off to Budapest feeling totally inadequate. As in-flight reading I took a pocket German dictionary from my O-Level taken 35 years earlier, my nephew's GCSE German grammar notes and a 1992 guidebook from a member of my Russian evening class. The street names were Soviet-style but the phrases and pronunciation guide were useful.

The conference began on Wednesday so that a two day study tour of Budapest had been arranged for me. I was met at the airport by Tibor Sándor and his American-born wife, who worked very hard translating.

In Budapest, I stayed in the guest room underneath the Fővárosi Szabó Ervin Könyvtár (in English, the Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library). It took a while but I eventually got used to the Hungarian habit of putting the surname first. The library is housed in a former nobleman's town house and was closed for restoration and replastering during my stay.

Tibor Sándor, Head of the Budapest Collection, showed me the collections in his care and explained how they were used for reference and income generation. I also met the Director who enlightened me as to the problems and solutions required to maintain a large local collection in an old building, in a capital city where no one wanted to pay rates or taxes for libraries.

My second day in Budapest was spent learning about the Szechenyi National Library, and hearing about the problems of running a National Library, heavily used as a reference library by all the students in Budapest. There had been a system of compulsory deposit under the Soviets but now, private publishers could not afford to deposit (27 I think) copies of the few books that were published.

In the neighbouring National Museum, we visited an exhibition which described the growth of Buda and Pest and the role of tourism in the development of Budapest. After this crash course in Hungarian cultural history, I visited the museum of Ethnography. Both used material from the Budapest Collection in their summer exhibitions. Close by is the immense but unfilled Parliament building, important as a symbol of democracy and nationhood before and after Soviet years. The two Museums brought home to me how close the feudal bonds of serfdom are in Central Europe.

Tata was just a short drive from Budapest. The conference had been planned for July when many libraries in Hungary are closed for summer holidays, and some of the delegates were planning to attend another conference the following week. I was made to feel a very honoured guest by staying in a guest house close to the College, where the conference took place. I could see my fellow delegates dormitories from my 3rd floor window!

Tata Town Hall was the scene of the first afternoon's papers. We were all welcomed by the Mayor of Tata, Katalin Kerti, a librarian, Fenő Virág, a member of the Komárom-Estergom county government, another librarian and András Tóth, MP, a teacher and director of Tata High School. The platform was draped with the flags of all the participating nations and decorated with flowers. The press were there to take photographs and do interviews. The theme was the role of local history monographs in local history research. The first speaker was Gergely Csifári, the director of Eger County Archive, and Erzsébet Gáncs and I followed with our double act. I was as relieved as, no doubt, the assembled librarians were, that my paragraphs and her paragraphs only took the designated 40 minutes. This was somewhat shorter than many of the other papers.

The two speakers who followed completely filled the time until our departure by buses about 5 p.m. to Majk. Here a former monastery built for the Camaldoli Monks has been preserved and restored. Some of the individual cells of the hermits are used as tourist accommodation. We were given an amazing guided tour by a determined official guide, all of ten years old. Commerce and culture have been forced to collaborate in Hungary, just as everywhere else.

The buses took us back to a restaurant with seating for almost 100, for dinner, toasts and mutual exchange of gifts and speeches of thanks. I received an enormous paper and ribbon covered parcel, which I opened gingerly to reveal a full-size wash basin and jug, reproductions of the famous Tata pottery. This was not yet the end of the evening's entertainment since Gyula had arranged a 'committee meeting' in the vaults of the Royal Castle of Tata, a bar. More toasts were drunk until I discovered that I could converse with anyone whose German was as excruciatingly awful as mine.

On Thursday and Friday mornings I was excused some of the papers to have a guided tour of Tata. I was taken up the shot tower, around the lake, to the German Museum and town centre by the daughter of a local librarian. She had spent a year in the USA and was happy to speak English and show me the delights of her native town.

On Thursday, Erzsébet worked hard to give me the gist of seven papers on the theme of local and personal bibliographies, which included Ilona Kovács of the Széchényi National Library on the *Biografica Hungarica*, a massive undertaking. This was, after all, a joint conference of the local Studies and the Bibliographical Groups. Once again I was made to realise that Hungary's history has an enormous influence on the present day: many Hungarians are, in fact, expatriate Hungarians, the borders of the country and its political overlords having changed many times. These and more familiar problems in producing local studies bibliographies were described by Miklós Bényei from Debrecen University.

To round off the afternoon, we were given a guided tour of Tata Museum, home of the local pottery and then back to the buses for a trip to Komárom and over the brown Danube to Ker-Komárom, now in the Republic of Slovakia but formerly part of Hungary. Back in the Hungary of 1996, we were guided over an enormous fortress guarding the Danube. Built in Austro-Hungarian times as a defence against Napoleon, it had been used as a secret military camp under the Soviets. When the latter abandoned it in 1992, the Hungarians found out that nuclear weapons had been based there. An enthusiastic military historian lit our way through the cavernous chambers and pulled us up the steep ramparts of this previously forbidden fortress.

We descended on a nearby camp-site restaurant for supper and during the long wait speculated on how the heritage industry could turn the fortress into a tourist attraction. After supper, another 'committee meeting' in another bar was arranged by chairman Gyula. Some official business was decided, which was announced at the closing ceremony on Friday morning.

The delegates departed. László Gyűszí, the young and energetic director of Tata town library, had organised a minibus which took a select band of us to Esztergom. There we visited the Library of Esztergom Cathedral, the Museum of Christian Art, the Archbishop's Palace and, finally, the Cathedral itself. The Cathedral Library houses about 250,000 volumes, including codices and incunabula. Having been to Canterbury Cathedral Library (they have St. Thomas a Becket in common), I asked about an emergency plan and was shown the mouse trap, the fire extinguisher and the librarian, an essential part of the plan.

Back in Tata, Erzsébet and Dr. Márta Horváth took me for a 'sub-committee' meeting to the Castle Vaults Bar. To the competing strains of a gypsy trio, Dr. Márta tried to explain the dual post-Soviet systems of town and county libraries and their financial structure. I had been puzzled by the duplication but not aware of the rivalry. This was to become clearer at Vác.

On Saturday, having visited the Spar for paprika and sausage, I was put aboard the train for Budapest, where Gyula Mándli and Edit Kovács, a newly conscripted translator, were on the platform waiting for me. The faithful Wartburg and driver were close by and we all bumped off towards Vác. On the way, I broke a 20 year record for not going into a McDonald's, anywhere, for an orange juice and, what we really wanted, a loo!

Vác library was also closed for the summer holiday and redecoration. I had an exhaustive tour and asked many questions until I understood how a town library worked, and how the end of socialism and changes in local government finance affected the book stock. There were many shelves of duplicate copies, which had come in from village libraries when these had become independent. Some socialist era books has last been issued some 10 years before.

For the rest of the afternoon Edit and I walked Gyula from church to museum to cathedral via the prison and triumphal arch. Gyula kept up a constant barrage of offers of beer or ice-cream - any excuse to sit down we realised. He and 'Maxted' had explored every bar in Vác and I fear Edit and I were a disappointment, not least in our collusion in refusing to be photographed.

On Sunday a full day of study-touring began with the faithful Wartburg taking us on a ferry across the Danube to Szentédre, where Gyula used to work. It is a very attractive town, a favourite with artists and tourists. I had chosen the Open Air Museum at Szentédre and we could have spent the rest of the day there but we had a lunch booking in the forest. After this we set off for Visegrád. First we clambered to the top of the Citadel for a photo-call, then we climbed up to the Palace of King Mathias for another, on the self-same spot at which 'Maxted' had been snapped. One more typical Hungarian supper with 'Maxted's' reputation still haunting me and I took leave of Vác, promising to return. Gyula, Edit, the faithful Wartburg and our driver found our way, eventually, to the other airport in Budapest. I managed to import my crockery, four pounds of Sunrise peaches from Edit's garden and the lighter literature safely into Heathrow.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank, in print, the Local Studies Groups in Britain and Hungary for making it possible for me to attend the Conference. I was especially impressed with the wide and valuable range of sponsorship put together by László Gyüsz, director of Tata library. For those who have read this far, the paper 'Local Monograph Writing in Britain' will be published in the forthcoming Newsletter of the London & Home Counties Branch of the LA LSG. There is also a deposited presentation copy, complete with illustrations, in Hungary.

Penny Ward is Heritage Officer, Margate Library, Kent Arts and Libraries.

OPEN UNIVERSITY DISSERTATIONS ON CD ROM

Mike Petty

In 1994 the Open University introduced a course on Studying Family and Community History (course DA 301), and in that year some 550 students successfully completed it. As part of the course a dissertation is required from all students and many of these deal with local history topics. The OU has now released the text of many of these dissertations on a CD ROM, which was launched in Cambridge on August 7th. It looks at the lives of hundreds of ordinary people and communities across Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth century, and has been issued because the research results are too important to lie festering in a filing cabinet - and local studies librarians have played their part in producing these results.

Local Studies Librarians have long been aware of the increasing demands on their material for the student project. The growth of local history and local geography for project work in the primary school has been particularly apparent recently, the numbers of youngsters with their GCSE projects and of course the more demanding requirements of the A-Level project have been supplemented by those undertaking business studies, by community nurses building up a profile of their patch and by the myriad of more mature students studying - well studying what.

Many people study family history and genealogy, and for parish register transcripts, enumerators returns and who begat whom, we can pass them to the County Record Office. But DA301 seeks those who have done all that and then want to go further, concerned not that Uncle Fred left his country parish for the big town, but for the reasons that drove him to do so. Often these students arrive at the enquiry desk, are given such assistance as is practical - or sometimes such assistance as is possible - and then they move away to pursue their research and are never seen again. What do they think of us?

Three students who undertook the course have now described their experiences on an audio cassette which is sent to others contemplating the course. It makes sobering listening as they recount their experiences of being on the other side of the enquiry desk from us - 'found the microfilm readers occupied and wasted time waiting' ... 'the photocopier was out of action so I had to copy everything by hand' ... 'the computers were intimidating, it was difficult to sort the wood from the chaff - I asked but nobody on the floor gave guidance and finding secondary materials was a problem'. But 'if you're open with the staff and tell them what you want they are very helpful and supportive' ... 'local history library staff spent time explaining directories, newspaper articles and books ... 'librarians given the opportunity to think and when not busy will offer advice on widening the search' - but surely we should be offering this to everybody, whether we have busy backlogs of cataloguing or not.

The interviewees agree that they each found the course stimulating, they became involved and absolutely enjoyed doing their own research - but then they would say that on an Open University cassette would they not.

The dissertations these students produce can cover topics which add tremendously to recorded knowledge of our local areas. They disappear home with the student

and are never seen again - unless one or two are deposited in the local studies collection where they were researched. Yet in a single year over 480 topics were researched by this one Open University course alone.

The topics embrace a wide range of issues and cover the entire country; they include 'Changes in the family structure in 19th century Fife', 'A study of nuclear family size in relation to occupation and social class in late 19th century Salford', a comparison between a rural and urban location in Worcestershire, 'The effects of literacy on social mobility in Ormskirk', the Primitive Methodists of Clavering, Essex, Irish communities in York 1875-1891, 'Migration patterns of HM Coastguards and their families on the Isle of Wight 1881', or the printing, stationery and bookselling trades in Canterbury. Each is significant in its locality and now each is available to its locality for a most modest expenditure. Just £9.50 (including postage) brings not one report but all 482. It is not a question of debating whether to place it in the local collection or the reference section or the lending library for at this price it can go in all three.

This CD ROM is for IBM compatible PCs and, now that librarians are gearing up to the new technology, this is the kind of source that we should be making available to our readers. This is one production, with its associated tape, which should be in every local collection and every library's stock - not just because of what students discovered about their topic but for what they report on the way librarians assisted - or failed- the researcher.

The CD is available from Professor Ruth Finnegan, OSFACH, (CD ROM order), Faculty of Social Sciences, Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, price £9.50 (inc p&p). The cassette, describing experiences in libraries at Harrow, Southwark and Cambridge, is also available from her.

Mike Petty is Librarian, the Cambridgeshire Collection, Cambridgeshire Libraries.

Editor's note: An article about DA301 and some comments by librarians who took the course appeared in LSL, 14(1), Summer 1995, pp 6-10.

THE DOROTHY McCULLA MEMORIAL AWARD, 1997

This is the Local Studies Group's own award and is presented annually to the member who in the opinion of the Committee, has contributed most to local studies librarianship. This year the Award consists of £100 and a certificate, and nominations are invited from members, chief librarians and anyone else with a suitable nominee. For further details about the Award, and a nomination form, please write to Philip Thomas, 25 Bromford Gardens, Westfield Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3XD. The Group hopes for a substantial response.

Nominations should be submitted by January 31, 1997, for consideration by the Committee at their March meeting.

LOCAL STUDIES AND THE INTERNET

The Internet is obviously of increasing use to local studies. *The Local History Magazine* has recently been exploring sites related to local history on the Internet and contains information in the following issues:

The Internet: information superhighway or an electronic version of the M25? Issue 54, March/April 1996, pp19-22.

Local history and the Internet. Issue 56, July/August 1996, p21.

Ian Maxted of Devon County Libraries spoke at the recent Heritage South West Symposium on the opportunities and threats offered by information technology and the internet. He also draws attention to *West Country Heritage*, a digital periodical which will not be published in conventional form and covers landscape, wildlife, conservation, building, history, and all aspects of the region's heritage. There is also *West Country Directory*, a commercial advertising medium for tourism and other purposes. Their URL is <http://www.intellect-net.com/west/country>.

Clearly there are other relevant initiatives and we would be pleased to hear of them. To start you off Helen Osborne has contributed the following article on family history.

FAMILY HISTORY ON THE INTERNET

Helen Osborne

Staff at Newport Reference Library have been working with members of the Newport Branch of the Gwent Family History Society to explore the Internet. Together they identified 5 key sites for family historians.

UK & Ireland Genealogy

The UK and Ireland Genealogical Information Service, colloquially referred to as GENUKI, is where you'll find the largest amount of information for the British Isles.

Most of its underlined links to other documents are self-explanatory. For example, from the 'home page' where you start, you can go to the main section on 'The UK and Ireland'. Within that, from the subsection on Societies, you can go to pages listing 'UK Family History Societies'. If the name of a Society is itself underlined, you can then get the pages giving fuller details of the FHS concerned.

Similarly, from the main section you can click on the underlined part of the phrase at the beginning of the third paragraph describing a 'map showing the counties in England, Scotland and Wales' and the map is then shown on the screen, with the old counties pre-1974 shown with their Chapman codes.

One-Name Studies

This is the first place to look to see if anyone is already researching the surname you are interested in. Other sources of reference are the British Isles Genealogical Register (or BIG-R) and the FHS's List of Members' Interests covering the county your ancestors came from, or the Genealogical Research Directory, but these aren't on the Internet.

Members of the Guild of One-Name Studies research and collect all references to a specified surname. For some surnames, a One-Name Society has been formed, which may issue a newsletter or magazine.

Over 5,000 surnames are being researched and members undertake to reply to enquiries provided you enclose an SAE (which you should do anyway whenever you make enquiries). The information is free but, again always send the details you've collected yourself relating to that surname, in case the member hasn't already got some of them. After all, Family History thrives on us helping each other.

Roots Surname List

This is a much bigger list of over 80,000 surnames showing the start and end dates for which there is information and the places between which the person(s) moved. Click the mouse on 'README' to get to the 'how to' pages. Within these, Section IIIA tells you how to search the list. Then go 'Back' to the original page (underlined in Section IIIA) to key in your surname in the 'Enter search keywords' box.

Unfortunately, most of the information currently refers to American families (using the Internet soon makes you familiar with all the abbreviations for the various states), but some of these may have emigrated there from this country. If so, the entry in the List should then show the county/country of origin and the first year will show the date after which they emigrated.

Internet for Genealogy

David Hawgood is a Fellow of the Society of Genealogists, the editor of the Computer Section of the Family Tree Magazine, and a lecturer and author of a number of books on the use of computers for genealogy, his latest book being the very useful 'Internet for Genealogy'.

This page has been bookmarked because it contains links to other useful guides to Genealogy on the Internet (the link to GENUKI is already bookmarked - see above).

Excite Net Directory

The Net Directory has been used to locate all the references it could find relating to Genealogy, and this is the result. The documents it found are all listed here in alphabetical order (more than 50 of them), and each of the titles provides a link to the document referred to.

Before clicking on the link to read a document, it's important that you read not only the descriptive title but also the accompanying comments as well. By doing so, you can avoid the specialist documents which, because of their American nature, probably won't help you. You can also avoid such documents as 'Treasure Maps: Genealogy' - as the description warns you, because it contains a lot of graphics (these always take a lot longer to display on the screen than text).

A number of the documents are themselves further useful lists, such as 'Everton's Guide' and 'The Genealogy Home Page'.

Helen Osborn is Borough Librarian, Newport.

NOTES AND NEWS

Gloucestershire County Library Arts & Museums Service has recently embarked upon an exciting new project to create a computerised union catalogue of Gloucestershire's unique local studies resources using CAIRS -TMS software. The project, known as Locate, will run until July 1998.

Gloucestershire's Local Studies Collection is housed in one central collection (the Gloucestershire Collection) with six smaller Local Studies Centres throughout the county. At present each of the collections maintains its own idiosyncratic catalogue -usually on card. There is therefore no collective knowledge of the resources of the whole, nor can any of the sites access information about material held in any other. Locate will ultimately provide a regularly updated user friendly union catalogue of all of the materials, held in all formats, which can be accessed at any of the sites by both staff and members of the public. A key feature of the project will be a retrospective cataloguing programme which will create fully searchable 'added value' catalogue records through the use of keywords and notes.

Possible future developments include document scanning, Internet links and links to the County geographical information system.

Some readers will have seen the obituary for Alain Girard of Caen in the November LAR. While paying tribute to his outstanding qualities as a librarian, it only mentions in passing his great interest in local history. As librarian of Caen, Alain was involved with local studies initiatives with both Hampshire and Devon, in particular the Hampshire/Normandy Accord and twinning activities with Devon: LSG committee members Philippa Stevens and Ian Maxted were involved, the latter becoming a personal friend. Alain worked extensively on the union catalogue of local studies collections in Normandy and was of great assistance with the Napoleon exhibition which Devon Local Studies Library mounted in Caen in 1985. In 1993 he spoke on local and regional studies in French libraries at a meeting of LSG's London and Home Counties Branch. Librarians from both Devon and Hampshire attended his funeral on August 7th.

A Shropshire Record Series is to be launched by Keele University in 1997. It will publish annual volumes relating to the county with full introductions and indexes, beginning with *Sir Stephen Glynn's church notes for Shropshire*. Further information about the Series is available from Dr. David Cox, Shropshire Records and Research Centre, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ (tel 01743 255357).

Riley Dunn & Wilson Ltd have recently launched a Disaster Recovery Registration Scheme. For over thirty years the firm has been involved in the building up of professional technical expertise in the salvage and restoration of paper based stock and bindings, following fire, flood or explosive damage, and this expertise has been used by many organisations to salvage, repair and restore their collections. Expert advice can be given and emergency teams of professionally equipped and trained staff can be sent to disaster sites at short notice. The new scheme guarantees member libraries, archives and museums priority access to the firm's expert services, so that, as well as giving telephone advice and counselling, expert staff are on

stand-by to help salvage, sort and log damaged leather or cloth bound books and paper or parchment collections prior to any immediate need for blast freezing, air drying or freeze-vacuum drying. A referral service for experts in specialist fields is also available, for instance to deal with non paper-based material. In order to be registered, libraries themselves must have a written active Disaster Control Plan, continual staff training on disaster awareness and provide emergency salvage equipment on-site.

The LA has recently issued its Training Directory for 1997. This contains a large number of staff development workshops for library and information personnel. Not surprisingly there is nothing specifically on local studies (that's the Group's job), but there are various courses applicable to all staff, particularly, perhaps, those on interpersonal skills (these include one on dealing with difficult users. . .), or the Guided Tour of the Internet. For further details about courses, or to get a copy of the Directory, contact the Continuing Professional Development Department at the LA.

Has your library recently published any high quality local history publications? If so, why not consider entering for the Alan Ball Awards for local history publications? This prestigious award is not only for books but for a wide range of printed and AV material, and the organisers will soon be inviting entries. Details can be obtained from Eric Winter, Library Services Trust, at LA headquarters.

Do you always remember to acquire the superseded copies of your local business directories when they are replaced by the reference library? In his review of the Dun and Bradstreet regional directories in the Autumn issue of *Refer*, Charles A. Toase comments that, as this particular series includes many small local firms, "they are particularly useful for local information (and ultimately for local history collections)." A timely reminder of the importance of such materials as information sources.

Yeovil Library's Local Historian-in-Residence scheme is now well into its second year. Since April 1995, on the first Wednesday of each month, members of the Yeovil Archaeological and Local History Society have manned the help-desk in the library. In the first year they logged over seventy enquiries on a wide range of local topics and enrolled several new members.

After a year's absence, due to local government restructuring, Scotland's Local History Week, will return in 1997. It will run from April 19th-26th, with the theme "Working Lives". The week will link in with the centenary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress. Formal links with the S.T.U.C are being organised by the Scottish Library Association who are arranging for the publication of a book and a poster on the Working Lives theme. The theme will also be dealt with at LOCSCOT's main day school of 1997.

LOCSCOT has announced the resignation of its Chairman, Joe Fisher. Joe, who was one of the founder members of LOCSCOT, and Chairman for the last eleven years, is very well known as a local historian as well as a librarian, and is a past winner of the Dorothy McCulla Award. This enthusiasm for both the profession and the subject is shown by the fact that he continued with LOCSCOT for five years after his retirement from the post of Senior Librarian of the Glasgow Room in the Mitchell Library. He will be continuing with many of his local history interests.

In response to a public appeal, Norfolk libraries have received some 17,000 items to help replace local studies material lost in the disastrous fire. These, and the remaining material which had been held in store, are now being recatalogued on a database which will replace the original card catalogues which were also lost. As the library was covered by insurance, the main problem is to acquire relevant material to replace what were often extremely rare items, rather than their cost.

With the completion of the publication of the Newsplan reports, attention is now focused on the Implementation Committees. The Yorkshire and Humberside committee has already produced amendment lists, and has now produced two further publications, a cumulative update to the 1989 report, covering 1990-95, and an index to local newspapers by place. The Association of Yorkshire and Humberside Library Services is determined to continue to improve Newsplan and to make it more flexible in use so that both library staff and the public have ready access to historic local newspapers in view of their value as primary source materials. Copies of both publications (details below) are available from AYHLS, c/o Wakefield MDC, Library Headquarters, Balne Lane, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF2 ODQ. Each costs £5.00.

Newsplan in Yorkshire and Humberside Cumulative update of local newspaper holdings 1990-1995. ISBN 0 90202131 1: Newsplan in Yorkshire and Humberside index to local newspapers by place. ISBN 0 90202130 3.

The Tameside Family History Award for 1996 was won by Margaret Knott of Dukinfield. Her entry, "The Changing Role of Women", was based on interviews with a range of women from different backgrounds, which compared their experiences at home and at work. A copy of the essay, along with the other entries, has been added to the stock of the Tameside local studies collection in Stalybridge library.

The Summer issue of LSL carried a note about the proposed establishment of a Public Services Quality Group to discuss quality issues in archival and local studies public services. The first meeting was held at the PRO, Kew, on November 13th. It was largely attended by archivists but there were librarians there, particularly those who work in combined studies centres and the London Boroughs where custody of archives and non-archival documentation is frequently shared. It was decided that a Quality Forum should be set up and Chris Pickford of Bedfordshire Record Office was elected chairman.

Brian Austin, the Members Research Consultant to the Somerset and Dorset Family History Society, has written to appeal for the organisation of a Directory of local history researchers around the country. He points out that family historians can lay their hands on large lists of, for example, surname researchers, but often family historians also need local history information. Would anyone who is interested or who has any comments to make please contact Mr. Austin at 11, Alma Street, Weston -super- Mare, North Somerset BS23, IRB.

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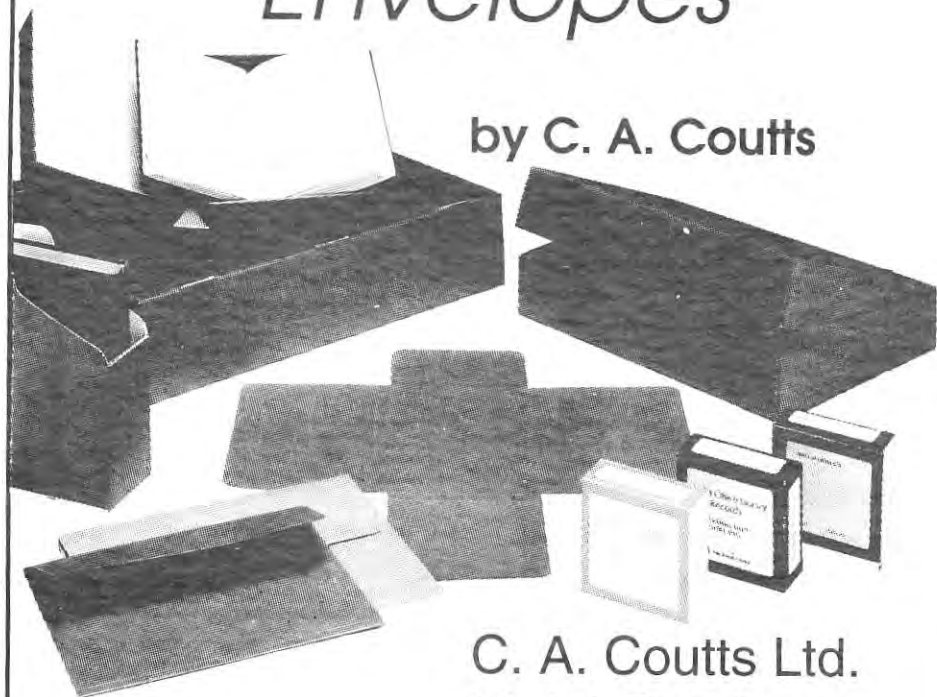
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