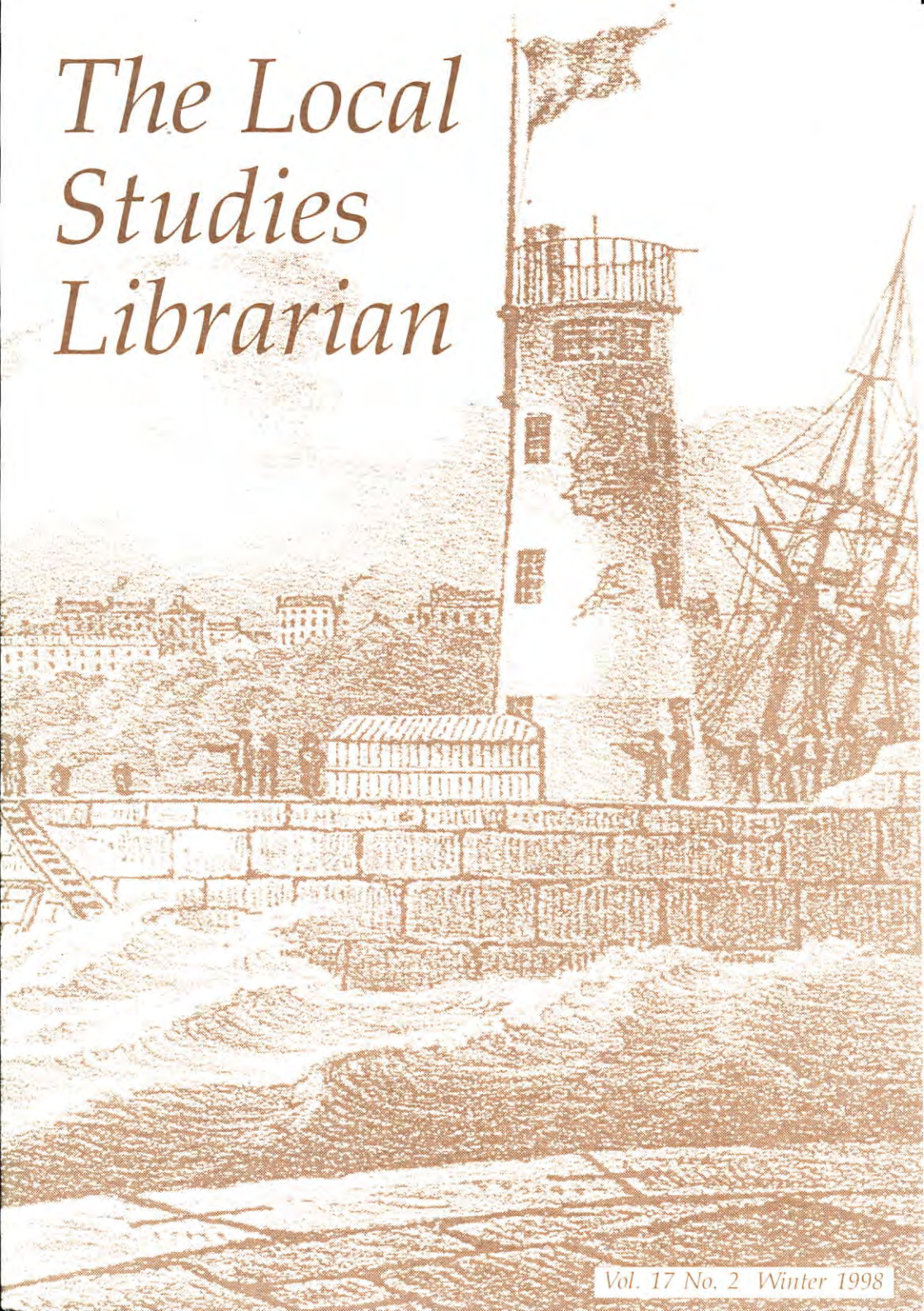


The Local Studies Librarian



Vol. 17 No. 2 Winter 1998

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Scarborough Lighthouse, c 1840. Courtesy North Yorkshire County Library



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EDITORIAL

Many things have been happening recently which impinge on local studies librarianship. Most of the recent reports - for instance *New library: the peoples network* and *Virtually new* - have referred specifically to the role of local collections, and the list of projects in the latter shows how much we have done so far. Recent well attended day schools in Nottingham and Durham have demonstrated the level of interest there is in the use of technology to improve our services to clients. Technology, of course, is not an end in itself, but is used to improve our services to the public and help answer enquiries: however, improvement in stock and its recording in networked catalogues can only increase demand, and meeting this demand is a management problem. One approach which has gained support in recent years has been the concept of the Local Studies Centre, bringing together library, museum and record office into one unit. While this can certainly improve service, there is still some controversy about the concept, and in this issue we provide articles on both sides of the case. Even if the provision of a single unit is not suitable in your circumstances, cooperation is necessary in the interests of the public we serve. We must also not forget the wide range of interests that our clients have. Many of them, such as sport, are not particularly well catered for, and that is why the Group has taken 'Popular culture' as its overall theme at the forthcoming UmbrellA weekend school. While our programme is not yet complete, some further details are given elsewhere in this issue. Do come and join us.

By the time you read this you will have received your annual Christmas present from the LA - your subscription notice for 1999. Please continue in membership of LSG. We are an active group, of around 1800 members, with a local group structure to complement our national activities: in this context, if you live in an area without an LSG branch and would like to see one established, do let us know and we shall see whether anything can be done. We try very hard to represent the concerns of members both to the LA and outside bodies: we **always** respond to discussion documents, as we shall be doing to the one on proposals for an LA/IIS amalgamation. We have a representative on LA Council and make our presence felt there, and we have a very active and highly regarded Chairman who also puts our case in various circles. And, of course, you get the *Local Studies Librarian* regularly, while some of our branches also issue their own newsletters. We feel that the Local Studies Group works to represent your interests and that we are worthy of your support. Please continue your membership and encourage other people to join us.

LOCATE - GUI ROUND THE EDGES

Christiane Nicholson

Introduction

Gloucestershire Library Arts & Museums Service has a long tradition in the provision of local studies. The Gloucestershire Collection, housed in Gloucester Library, was founded in 1900 and holds some 200,000 items relating to every aspect of the county. Since 1991 we have also been developing Local Studies Centres in six of our main libraries. Each of these Centres has a collection relating to its local community, including both original and microform material. For historical reasons they vary greatly in scope and size and as unfortunately there had never been any form of union catalogue, they were largely autonomous.

In 1994 we decided that it was time to take a hard look at the future of the service and to identify some initiatives which would give it a more dynamic profile and direction. Though various areas of opportunity emerged from this process we decided that access would be our main priority for the foreseeable future, and in particular, the provision of access to information about the resources in each of our collections.

Our vision of a union catalogue for all seven Local studies collections was born - we envisaged it providing access to resources at all sites, from all sites, permitting cataloguing at all sites and enabling searches by site, format and content. Clearly the only solution was an electronic catalogue and a project team to deliver it.

Specification and selection process

Our specification was drawn up from discussion in the Local Studies Team - if anything were possible, what would we want? There were very few practical IT skills within this group at that point in time, nor was there a particularly high level of awareness - we've come a very long way since then! This lack of awareness was actually an enormous benefit because it enabled us to dream.... there was no one to pour cold water on our flights of fancy - and that, just over 3 years ago, was how we regarded them. Of course there couldn't be a catalogue that could do all of these things and accommodate our various idiosyncrasies, could there....?

We wrote the specification ourselves, from a position of blissful ignorance. It was very brief, just three sides of well spaced A4, and invited eight suppliers to tender for the contract. From the responses we short listed four companies and asked them to demonstrate their proposed solutions. It was here that the shortcomings in our specification began to emerge - it was so broad and non-specific that most of the systems met most requirements without any difficulty! Each of them proposed different solutions of varying levels of quality and glamour. Eventually CAIRS Ltd. were selected because, despite the distinct lack of glamour in their software (at that time it had a definite 1950's, East European, utilitarian feel about it!) they had a track record of commitment to ongoing product development.

Having survived this process and experienced a small delay while the Heritage Lottery Board rejected our bid for funding and a further delay while the contract between ourselves and CAIRS was agreed, the two year Locate Project was finally scheduled to start in August 1996.

Aims and Objectives of project

- Using software chosen following the selection/tendering process, to design, develop and implement the use of a standalone computerised Local studies catalogue in Local Studies Centres
- To develop and implement a retrospective cataloguing programme for stock prioritised in the Gloucestershire Collection in Gloucester library

Building the system

Based upon our submitted specification and discussions with Sales staff, CAIRS advised us that our requirements could be met through five days of consultancy time and two days of training for the Local Studies Team, spread throughout the ten week consultancy period. This became part of our contractual arrangement.

In September 1996 we met with a CAIRS consultant for the first time and began the work associated with defining the system. At this point two important things became apparent - they were

1. that the two week hiatus between my taking up post and the beginning of the consultancy period had been very well spent considering our needs in relation to the cataloguing of different document formats.

We wanted to ensure that our data should be exportable in the future and decided to use MARC principles to underpin our cataloguing work. There were however, compromises to be made partly because at that time CAIRS TMS did not fully support MARC tagging and partly because MARC did not fully meet our requirements. The nature of the compromise was that in some areas e.g. personal names, a number of MARC tags including forenames and surnames were merged into one field in Locate data entry screens.

2. that there was a fundamental difference between CAIRS and ourselves over the system they were expecting to build and the system we wanted them to build!

Our solution in part to this problem was to convert the training days to consultancy days, thereby increasing the development time available. As our relationship with CAIRS developed it became increasingly obvious that this difference in perspective was largely due to the inadequacies of our specification, the lack of understanding by Sales representatives of the significance of elements of our discussions and finally, a lack of understanding on both sides of the significance of answers given to questions asked. It is to their credit that at no stage did this misunderstanding between CAIRS and ourselves become 'an issue': they were and generally remain, committed to developing and configuring their software in ways that meet our needs.

Record and database structure

We needed to develop a means of enabling our collections to be recorded without the need to fundamentally change the way each site worked on a daily basis or to reclassify their collections. We wanted each site to attach to a single 'core' record

even when their copy of a title or document was perhaps in a different format or had unique characteristics. This was achieved by creating core, site specific and keyword elements to each record. The core pages contain standard bibliographic information and capacious notes fields for 'added value' elements, the site specific pages contain local accession numbers, interest profiles relevant to their specific geographical area and variations in format and the keyword element comprises place-names and subject terms. We grouped differing document formats according to their broad cataloguing needs which resulted in thirteen databases within Locate. Of these, twelve are straightforward catalogues whilst the thirteenth is in fact an index of personal names taken primarily from birth, deaths and marriage columns of local newspapers - the People Index.

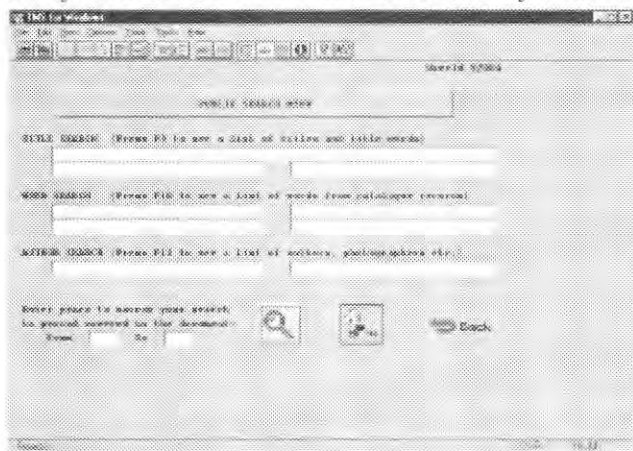
Searching Locate

Search results are defined, partly by the choices we made about how cataloguing fields should be indexed, partly by the nature of search profiles built 'behind the scenes' using Boolean logic and partly by the interaction of search terms with the system thesauri and our own keyword authority file. The complexities and choices presented have proved to be the most challenging areas of development for us.

We wanted a system that met the needs of both staff and customers - expert and non-expert! We had some clear ideas about what types of search we wanted and which fields should be included but it took some time before the full implications of some of our choices became apparent. What had seemed to work well with a database of 10,000 -15,000 records and a keyword list in its infancy, became problematic once we reached 25,000 - 30,000 records and a much more developed keyword list.

During 1997 a software upgrade enabled a more graphic user interface to develop and we are about to implement our latest refinement which provides a more pleasing presentation, logical search approach and transparency in search results. Locate now supports three public search screens - a general search screen, shown here, a keyword search which interacts directly with our authority file and system

thesauri and a search of the People index. The default search is across all sites and all catalogues (People Index must be searched independently of the others) though specific sites and document formats can be selected once the initial search has been completed. Our new search menus are more intuitive and attractive, though work is still in progress and we have some way to go.



Where are we now?

We have just migrated to a network version of the system and as the initial project draws to a close we have some 50,000 records and keywords available on the system and commitment at the highest level within the organisation to continue the project as long as possible, with the aim of achieving 100% coverage of stock in the Gloucestershire Collection by 2002.

Future developments

A feature of this project has been the constantly changing nature of our goals, partly driven by circumstances e.g. the unexpected acceleration of WAN availability allowing networking to take place, or by our own developing vision of what is possible. Current future plans include:

- connection to the Internet within the next few years
- partnerships with local organisations
 - guest databases accommodated using our equipment and network
 - contributions to the People Index from volunteers, Family history societies etc.
- Intranet links to areas such as tourism, geographical information systems, County records office etc.
- CDRom support resources e.g. print or photographic collections, maps etc.
- Continuing developments in on-line help systems and user interface

Throughout this project we have learned a great deal about systems, project management and perhaps most of all, ourselves and what we can achieve given the right circumstances. There is often the temptation to 'buy in expertise' and thereby avoid negotiating the learning curve: that may of course be the best course of action on occasion, but we now have a body of expertise and experience within our Organisation that will hopefully serve us well in the future.

Christiane Nicholson is Locate Project Manager, Gloucestershire County Library.

REGIONAL STUDIES CENTRES: THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND'S LATEST OUTREACH VENTURE

David Lammey

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) sees itself as the record office for all of the six counties of Northern Ireland (and beyond), and for that reason is keen to establish itself outside of Belfast. To this end preliminary discussions have taken place with Armagh District Council and QUB at Armagh to set up a PRONI regional studies centre in the campus building (the old Co. Armagh Infirmary building, dating from the 1770s); with Derry City Council to establish a similar centre (catering for the whole of north-west Ulster) in the Harbour Museum, Londonderry; with the Border Counties History Collective to establish a centre in its office in Blacklion, Co. Cavan (the Border counties concerned being Cavan, Fermanagh and Leitrim); and with Ballymena District Council to establish a centre in the new Mid-Antrim Museum facility which is to be set up with massive Heritage Lottery Fund support. The purpose of the regional

studies centres is to raise the awareness of people in the areas in which they are situated of the work of PRONI and the wide range of source material in its custody. In particular, they are intended to assist researchers to prepare themselves in advance of a visit to PRONI's Balmoral Avenue headquarters. Because highly expensive strongroom accommodation cannot be duplicated, far less proliferated, the Mountain cannot go to Mohammed. But Mohammed can be well-briefed in advance by means of computerised finding aids, so that his time on the Mountain can be well spent and fully focused.

Another reason for pursuing this outreach policy is the fact that PRONI is running out of space to accommodate the ever-increasing number of visitors coming through the doors, and the annual accrual of records. The physical limitations of the building point to the need for a greater emphasis on remote access.

It is intended that the accommodation, furniture, heat, lighting, etc, for each regional studies centre will be provided by the host organisation, while PRONI will supply the electronic and hard copy media containing information about primary sources relevant to the area in which the centre is located. It is likely, however, that funding for computer hardware will have to be sought externally. This community access facility will function on a self-help basis. However, PRONI will be happy to organise regular workshops with the aim of demonstrating to researchers how to make best use of the information provided by the centre.

This information which will be made available to the public in a centre will comprise PRONI's computerised Geographical, Subject and Prominent Persons Name indexes (these finding aids are currently available only at PRONI's Balmoral Avenue headquarters). The Geographical index alone consists of around 15 entries for each of the 6,200 townlands in Northern Ireland. Each entry will provide the reader with the PRONI reference number, summary description, and date of records such as Ordnance Survey maps and memoirs, and valuations. There are approximately 90,000 Subject index entries (constituting some 400 megabytes of data, or 6,000 A4 pages). The Prominent Persons Name Index runs to approximately 5,000 entries. Both contain details similar to those noted above. Of course, the reader will have to visit PRONI to consult the documents covered by these indexes. It is not yet possible to provide readers with digitised images of documents at remote access points.

PRONI's Internet website pages (of which there are over 2,000) will also be made available, on a CD-ROM disk, so access to a modem will not be necessary. The information on the disk will be updated at regular intervals. Useful features on the website include answers to frequently asked questions, historical/archival introductions to many of PRONI's most important privately deposited archives, policy statements, and details of our publications (complete with order form). In addition, our recently updated interactive touch-screen video will be installed, thereby affording researchers the opportunity to gain a visual impression of PRONI before visiting the office. The video will also provide researchers with practical information about how to use the facilities available at PRONI, eg, 'how to order a document'.

Moreover, PRONI will provide a wide range of hard copy media, including copies of all relevant PRONI *Guides to Sources* publications (eg, the 2 - volume *Guide to*

Landed Estates Records), and sets of *Deputy Keeper's Reports* 1960-1989, *Annual Reports* 1990-1995, and *Statutory Reports* 1995-1997), copies of detailed catalogues of archives relating to the local area, and multiple copies of leaflets on family and local history aimed at providing a quick and concise guide to records such as wills and testamentary papers, poor law records and grand jury records. A set of audio tapes of PRONI staff seminars covering topics such as title deeds and leases, church records, school records, the Drapers' Company archive and local authority records will also be supplied.

In a sense PRONI has already established, not so much a regional studies centre as an outreach unit relating to the whole of Northern Ireland, at the Ulster American Folk Park near Omagh. This unit houses an emigration database containing details of people who emigrated to North America, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere over the last few centuries - details gleaned almost exclusively from PRONI's primary sources. Similarly, the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts in London (which compiles the National Register of Archives) acts as an outreach unit. It receives photocopies of calendar lists of major collections acquired by PRONI, and the lists are consulted by readers in the Royal Commission's search room. However, this new phase of our outreach programme, characterised by the use of sophisticated (but 'user-friendly') information technology and a new emphasis on regional relevance, represents a more concerted and determined effort to promote access to PRONI's archives. Therefore, we anticipate reporting on the establishment of two or three regional studies centres in the next Statutory Report.

David Lammey is Head of Reader Services, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

THE DOROTHY McCULLA MEMORIAL AWARD, 1999

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 - including local historians - with a suitable nominee. Last years nominations were of a high standard and all of them met the judges' criteria of good overall service provision, excellent promotional work and innovation. All chief librarians and some local history journals have been circulated this year and once again we hope for a substantial response. For an information pack about the Award, and a nomination form, please write to Patrick Baird, Hon Secretary, Local Studies Group, Local Studies and History, Birmingham Central Library, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3HQ. Nominations should be submitted by March 31 1999.



Martin Hayes of West Sussex Libraries being presented with the 1998 McCulla Award by LSG Chairman Elizabeth Melrose.

LOCAL STUDIES CENTRES

Greta Friggens

This article is based on research originally undertaken for a postgraduate dissertation which examined the concept of the local studies centre, ideally the amalgamation of local studies library, museums and archives to form one service, housed within one building and working as a single entity. It endeavoured to establish whether this kind of unit would provide a more organised, efficient and effective service, as well as a more centralised one. In order to do this the relatively independent position of each of the three services was defined in relation to the four key areas of service provision: accommodation, collection development, staff and users. This enabled the similarities and differences of each of the services to be discovered, and the theoretical benefits and problems of an amalgamated service to emerge. To confirm the theory, case studies of particular local studies centres were carried out, and the final conclusion was that the amalgamation of the three services was a viable and worthwhile option.

The idea of a 'one-stop' local studies centre is not new, having been advocated, from the 1970s onwards, by such authors as Michael Messenger, Philip Cruttenden and Harold Nichols. In 1990 the Library Association Local studies Group issued its *Guidelines* for local studies collections, in which a section on local studies centres was included. This pointed out that convenience to users was of prime importance and that to achieve this the local studies library, the local museum and the archives department should be situated in close juxtaposition, with the staff of all three working in close cooperation, and that while most existing buildings precluded this, it should be carefully considered in planning new complexes. 'In such a situation joint collecting policies, shared exhibitions, services for schools and the general fusion of information and expertise can result in a local studies service of the highest order'.

Since the time that these ideals were proposed, attempts have been made with varying degrees of success to implement them, and this article attempts to show how far the *Guidelines* have been followed and to what effect.

The provision of local studies services to meet developments in the study of local history have been considerably affected by the reorganisations of local government which have taken place. The changes in boundaries and responsibilities of authorities have had repercussions for local collections, some favourable, others less so. For the larger local authorities in particular it provided opportunities for an improved approach to local studies librarianship. Among other things, it allowed a greater level of cooperation. In 1987, one writer pointed out that the abolition of the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan Counties could result in the devolution in archival powers and that this might help the creation of new local studies centres combining archives and libraries. This did occur in many cases and the case studies used in this article demonstrate that this was a positive result.

The concept of the local studies centre is a significant point for discussion because of the ever-increasing interest in local history and the consequent need for better services to meet increased user demand and expectations. Unfortunately this has occurred during a period of instability within the library service, particularly in the public sector; financial constraints and changes in patterns of government have left public libraries in a state of transition. The increasing public expectation of

quality services, set against continuing government control of local government expenditure causes major problems and it is suggested here that some of these pressures could be alleviated if the local studies concept was more widely practised. Once the initial cost of the building and reorganisation of the collections has been accounted for, operating costs should be reduced. Resources such as microform readers and photocopiers could be shared in public work areas, duplication of items eradicated and storage space reduced. The quality of service would improve, replacing the geographically diverse and complex provision which generally exists at present. The ultimate solution could be for the local studies collection to break away from the public library and merge its identity with other providers of local information to form a separate local studies centre.

In order to test this hypothesis case studies of four local studies centres in London were carried out: the investigation covered the four key areas of service provision - accommodation, collection development, staff and users. The centres concerned were the local studies and archives centres of Lewisham and Hammersmith and Fulham, and the local studies, archives and museum centres of Kingston upon Thames and Croydon. A visit was made to each centre and staff answered a prepared questionnaire.

Accommodation

Hammersmith and Fulham Archives and Local History Centre is situated close to the shopping centre in a modern purpose-built centre which it shares with other community facilities, including the local Urban Studies Centre. Amalgamation occurred in 1992, when the opportunity was taken to move into a new building where the archives and two local history collections, previously situated in three different libraries, could be brought together. There are no plans to add further services such as a museum or art gallery, as this would require major funding.

Lewisham Local Studies and Archives Centre is housed within Lewisham Library, again alongside other services such as the Tourist Information Centre. Its location in Lewisham's main shopping precinct makes it an ideal community focal point. Lewisham has always had an integrated local studies and archives service. It is possible that a museum will be added to the centre in the future, but in the present financial climate this is highly unlikely. **Kingston Museum and Heritage Service** originally combined local studies library, archive and museum in one building. However, expanding collections have forced the service to fragment. The museum remains near the town centre, next to the public library, but archives and local studies were forced to move out in 1992, and are now housed in an old school, along with the adult education centre. An archive store was constructed there at great expense, but this is now full and an out-store is required, further fragmenting the service. **Croydon Local Studies Library and Archives Service** and Lifetimes (museum) are housed in the Croydon Clocktower Complex, which was opened in 1994. They share accommodation with various other public services including the Riesco Gallery, a cafe and a shop. The whole complex provides a pleasant environment for pursuing all the services it offers.

Some problems were encountered even with purpose-built accommodation. At Hammersmith, for instance, the centre needs more office space and a sales point, though, unlike many centres, it does have enough storage space until the end of the century.

Despite these problems common accommodation is preferable for the functioning of a joint service, for the reasons mentioned previously.

Collection development

Theoretically, a collection development policy is essential whether collections remain separate or amalgamate, but where amalgamation has occurred it is logical to have a single policy: this would help to overcome such problems as competition for rare material. In practice the methods for developing such a policy, if indeed one exists at all, are varied: the case studies revealed that policies are formed according to the needs of the centres.

Each of the centres investigated had a joint budget, except that at Croydon the museum budget was separate from that of the local studies library and archives service: such a joint budget helps integration. Hammersmith recognises that their enables them to be independent of the other libraries in the borough, and Croydon and Lewisham acknowledge the flexibility it allows. Priorities can be decided upon and funds transferred from one heading to another. The museum element at Kingston was undergoing refurbishment at the time of the survey: this was only made possible by contributing money from one of the local studies budgets.

By their nature, items in each of the collections are distinct and cataloguing and classification methods have been established over the years, which makes integration of the records difficult: at present all four centres have separate catalogues for each element of the service. Croydon has made most progress towards an integrated library, archive and museum database to serve the indexing, cataloguing and retrieval needs of all three services. One of Kingston's long term objectives is to work towards an integrated retrieval system.

Staff

It is essential that all areas of the collection are serviced by a professional member of staff to ensure that the collection is used efficiently and ensure that users receive the correct information. Lewisham emphasises the problems when the relevant professional staff are not employed, the archivist stressing the imbalance caused by the removal of the local studies librarian post: specialist knowledge of collection management and reader enquiries is lacking. The archivist also notes the problem of having no professional staff to maintain the closed access museum collection.

Staff will also benefit from amalgamation. Working as a team will remove the isolation which is often felt by staff. They will have a forum for discussion and support in carrying out new ideas for improving the service. Cooperation between the services is prominent in Croydon, where libraries and archives provide much of the information which is recycled in the museum's work.

There is also the possibility of establishing new posts, for instance, for conservators or education officers. This has happened at Kingston where an education and outreach officer relieves some of the pressure from collection specialists. Conversely, Hammersmith and Fulham operates on limited opening hours because its staff are responsible for both areas.

Users

Public libraries in the United Kingdom have fulfilled a variety of roles over the years. Their aim has always been to reflect the needs of the users in the services they provide. In the local studies field any level of integration can only be beneficial to local historians, family historians, and those researching any aspect of the locality, as it makes their task less arduous, and if museums are included, provides a visual as well as documentary account of the past. In Croydon, users have

expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the service, whereas at Kingston, where the service has been fragmented, reactions are more mixed. Housing all the collections in one building encourages their use, as has been shown from surveys in Bolton and Oxfordshire.

Conclusion

At present, local studies centres appear to have problems, the main one being lack of funding. The fact that some centres lack museum services, for whatever reason, is an obstacle, although the case studies have shown that some museum objects are collected and stored, without being exhibited, if they have local historical value. The establishment of a local studies centre could be the opportunity for the museum service to be developed.

The local studies centre concept is a viable and worthwhile alternative to the more familiar independent service provision. It has the potential to be a more organised, effective and efficient service for the local authority and, above all, to the public it aims to serve. A wealth of sources, human and material, are conveniently available at one location, removing the user's uncertainty of where to go to find the relevant material and speeding up and enhancing the process of research and investigation. There is undoubtedly sufficient enthusiasm for such a service in the United Kingdom. Given the necessary support and funding, the ideal of the concept of the local studies centre incorporating fully integrated local studies library, archives and museum services, could become a reality.

Greta Friggens is an Assistant Librarian at De Montfort University Library.

THE ORGANISATION OF LOCAL STUDIES: a permissive approach

David Rimmer

Local studies, as a branch of librarianship, has been a success. Local studies libraries are increasingly heavily used and within recent years the status of the local studies librarian within the library profession has increased. All this is to the good, especially as for many years local studies librarianship had been regarded as a backwater in terms of remuneration and status: for those who chose to specialise in this area their sole reward was love of their work.

Alongside this improvement has been a parallel development with wider implications. This has been the founding of 'local studies centres' comprising record offices, local studies libraries and sometimes museums, following the reasoning that the component professional units fall within the sphere of a wider and greater entity - local studies. Other terms used include 'local interest centre', 'local history resource centre', 'records and resource centre' and 'heritage centre'. A number of authorities have and are implementing this policy, which seems to be gathering momentum. However, it is as yet far from complete and I wish to question its validity in terms of public service, of the values of an open and democratic society and of administrative convenience.

Local studies as a multi-professional concept has its limitations. In some cases it is only too clear that incorporating record offices and local studies libraries into single units is a cost-cutting approach by small local authorities lacking the

resources to fund and develop separate organisations with adequate dedicated resources: the quality of public, educational and official services sadly can reflect this inadequate funding base.

The rationale of the local studies centre is flawed, as the core assumption is that it is possible for all knowledge of the history of an area and of its activities to be encompassed within a single local unit. But for any area there are always major sources held elsewhere, even if only at major national institutions such as the Public Record Office and the British Library. Thus the local studies centre can aim to offer the user a solution which does not exist: there are no 'one stop shops' in the world of local history.

There is a further limitation. Local studies is too narrow an objective as far as record offices are concerned. Record Offices hold archives which are of national or at least of more than local significance. Records Management, a core activity for any record office, so as to prevent it being swamped by the mass of ephemeral paperwork generated by local authorities, has no link with local studies. The policy of establishing an integrated local studies centre can weaken this wider service provision by record offices by substituting or subordinating such a broader service to the single unit, local studies.

My second criticism of local studies centres goes beyond service, operational or professional concerns: it relates to the essential values of a healthy democratic society. To have separate local studies libraries, record offices and museums is healthy. It is evidence of a pluralistic, open and democratic society. The study of the past and its interpretation always have social and political implications and this is why the professional and intellectual independence of the librarian, archivist and museums officer should be preserved and defended when challenged. It is symptomatic of the erosion of small freedoms which has taken place in recent years, that some local authorities have accepted the practice of placing all historical evidence they have in the hands of one manager. It might be felt that intellectual and professional freedoms are small matters. My contention is that they are not.

Multi-disciplinary organisations also have their problems. It is widely accepted that managers, with a broad vision, do not need to have a specific grounding in the specialisms which they are managing: indeed some management scientists seem to suggest that manager equals competent, whilst professional equals incompetent. The truth, of course, is more complicated. There is much to be said for applying the same differentiation between the professional and the amateur. From my own experience there are a few gifted administrators who can assimilate unfamiliar knowledge very quickly and apply this knowledge very quickly to be able to administer in depth a range of different units. Sadly these people are few and far between and it would be unrealistic to assume that it would be possible to find such a person to manage every local studies centre.

Even if such a person could be found, because of the wide range of disciplines involved - for instance librarians, archivists, curators, archeologists, conservators - developing and managing a local studies centre would be a formidable task. A local studies manager would have to reconcile different trainings, outlooks and

objectives, which could take up a great deal of time. I would argue that this problem is avoidable and that there are more effective and realistic ways to cater for local studies than by forming local studies centres.

Record offices, museums and libraries are national professional organisations which have evolved over long periods of time. The record office has always been a coherent structure concerning all elements of archive administration (later extended to records management): fieldwork, acquisition, transfer, cleaning, sorting, boxing, listing, conservation, production and consultation. Libraries and museums certainly have their structures also.

Having described the service, socio-political and administrative aspects of my reservations concerning local studies centres, I now move to the heart of the matter. Until recently there was no term defining the process of creating local studies centres. Recently, however, the term "synergism" has been adopted. It has been used by one county where the local studies library and record office are being merged, and by the chief officer of another county who has responsibility for record offices, local studies libraries and some museum functions. The dictionary definition of the word is "the forming of something by co-operative effort or work". The management definition is cruder, that of merging two units with similarities to form a stronger and larger whole with a new identity.

Management thinking in the UK can be rather old fashioned, sometimes lagging behind thinking in many other countries. I still find it incredible that in the United States, synergism as a management approach was largely discredited twenty years ago, as part of the reassessment which took place in the wake of the Vietnam war, yet there are clearly those in this country who are embracing synergism as a "new" management concept.

In criticising the idea of the local studies centre it could be said that I have been entirely negative and destructive in criticising a coherent concept and have offered nothing to put in its place. But what I am suggesting is that the formation of a local studies centre, combining record office, local studies library and museum is not a good thing. Why not sweep away the concept of such centres entirely and seek a radical change in attitude and approach? Do we need any formal permanent organisation to promote local studies at all? I suggest that local studies demands are so varied and subject to so many subtleties and changes in fashion that real progress is best achieved through the retention of museums, record offices and local studies libraries, all truly independent of each other.

It is also suggested that they, when the need arises, should work together permissively, flexibly, free from the constraints of power relationships and free from the dead hand of central bureaucracy. Such a change in outlook would remove mistrust and in the end would do more for the public we all serve as they, the users, will benefit from co-operation between the professional units working together on a basis not of central control and coercion, but of free will and mutual respect.

David Rimmer is County Archivist, Gwent.

This article originally appeared in the LSG Welsh Branch Newsletter, 8, 1997.

VIRTUAL VIEWING: REPORT OF A DAY SCHOOL

Richard Pears

On 15 October more than 70 delegates assembled in Durham for a Day School with the title 'Virtual viewing: the digitisation of local history material in libraries, archives and museums'. This was jointly organised by Iain Watson, Local Studies Manager for Durham County Council and myself for the Local Studies Group. Iain had attended a digitisation conference in Nottingham which he found very useful and was keen to see a similar event in the North East, which does not have a branch of LSG. We were both aware of the vast scope of digitisation projects around the country and we set about organising a day school with the aim of highlighting as many aspects as possible of this work. We were fortunate to have so many examples to choose from and it was difficult to narrow down a list of speakers. We were both concerned that the day school should be for everyone involved in local studies; not only libraries, archives, record offices and museums, but also the enthusiasts who use these services. With this in mind we arranged a very full day with various fairly short presentations to cover as wide a range of topics as possible. We were also aware of the prohibitive fees delegates are sometimes expected to pay for similar events, so we kept the cost down to £10.00 per person which we hoped would cover our speakers' expenses. Iain and I were stunned by the response to our publicity. We had hoped for a strong regional response, which we got, but others came from as far afield as Kent and Dundee.

Michael Long, manager of Information North, set the context for the day, updating delegates on developments since the publication of David Parry's report *Virtually New*. These include the award of £500,000 from the Wolfson Fund for the Regional Information Service to create a managed intranet linking 284 libraries in the north east and ICT training for 600 staff. He highlighted several obstacles that must be overcome before digitisation projects can begin. It is not enough just to buy a scanner and start digitising your photograph collection. EEC Directive 93/98/EEC, which extends the copyright period on many items held in local studies collections, must be taken into account, material must be prioritised for digitisation, and finding aids and indexes improved.

Peter Kelly, Internet manager for Leeds City Council's website discussed the work needed to add nearly 200 images to the City Council website. This is a tiny proportion of the local studies collection, much of which came from the City Engineers department, a reminder to those of us in local government to speak to other departments!

Jim Lawson, Keeper of Resource Collections at Beamish, the North of England Open Air Museum, traced the development of their image database from card catalogue to analogue based technology. When digitisation systems were developing, the technology was too slow to be able to cope with a collection of 100,000 images, so analogue was used. Today, with modern technology, they now have a digital system working alongside the analogue database, with the card catalogue retained for less confident users. Digitisation has allowed the Museum to assist planning departments, the press and education.

Carolyn Ball described the creation of the 'Journeys into History' CD-ROM by Durham County Record Office. Aimed at schoolchildren this CD-ROM used local history information to educate users about national history. If undertaking digitisation projects for educational use it is vital that they be compatible with the National Curriculum.

Next came Graham Turnbull from the Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network (SCRAN), which is creating a networked media resource from material held in Scottish museums, galleries and libraries. With £14.7 million of Millennium funding over 5 years this is a massive national project which will make material held across the country available for education. The digitised material will be of commercial quality, bringing much needed royalties to the collections which contributed. His presentation was a tour de force, showing the unlimited potential of digitisation.

David Mander followed, outlining the creation of '*Hackney on Disc*', a CD-ROM linking photographs and maps. This has since been developed into an on-line service, with workstations to improve public access and replace an antiquated card index. Future developments may include linking the digitised maps to the GIS system used by planning departments and an output scanner to replace the conventional photograph reproduction service.

A reminder of the strong contribution of academia to local studies came from Derek Harding of the University of Teesside. He described the cooperation between the University, Cleveland Local History Society and local public libraries in the production of a Millennium CD-ROM. The University has the technology and expertise for digitisation, the libraries have material which they wish to preserve while improving public access, and the local history society has the volunteers to contribute time and local knowledge. Work on the CD-ROM is proceeding apace. Although a great deal of time has been required, this has been given voluntarily and so far costs have only been about £100 - much of this being copyright payments.

The power of one determined person was demonstrated by Eileen Carnaffin, Local Studies Librarian of Gateshead Libraries and Arts Service. The local studies library was accessible only in the Central Library, which made it impossible for schoolchildren to come in classes. With assistance from the Gateshead Education Business Partnership Eileen has set up an on-line local studies service to improve access to material. Children can contribute and receive material and take part in electronic conferencing with other schools. The Education department provided the necessary hardware to set up the system while Eileen contributes time and expert knowledge.

Not content with co-organising the dayschool and dealing with any problems that arose, Iain Watson gave the final presentation, about the Durham Record -, Durham County Council's on-line local studies database uniting maps and photographs of the whole county. Iain explained how the system was intended for unmediated public access using touchscreen technology. Access to local history material was greatly increased. Previously there had been about 30 requests for photograph copies each year; now hundreds of printouts are made from the system. Digitisation has been very successful in improving access to local history material.

I learned a great deal about the potential that digitisation offers local studies collections. It heralds the improved access to material that today's enthusiasts desire, while ensuring that delicate materials can be conserved for the future. There is a great deal of work to be done, particularly in the less glamorous tasks such as indexing, and finance must be found, but cooperation between local studies professionals and enthusiasts will help to speed us towards our goal.

Richard Pears is Reference Librarian, Middlesbrough Libraries and Information Service

HUNGARY AGAIN - The 1998 Local Studies conference and study tour

Diana Dixon

To my delight and surprise, I was nominated to represent the Local Studies Group at the 5th conference of the Hungarian Association of Local Studies Librarians in Kiskunhalas in July 1998. The theme was religious libraries and I was expected to talk on the British experience. As previously, the conference was in the middle of a week's study tour in Hungary and the Hungarians would be responsible for my board and lodging in Hungary.

Gyula Mandli, chairman of the Local Studies Group of the Hungarian Library Association, met me at the impressive Keleti pu station in Budapest and took me to my accommodation beneath the Budapest Municipal Library, where I was to stay for the next two days. Culture beckoned, and off we went to the National Museum, for a tour round an excellent historical exhibition which put what I later saw in context. Setting a pattern that was to become the hallmark of the whole tour, the next stop was a refreshment stop for an excellent meal, before we embarked on a walking tour of the cultural delights of Budapest.

On the Monday, it was upstairs to see the full splendour of the baroque palace in which the library is housed, chandeliers and all. Such a building, while visually appealing, presents enormous problems for the library and I was impressed with the pragmatic solutions to the difficulties. The local studies reading room was a delight - everything a repository should be - elegant, panelled and serene. Behind the scenes there was a contrasting hive of activity. Staff have exploited the impressive illustrative collections of Budapest history to the maximum by producing attractive booklets of the city's rich cultural heritage, and a database of the collections.

In the afternoon, I went to the National Library. Here again I was impressed with the wealth of the special collections, especially of the maps and the music, including a unique Haydn archive. A visit to the microfilm unit to compare notes on newspaper microfilming projects followed.

An early start on Tuesday morning in the company of my official interpreter, Erzsébet Gáncs took us off to Kecskemet. Nothing had prepared me for the impressive public library in Kecskemet. Newly constructed, with its attractive turquoise roof, this was a building to marvel at. Lecture theatres, cafes and a welcoming atmosphere made this an exceptional library, matched only by the dedication and enthusiasm of its staff. Much of its success is due to its dynamic and enthusiastic director whose dedication has permeated down through the staff. We enjoyed a delicious lunch in the library before setting off to view Kecskemet's architectural splendours. We were privileged to be escorted by the director around the outstanding Cifra palace, a fantasy of Hungarian art nouveau.

From Kecskemet we moved on to Kiskunhalas. The Lace Museum here was the scene for the afternoon's proceedings. It was a delight to examine the intricate and beautiful lace exhibition before the more serious business of the conference began. Its theme was religious libraries and the papers were intellectually

stimulating and extremely interesting. It soon became apparent that many of the problems of religious libraries were similar in our two countries. Without the services of my excellent interpreter, Erzsébet Gáncs, little would have been clear. The intellectual rigour and scholarship of my Hungarian colleagues was impressive and I learnt a great deal.

The highlight of the afternoon was unexpected: to our surprise the Hungarian Library Association had decided to honour Elizabeth Melrose for her contribution to Anglo-Hungarian librarianship by presenting her with a medal. There was no doubt of the high regard in which Elizabeth is held in Hungary.

A special exhibition of handicrafts by librarians was held in Kiskunhalas Library, including a unique and distinctive exhibition of root sculpture from humble tree and vegetable roots.

The second day of the conference took place in the colourful and attractive baroque town of Kalocsa. Dominated by an impressive cathedral, the town has an archbishop's palace in which there is a splendid library.

For some the best was yet to come. Our trip to a local winery was an enjoyable experience, with as much wine as we could possibly imbibe. To our credit, we all were able to find the coach at the end of the afternoon! On the last morning we all made our sad farewells to new friends. So many people had been so warm and welcoming to us and it was with genuine regret that we bade them farewell.

For us all was not over. We drove back along the flood plain of the Danube, to the delightful baroque town of Vác. Here we were the guests of Gyula Mandli and his obvious pride in his library was reflected in the warm welcome we received from the library staff. Once again we were impressed to find such modern facilities, especially in the audiovisual room, in such a historic building. As so often in Hungary, the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff in this well organised and well resourced library impressed us.

Saturday was devoted to tourism. Starting with a trip to Szentendre, we sauntered through its picturesque streets untroubled by hordes of tourists. Before they arrived we escaped to the tranquillity of its library. We then visited the Szabaten Neprazi Museum (National Museum of Hungarian Village Life) which was a real delight. In brilliant sunshine we enjoyed exploring the reconstructed villages and farmsteads before going on to the imposing Visegrad castle. Back at the library, the staff had prepared more tempting delicacies and a convivial evening followed.

On Sunday we bade farewell to our exceptionally hospitable and generous host Gyula Mandli and his colleagues. I was genuinely sad to leave Hungary and all the friends I had made there. We have much to learn from our Hungarian colleagues, both in terms of their innovative dedication to their work and also in their hospitality to their overseas visitors. I should like to thank the Local Studies Group for nominating me to represent them.

Diana Dixon is a freelance researcher and an LSG committee member.

ROUND THE BRANCHES

First of all, welcome to a new Branch - **Midland and Anglia**. Formed following a very successful Day School in Nottingham, officers and committee have now taken office and a Day School on marketing local studies is planned for May 1999. The Branch is also considering establishing a newsletter. For further information contact Joan Bray at Nottingham Central Library.

The Local Studies Panel in **Northern Ireland** organised a most successful Local Studies Week, with over forty local history oriented events taking place across the Province. The week also gained good publicity for the Panel from the BBC. It is hoped to build on this years event by running another Local History Week in June 2000. The Panel's representative on LSG is now Linda Greenwood.

LOCSCOT, which organises Local History Week in Scotland, is already planning for 1999. To run from 17 - 24 April, the theme will be 'Health and Welfare', and in preparation for this there will be a Day School on this topic at Stirling in March. The LOCSCOT committee has now held 100 meetings, and the occasion was marked by a lunch at which Joe Fisher, the former Chairman, was guest of honour.

London and Home Counties Branch, under Chairman Nick Scott, has a much changed committee, is looking forward to presenting new Workshops, and is changing its journal to become a news sheet.

Welsh Branch members are active in promoting local studies and are looking for new committee members to stand at the AGM early in 1999.

North West Branch held a meeting in Warrington to celebrate 150 years of north west libraries, and are planning a day school on digital imaging and photographs in May 1999. On the publicity side, the Branch has produced an attractive publicity leaflet and have prepared some new display panels advertising the Group.

In the **Yorkshire and Humber** region a local studies librarians group has been formed. As with the Newsplan Implementation Group, it is associated with the Association of Yorkshire and Humberside Library Services. A Chairman has been elected and a working party formed to compile a directory of local studies contacts. The representative of the new group on the LSG committee will be Douglas Hindmarch from Sheffield Local Studies library.

While there is no Branch in the **North East**, the Northern Chief Librarians' Local Studies Librarians Group, representing the area's local studies collections, presented, in conjunction with LSG, the very successful Day School in Durham, reported elsewhere in this issue.

OUR NEW LA COUNCILLOR

LSG's new Library Association Councillor is Albert Hartley, Resources Manager with Warrington Borough Council's Library and Information Department: he transferred there from Cheshire County Library in April 1998 with local government reorganisation. Coincidentally, however, he began his library career with the previous Warrington Borough Council in 1967, as Cataloguer.

Warrington Library is the oldest rate-supported library in the country, celebrating this year its 150th anniversary, and over the years successive librarians have built up a considerable local studies database. Inevitably Albert became interested by, and involved with, firstly this database and then local studies generally. He produced the index for G. A. Carter's revised edition of Hobbs's *Local Studies and the Librarian*, and as a keen photographer was involved in the Warrington Photographic Survey which ran in the late 1970s.

Albert is now on the committee of the North West branch of LSG and has been involved in the planning of its day schools. In addition, he is involved in IT through his new post and is keen to exploit possibilities such as digital imaging to link together these interests.

We welcome Albert to the LSG Committee, where he will be able to keep us up to date with events at Ridgmount Street. He will also, of course, express our views on matters of interest to the Group at LA Council and committee meetings.

THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CENTENARY MEDAL

This year the Library Association celebrates the centenary of the granting of its Royal Charter. As part of the celebrations the Association announced that it was to award 100 medals to library and information workers, the aim being to represent the current profession as a whole, across the full range of library and information work and levels of staff. Nominations were requested from LA members for names of people who had made outstanding contributions to library and information work. Selection of those to receive the medals was carried out by a steering committee in accordance with these criteria. The complete list of recipients appeared in the *LAR* for December 1998 (pp 660-1), and the medals were presented by HRH the Princess Royal at a special ceremony at the British Library on December 8th. The medallists listed below are members of LSG, and the Group sends its heartiest congratulations to them.

Susan Bates; Bryan Berryman; Mary Casteleyn; Geoffrey Forster; Ruth Gordon; John MacRitchie; Michael Marshman; Elizabeth Melrose; Christine Pearson; Lorna Smith; Donald Steele; Martin Underwood.

OUR PROFESSIONAL FUTURE

All LA members by now should have received a copy of this document, which sets out proposals for the amalgamation of the LA and the Institute of Information Scientists, and the Association is very anxious to hear members views. As some of the proposals relate to special interest groups such as LSG, a response will be submitted by the Local Studies Group. It appears from the proposals that Special Interest Groups will be able to carry on very much as before, including capitation payment from the centre, as well as the right to raise their own income and to enrol non-members of the parent organisation. As LSG does not overlap with any other existing LA or IIS Group it does not seem likely that there will be a problem. However, the LA and the Group do wish to have as many expressions of opinion as possible, including positive ones-if you agree with the proposals, please say so. In order to help the Group response, please send any comments you may have to Patrick Baird, our Hon. Secretary, Local Studies and History, Birmingham Central Library, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3HQ by the end of January. You are welcome, of course, also to send submissions to Ross Shimmeron at LA Headquarters.

UMBRELLA 5 1999

UmbrellA 5, the fifth of the Library Association's national study schools, will take place in Manchester from July 1-3, 1999, and LSG will be presenting a full programme alongside those of all the other LA Groups. Manchester again? This is because there are very few locations which can cater for such a large group of people and so many parallel sessions. Accommodation at UMIST is good and Manchester is easily reachable from most parts of the country. You will notice, however, that there is one major change - UmbrellA will run from Thursday to Saturday. This gives delegates part of their weekend free, and Saturday travel may be easier than Sunday. It also gives people more chance to come for a day visit. On Friday and Saturday there will be a plenary session with a leading national figure, and a full programme of Group events:. Saturday will run as a full day. Thus, there is more opportunity than ever for you to take part in UmbellA. It is best to come for the whole period, as this gives you more chance to meet people, but if you can't, at least come for a day!

LSG's general theme is 'Aspects of Popular Culture', as it was felt that this is sometimes forgotten among more academic topics. Our programme is not absolutely finalised, but we do know that on Thursday evening the keynote address will be by Michael Dewe, with the title *Don't you Rock me, Daddy-O! Popular culture, local studies and- skiffle!* There will also be talks on the National Fairground Archive, on the value of newspaper advertisements, and on an aspect of sport. A joint session with the Library History Group will hear Nicola Smith consider *Local identities in local collections*. The LSG Annual General Meeting will be held late Saturday morning and it is hoped to have the 1999 McCulla Award ceremony then, together with a speaker or discussion on current issues in local studies - whatever they may be by then! You are permitted to come to the AGM even if you have not registered for UmbrellA, but you must make arrangements in advance - look out for further details in the *LA Record*. We hope, however, that you will come to UmbrellA and enjoy the whole conference - or at least one day of it! The organisers of the School and of the group programmes have put a good deal of work into the preparations, so please do come and enjoy the programmes - and learn from them. Incidentally, any delegate can go to any session - but of course you will come to ours!

HELP WANTED

Graham Baker, Senior Librarian, Local Studies, Gloucester Library, Brunswick Road, Gloucester (tel. 01452 426949) is interested in hearing from anyone who has implemented or is planning the digitisation of text rather than images (eg their local studies catalogue) for the Internet, as his strategic plan calls for his catalogue to be made available there at some stage in the future.

In his column in *Refer*, the journal of the LA Information Services Group, Charles A. Toase asked for information about any local directories still being published and has so far traced only two - Tilley's Ledbury Directory and the Belfast and Northern Ireland Directory. Does anyone know of any others? His address is 6 Watery Lane, Merton Park, London SW20 9AA.

The Library Association's Personnel Training and Education Group and its Professional Qualifications department have been concerned for some time about the comparative disadvantages experienced by candidates on Route B of the routes

to Associateship. Route A candidates have access to a supervisor to provide support but there are no arrangements for candidates using Route B. It is proposed therefore to set up a formal network of mentors for these candidates, and volunteers are now needed. Anyone who is interested in helping is welcome. Ideally they should be chartered through the Registration process, but the main essential is enthusiasm to support candidates in developing professional commitment. Becoming a volunteer is challenging and rewarding; by giving candidates support and encouragement and helping them to persevere with their Associateship training, you will be helping them to become confident and competent information professionals. Whatever sector you work in there is likely to be a potential candidate who would welcome the opportunity to have your support and advice during their registration period. If you are a chartered librarian and wish to know more contact Marion Huckle, Professional Qualifications Dept at LA Headquarters.

NOTES AND NEWS

One of the librarians awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List was Benita Moore, who worked for Lancashire County Library Service for almost 43 years. The award was for her contribution to local history in Lancashire. Benita was a member of staff from the Local Studies department of Accrington Library; she was also the author of many books on Lancashire poetry and had tape-recorded the memories and reminiscences of many residents in East Lancashire. Benita's interest in local history won her national acclaim when she won a national award from the Post Office for her diary. As part of the award, her diary has been buried in a time capsule under a new building. Regretfully, we have to report that Benita died on Sunday 28 June after a long fight against cancer.

Belated congratulations to Mike Petty, formerly of the Cambridgeshire Collection, both for his MBE and for his honorary MA from Cambridge University, awarded for his work in organising, expanding and disseminating the resources held in the Cambridgeshire Collection, the local studies department of Cambridgeshire libraries. These add to various previous awards, including our own Dorothy McCulla Memorial Prize and an Honorary Fellowship from Anglia Polytechnic University.

Double congratulations to LSG Chairman Elizabeth Melrose. As mentioned elsewhere, the Hungarian Library Association has awarded her a medal for her services to Anglo-Hungarian cooperation in local studies librarianship. She is also the recipient of one of the Library Association's Centenary medals.

Readers will be sorry to hear of the sudden death, in April, of Penny Ward, Local Studies librarian at Margate and a member of the Local Studies Group national committee as well as an active member of its London and Home Counties Branch. In 1996 she represented the Group at the conference of the Local Studies Group of the Association of Hungarian Librarians: her report on this appeared in the Winter 1996 LSL. A full obituary was published in the July LAR (p.375). Her colleagues and friends set up a memorial fund which has so far raised over £800 and they are now looking for a suitable item relating to Thanet which can be displayed as a memorial.

Gateshead M. B. has recently started a series of leaflets dealing with the individual 'towns and villages' within the borough. Compiled by Eileen Carnaffin, Gateshead's local studies librarian, the first eight of a potential 35 have so far been issued.

They are in a standard format of three-fold A4 and give a very brief outline about the place for local residents, schoolchildren and visitors. The inside spread gives brief illustrated information on a variety of topics such as buildings, industry and social life, while the outside folds include a chronology and a list of useful addresses for further information. Nicely produced, the leaflets are issued free of charge and are funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

Need information about Scotland? A list of the local studies librarians of each local authority in Scotland appears in LOCSCOT, 3(8), Winter 1997/8, pp 13-15

Kent County Council has been awarded a grant by the National Heritage Lottery Fund for the conservation, repair and mounting of their large collection of 19th Century tithe maps. The maps are held at the Canterbury Cathedral Archive and the Centre for Kentish Studies in Maidstone and the work is expected to take up to three years to complete. A good deal of work needs to be done, as many of the maps are very large and some are in poor condition. In view of this, the work went out to tender and the contract was awarded to bookbinders and conservation specialists Cedric Chivers Limited, one of our regular advertisers.

Just a reminder that the *Index* to vols I - 15 of LSL is available. If you would like a copy, get in touch with Alice Lock, Local History Librarian, Tameside Local Studies Library, Stalybridge Library, Trinity Street, Stalybridge, Cheshire, SK15 2BN. There is a charge of £1.00 to cover handling costs. Please state whether you want disk or hard copy.

Newcastle City Libraries and Information Service has just issued a new publications catalogue. With over eighty titles in print, this must make it one of the largest library local history publishers. Titles range from annotated booklets of photographs of different areas of the city to academic monographs and one or two 'classic' reprints -and even an illustrated childrens story based on the city centre!

Oxford University Department for Continuing Education is offering a new Diploma in Local History via the Internet. This is a one-year distance learning programme comprising two modules, one on 'Databases for Historians' and the other on 'Concepts and methods for local history'. Course material will largely be provided over the Web, and students will be able to communicate with their tutor and with other class members over the Web. The course starts in April 1999 and a there has already been a large response. For further information contact the Certificate Administrator, OUDCE, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JA, or <http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/lhist1> (tel 01865 270369, fax 01865 270309, e-mail ppcert@conted.ox.ac.uk).

In 1996 we reported a lottery award of £255,000 to the Linen Hall Library, Belfast, a subscription library best known for its Irish and local studies collections. Now a further lottery grant of £1,822,000 will be used to improve facilities for staff and users, book storage and events. It will also pay for computerisation of the catalogues of key collections and for a major cataloguing and conservation programme: this will include the repair of some 30,000 books.

London and South East Library Region (LASER) has been carrying out a survey, commissioned by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Library Association, of heritage material held in local authority public libraries in England. 142 questionnaires

were sent out asking about a wide range of media including art prints, sound recordings, film, microform and artefacts. The survey is intended to fill gaps in present knowledge about the existence of heritage collections in public libraries: this information is particularly important in the light of local government reorganisation. Information is also being collected about the condition and accessibility of collections. The report will be issued shortly.

The Black and Asian Studies Association aims to foster research and disseminate information on the black presence in Britain. One concern is the relative paucity of local research, although some libraries and record offices have done some work on the topic. Black people have lived scattered throughout the country since at least the seventeenth century, and the Association hopes to encourage more studies by publicising the situation and by holding conferences: the next is in January 1999. The Association also publishes a Newsletter three times a year which includes original articles, book reviews and other information. For subscription details, or any other information about the Association contact the Secretary, Marika Sherwood, BASA, 28 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DS (fax 0171 862 8820, e-mail marikas@sas.ac.uk).

HAVE YOU SEEN ... ? Some recent items of interest to local studies librarians

Virtually new: creating the digital collection. Library and Information Commission, 1998. 129pp. ISBN 1 902394 00 3.

This is an important report for local studies librarians. Prepared by David Parry of Information North, the consultants to this review of digitisation projects for LISL, it both addresses the general situation regarding digitisation and gives a list of those projects which have or are being carried out, or are being planned. Confined to local authority libraries and archives, the directory shows that the majority of these projects are concerned with local studies, many of them to do with photographic collections. The main report itself contains an overview of the progress and nature of digitisation projects, with a discussion of the key issues including copyright and the need for the establishment of standards, for instance for data capture and storage and for preservation of digital media. The major call is for a central source of expertise in digitisation along with a need for coordination and cooperation in the public sector. *Virtually New* contains a large amount of food for thought, and both the report and the list of projects are worthy of study. If you have not looked at it yet, get hold of a copy now.

Gillespie, R & Hill, M (eds). Doing Irish Local History: pursuit and practice. 1998. 147pp. £8.50. ISBN 0 85389 676 3.

Collins, P. Pathways to Ulster's Past: Sources and resources for local studies. 1998. 158pp. £6 50. ISBN 0 85389 693 3.

Both published by the Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast.

These two books complement each other nicely. *Doing Irish History* is a series of chapters by individual experts about the variety of ways in which local historical study can be carried out. The first half of the book deals with general aspects of the topic - the idea of locality, locality and landscape, folklore and local history, and literature and local history - while the remainder gives examples of practice. These are on the study of townlands, the built heritage, and Armagh in the eighteenth

century. There is a final chapter on the importance of comparative studies. *Pathways to Ulster's Past* is mainly a guide to useful sources for local historians: its aims are not to explain the 'how' of local studies, but to show where to go to find the raw material for study. After a useful introductory chapter on local administrative units, official sources such as taxation rolls, records of Parliament and poor law records, with indications of where they can be found, are dealt with by period. There is also a wide-ranging section of 'miscellaneous records', including such items as wills, gravestone inscriptions, directories, newspapers and church records. The final section is in effect a guide to archives, museums and libraries in Northern Ireland and the Republic, including opening times and a summary of their main holdings.

Overall, these two volumes should be valuable to anyone undertaking local or family history studies related to Ulster (*Pathways to Ulster's Past* covers the historic nine county province), including of course the many people from outside the Province whose forebears came from there.

Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland. Vol. 40. Counties of South Ulster, 1834-8. A. Day & P. McWilliams, eds. Institute of Irish Studies, in association with the Royal Irish Academy, 1998. 200pp. £8.75 pbk. ISBN 0 85389 661 5. Also available in hardback.

This is the last volume in the series, completing the publication of what is a unique source of information about the northern half of Ireland immediately before the Great Famine - the project was halted before the rest of the country could be done. These memoirs, or written descriptions, were prepared to supplement the information given on Ordnance Survey maps. They give a vast amount of detail about each parish, including the topography, the built environment, land-holdings and population, employment and livelihood of the parishes, with information for instance on the churches and schools. The information varies somewhat from parish to parish: perhaps the nearest equivalents are the Statistical Accounts for Scotland. This volume is well laid out and easy to read. The publication of this series has obviously been a major task, and local historians will be very grateful to the publishers for doing so.

Munby, L M. Dates and time: a handbook for local historians. British Association for Local History, 1997. 86pp. £9.00. ISBN 1 86077 074 6

Local historians and others who need to establish precise and accurate dates for their various sources in order to carry out their work properly will find this handbook very helpful. The first part of the volume discusses the concepts of dating and the various systems - for instance the Julian and Gregorian Calendars - which have been used, and also the development of accurate time measurement. The second part is a series of appendices tabulating regnal years, various calendars such as Chinese and Jewish, religious feasts and other similar information of importance to local historians. This work is a useful tool for local studies librarians to have at hand to help their users, even if they also have Cheney's *Dictionary of Dates*, which is not easy for the beginner to use. One of the purposes of this guide, indeed, is to help the student use Cheney, which is referred to throughout: it also provides a wider study of dating methods. Apart from its reference use, however, the first part of this book is a fascinating read in itself. There are references and a bibliography.

Gibson, J, Medlycott, M, and Mills, D. Land and window tax assessments. 2 ed,

Federation of Family History Societies, 1998. 72pp. £2.95. ISBN 1 86006 054 4.

This is a revised and enlarged edition of a work first published in 1993. Updated from a survey first carried out in 1983, it lists the whereabouts of the surviving records of these taxes throughout Britain. This edition now includes outline maps for each county (pre-1974 boundaries) showing the administrative divisions (eg hundreds, lathes) in which the Assessments are usually arranged. These, together with the long introduction explaining the taxes and their use by historians, and the Bibliography, make this booklet of value to historians in general who need guidance on these source materials. Like other FFHS publications it is carefully compiled and reasonably priced.

Marchant, P and Hume, E. Visiting Knowsley's past. LA Record, 100(9), Sept 1998, pp468-9.

A description of the local history web site set up by Knowsley Library Service. Sources incorporated include photographs, maps, artefacts and audio interviews. Knowsley local collection is at present divided between two libraries and, with no space available to bring them together, the Internet provides a single access point to the whole collection. The Site's Organisation, management and future plans are briefly described. While primarily for local people, the web site has attracted visitors from various parts of the world - since going live in April there have been over 75,000 visits in total. The web site may be accessed at <http://history.knowsley.gov.uk/>

Crosby, A. Copyright burdens on local history. Local History News, 48, Autumn 1998, p3.

Considers problems of local publications and legal deposit from the point of view of the small publisher rather than the librarian, though the author is sympathetic to the need for legal deposit of Society publications etc.

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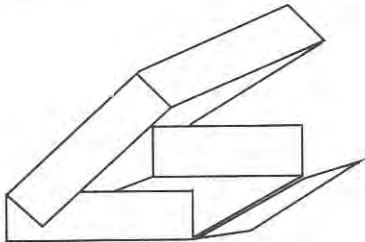
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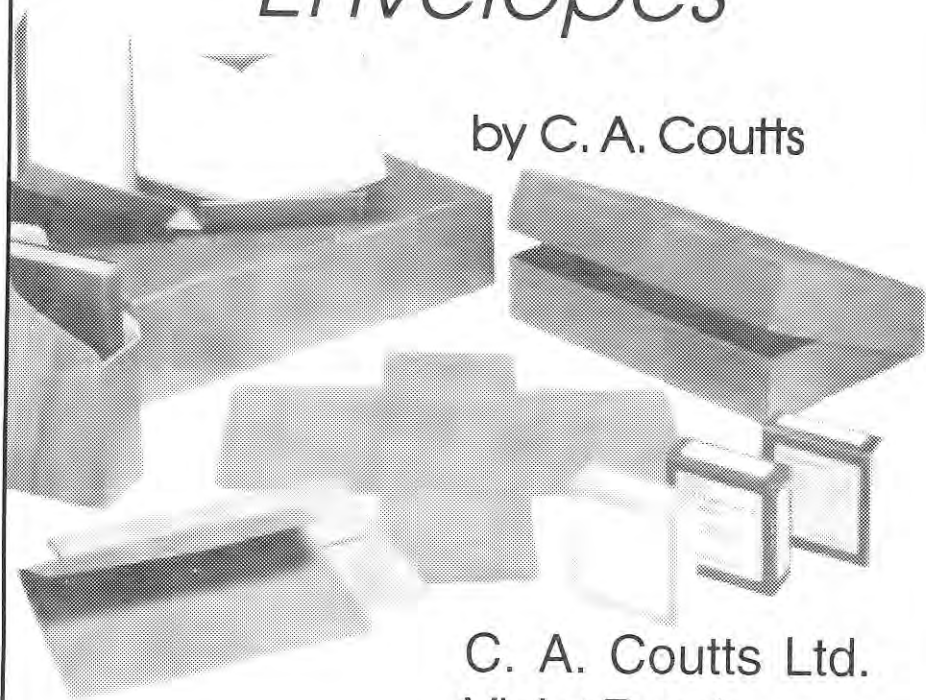
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