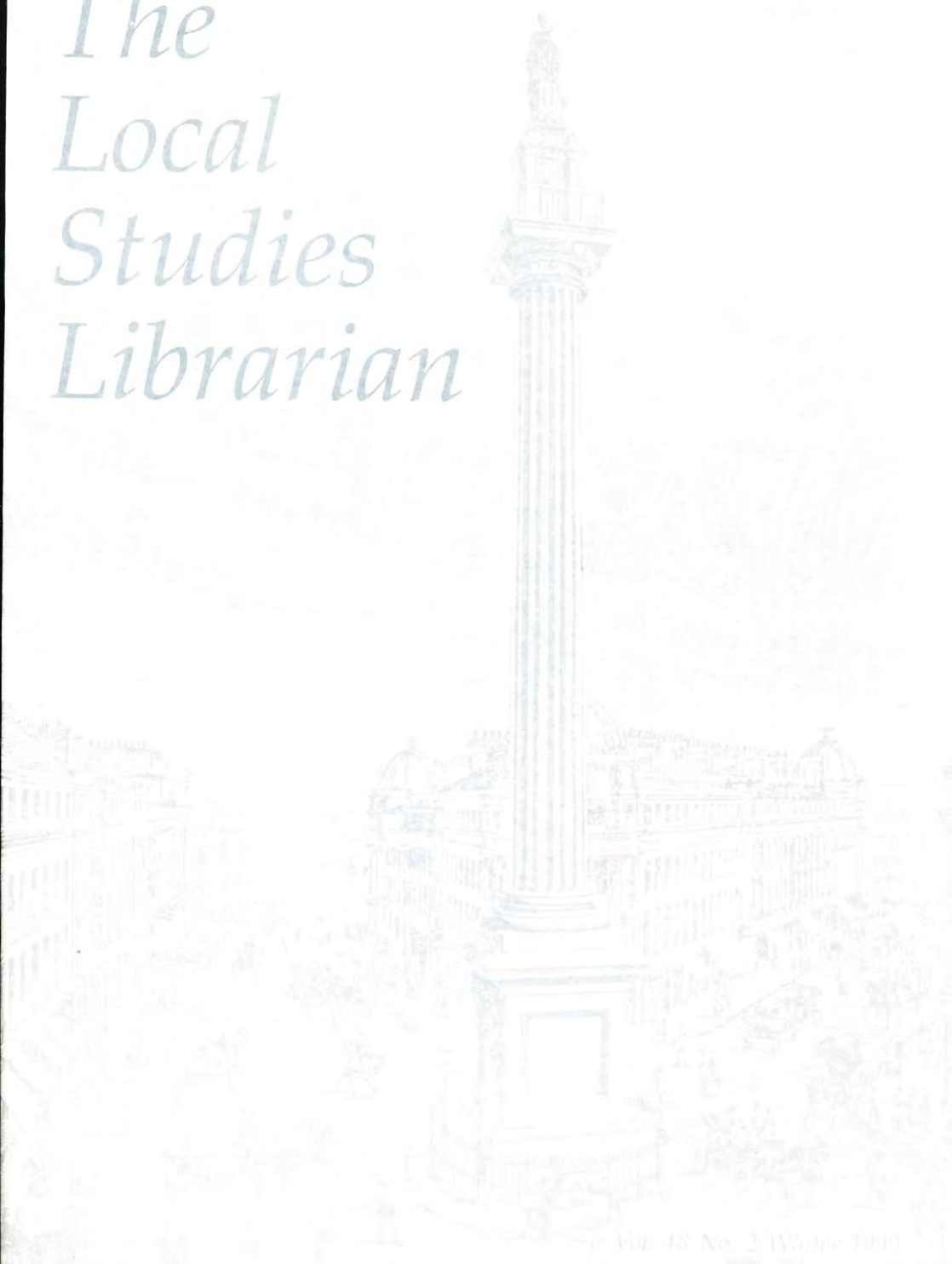


The Local Studies Librarian



Vol. 18 No. 2 Winter 1991

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EDITORIAL

UmbrellA 5 was a great success to judge from positive responses made to the questionnaire completed by delegates, and the LSG is pleased to have been part of the conference, providing what our Committee felt was a very good set of papers related to 'popular culture'. A number of LSG members were present, but attendance at Group sessions, though enthusiastic, was quite small. To try to establish why, a questionnaire was included with the Summer issue, which was held back for this purpose, and the results are reported in this issue. To the Committee, the biggest disappointment was that the response rate - 3.4% - was so low that the comments can only be a snapshot of some members' views, rather than providing statistically significant data. There is to be another UmbrellA, again at Manchester, in 2001, and our committee would again wish us to take part. Incidentally, participation has never actually cost us anything from our funds, and the Group gains from networking with other Groups and from the general publicity. However, we would like to try to ensure the right kind of programme to encourage our members to attend, so please let us know as soon as possible if you have any ideas - it is not essential for us to have an over-riding theme. LA headquarters is already planning the event, and our committee will have to decide quite soon on our level of participation. We know that there are problems sometimes in attending individual papers - or indeed with attending at all - but if you have any ideas, please let us know soon!

More generally, communication is often a problem within organisations. While we try to hold meetings during the year, our members are scattered and we do not have Branches in all parts of the country. Thus *LSL* becomes the main channel of communication for members. However, neither the *LSL* nor the Group itself receives much in the way of comment of any kind about our activities. Communication between librarians and clients is always seen as essential for the provision of a good service - but surely communication with other librarians is also important. The editor is always pleased to receive correspondence, news items and press releases, and offers of, or ideas for, articles for *The Local Studies Librarian*.

Because we feel they are worthy of a wider audience, we are including two papers from UmbrellA 5 in this issue, with another to come in the next, together with a paper presented at a day school on marketing local studies, again with another to come next time.

A final point. Subscription notices will probably be with you by the time you receive this. Please renew your membership of the Local Studies Group - we are an active Group, and we do work hard to represent you locally, nationally and internationally.

THE LOCAL STUDIES GROUP AT UMBRELLA 5 - QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Take Manchester by storm... There are many good reasons for attending Umbrella 5. The publicity for the fifth Library Association national conference for its members last July in Manchester was ecstatic. The Local Studies Group Committee had agreed to support a programme on 'Aspects of popular culture' believing that local studies librarians must collect source material for the interests of today. The Group Umbrella programme organiser had put together what we hoped was a varied and informative set of lectures, including papers on the phenomenon of skiffle, the National Fairground Archive and local studies aspects of newspaper advertisements. The Librarian of the Trent Bridge Cricket Ground spoke about his cricketing research and another talk considered local identities in local collections.

So, where were all our members?

In order to find out why audiences at the Group sessions, though enthusiastic, were so small, three of the national committee compiled the short questionnaire that went out with the summer edition of Local Studies Librarian. All our members received this questionnaire. By no means can the response (3.4%) be considered a sample of the entire membership, but the collated figures - and especially the written comments - are informative and are perhaps unsurprising. Local Studies Group members cited staff shortages and lack of time as the main deterrent to their attendance at Umbrella, followed closely by the cost of a three day event. And perhaps our Umbrella programme was bucking this year's trend by not concentrating on ICT and the digitisation of local studies resources - this latter received the greatest number of votes, as did local studies Regional Day Schools as opposed to a national professional gathering.

We are extremely grateful to those who did take the time and trouble to send us their views. The responses will be used to help plan future events for the Local Studies Group. And our sincere thanks to the member who wrote... *'I personally find the LSG the best bit of the LA, so you must be doing something right! Keep trying'*. We will!

SURVEY RESULTS

Number of members of LSG (ex overseas members) 1999	1,696
Number of questionnaires completed & returned	58
% response	3.4%

1. Does your work involve you in any kind of local studies service?

- Yes	40
- No	16
- No comment	2

2. Did you attend UmbrellA 5 in July 1999?

- Yes	9
- No	49

3. If you did attend UmbrellA5, how many local studies events did you attend?

1 response did not answer this question

The figure for total attendance includes the presence of the LSG programme organiser and the chairman at all seven sessions

- Members attending and responding to questionnaire	9
- Total attendance at 7 LSG sessions	93
- No of members at 7 LSG sessions	30
- Average attendance of members at each session	3-4
- % of LSG members attending the LSG sessions	32%
- % of non-members attending the LSG sessions	68%

4. If you did not attend all the sessions, could you indicate why.

- Other attractions, local studies only part of my work
- Already done the 'visit' before
- Felt that two sessions offered by other Groups were extremely relevant to my work
- On another Group committee so responsibility to those Group sessions

5. If you did not attend UmbrellA5 please give your reasons.

In most cases the respondents gave more than one reason. Each reason was counted separately.

- Cost - lack of financial support (personal or authority)	18
- Lack of time	17
- Social/personal reasons	12
- Staff shortages/could not get away from work	6
- Low perceived priority in authority for local studies	6
- Programme not focused on respondent's particular interests	5
- Distance	4
- Unaware of event	1
- Other	2

Staff shortages were allied by the respondents with **lack of time**, so, together, these were the most mentioned cause of non-attendance, followed by the **cost** of the UmbrellA conference.

6. There are different ways of presenting professional development events in the field of local studies. Please prioritise... as they would benefit you:

10 respondents did not prioritise.

First choice scored 4 points, second choice 3 points, third choice scored 2 points, fourth choice scored 1 point

- Regional day schools	(34 replies put this first)	171 points
- Separate local studies conference	(11 replies put this first)	129 points
- Attendance at Umbrella 5	(2 replies put this first)	87 points
- Other	(1 reply put this first)	38 points

Of those that considered 'Other', suggestions were:

- On-site training days
- Joint meetings with other related professions
- Joint events with other Groups (eg Careers Development Group)
- Visits to local studies centres & heritage sites, historical institutes (eg PRO, BL)
- Publication in journals/fact sheets/newsletters/websites

7. What topics would you like to see covered?

13 respondents did not answer this section

Of the other 45 most replies listed several topics. These suggestions were placed in a relevant category.

The totals relate to the main category heading and particular topics are listed under each heading

- <u>ICT and related topics</u>	20
Impact of ICT on local studies	
Digitisation, digital catalogues, digital indexing	
Internet and websites	
- <u>Resource related areas</u>	11
Acquisition, resource management	
Evaluation of sources	
Rare book collections	
Newspapers, ephemera, photographs	
Consideration of related areas - Oral history, film history, Archaeology, tourism, archival material, architectural history etc	
Peripheral sources eg RCHM	

- <u>Marketing and promotion</u>	10
Exploitation of collections	
Outreach, organising events	
Publishing, guides and handouts	
How to do local studies research inc. publishing results	
Work with schools	
Equal opportunities	
 - <u>Co-operative ventures</u>	 9
Partnerships, esp. with Archives, Heritage Units, Museums	
Fund-raising including sponsorship	
Funding bids	
 - <u>Family history</u>	 7
Electronic sources	
Family history sources	
 - <u>General professional developments</u>	 5
Coping with financial restraints	
Training	
Talking to fellow professionals	
How to obtain employment in the local studies field	
 - <u>Management of local studies: best practice</u>	 4
Service provision - evaluation and provision with few staff & less funding	
Standards, best value, benchmarking	
Training and encouragement of non- specialists & part-time librarians	
User groups, volunteers	
Copyright	
Conservation- access versus preservation	

Joan Bray

Ian Jamieson

Elizabeth Melrose

September 1999

'DON'T YOU ROCK ME DADDY-O': POPULAR CULTURE, LOCAL STUDIES - AND SKIFFLE!

Michael Dewe

This is a somewhat ambitious title for this paper. However, all three topics are addressed, though not necessarily in that order, with skiffle, as my main example, given perhaps the main amount of space. I hope it provides useful background to the Local Studies Group's general Umbrella theme of 'popular culture'.

Skiffle may have been described as piffle, or even 'squiffle', but my intention is to show that it has an important place in the history of popular music. This significance is spelt out more fully in my book *The Skiffle Craze* (Aberystwyth, Planet, 1998, £15.00, ISBN 0 9505188 5 9). It was while I was researching this book, in both its local and national dimensions, that I began to feel that local studies libraries may not always have shown sufficient concern for the materials of popular culture: this is a theme I shall return to at the end of this paper. I have to emphasise that my views are not based on any structured investigation, but are impressions resulting from working on my book.

Popular culture

Defining 'popular culture' presents a major problem: it seems very difficult to find a concise phrase that will contain the essence of what it is all about. It could be useful at least to distinguish it from what might be called high culture, which might be said to be an establishment view of what constitutes the best in art, literature, music and so on - views which are held by a significant and influential minority. Popular culture, by contrast, seems to have two dimensions: a commercially orientated culture aimed at a mass market - if, as it were, high culture is Harrods, then popular culture is Tesco or Asda - or a culture of, and for, the people. Popular culture, it seems to me, taking skiffle or cricket as examples, can exist both as a commercial and as a 'people' culture - a national mass market dimension and a 'local enthusiast' or 'grassroots' dimension.

Popular culture is generally associated with the mass media: the press (tabloids), publishing (comics, magazines for men and women), radio (pop music), television (the soaps), the recording industry (hit records, pop stars etc) and so on. Although not of the mass media, but closely associated with it, one might add sport, and, seeking a wider definition, possibly other things such as folklore, to what constitutes popular culture.

Popular music

Defining popular music also causes problems. Perhaps at its simplest one can only say that popular music is just that - it is popular with someone. This popularity is usually gauged by such things as sales, chart positions and air play, includes certain commercial genres such as rock 'n roll, punk and skiffle: it usually has mass distribution, is primarily recorded, is usually vocal music, and has its own aesthetics. These characteristics, emphasising commercialism and recorded music

seem, however, to ignore the 'of and for the people' aspects of popular culture, the grassroots aspects of music making - local brass bands, barber shop choirs, jazz bands, rock bands and, in the Fifties, the amateur skiffle group.

There is the high culture view of popular music that dismisses it for *being* 'commercial' and therefore inferior, and as one that is indulged in by indiscriminating consumers. Whatever our own view of what popular music is, its centrality in popular culture has to be recognised, especially for young people: this centrality began in the Fifties with the emergence of a teenage culture at that time associated with the music of skiffle and rock and roll.

On the whole the public librarian's attitude to the provision of the print and sound materials of popular music has improved enormously in my working lifetime. When I began as a library assistant, the lending library did not stock jazz and popular music.

Broadcasting in the Fifties

Some of the issues surrounding popular culture and attitudes to popular music can be demonstrated by looking at the work of the BBC in the Fifties and how surprisingly hospitable it was to the skiffle craze of 1956-58. While today there is a multitude of broadcasting outlets, both public service and commercial, national and local, in the mid-Fifties the picture was much simpler and more monopolistic. Until the advent of independent television in 1957 there was one TV channel radiated (the word used then) by the BBC and three radio programmes, with some regional variations on the Home Service. It is interesting to note that while independent TV arrived in the 1950s, commercial radio did not, hence the emergence of pirate radio stations in the 60s, which led to the shake-up of the BBC and resulted in numbered channels: as part of this Radio One, devoted almost entirely to pop music, came into being.

The BBC and popular music

Broadcasting is immensely influential for a country's culture - whether highbrow or lowbrow, elitist or popular - and this is particularly true of music. Looking at the BBC in the Fifties, it is clear that to that institution music meant classical music, which specifically included ballet and opera. Popular music was designated as 'dance' music and this included jazz. Classical music predominated.

A view of the BBC in the Fifties, then, is that the corporation did not do enough to cater for popular music, in particular the music needs of young and specialist audiences. However, if we look at the BBC radio and television output towards the end of the decade the corporation was beginning to address these audiences, and one of the arguments favourable to the BBC is its treatment of skiffle. The BBC actually launched three major programmes that brought skiffle and the guitar to the attention of the listening public and helped to satisfy the needs of teenage and specialist audiences. On television there was *Six-Five Special*, which went out on Saturday evenings between February 1957 and December 1958. The programme featured well known skiffle groups from time to time and was renowned for the

vigorous jiving of its teenage audience. Indeed, before it ceased it hosted the National Skiffle Contest in programmes from February to August 1958. The heats, semifinals and the final were played out on the programme. This gave amateur groups from all over the United Kingdom the chance to play on TV. The programme therefore gave outlets for both professional skiffle groups and amateur ones.

The two radio programmes that featured skiffle were *Saturday Skiffle Club* and *Guitar Club*. Skiffle did appear elsewhere in the radio and television schedules, but these two programmes were particularly important, although neither devoted itself entirely to skiffle - *Saturday Skiffle Club* provided a weekly half hour of skiffle and jazz, and ran from June 1957 to October 1958, while *Guitar Club*, although it promised Spanish to Skiffle, in fact was rather short on skiffle. It outlasted the skiffle craze, running from August 1957 to August 1962.

Skiffle arrives

The BBC's - and everyone else's - interest in skiffle started with Lonnie Donegan's recording of "Rock Island Line", which went into the hit parade in both Britain and the USA in early 1956, going on to be a million-seller. Lonnie Donegan and his jazz associates had been playing this small group - predominantly vocal - black music for a few years before it came to the attention of the British public, usually played during the interval between jazz instrumental sets. The idea had caught on with other jazz bands - the Avon Cities Jazz Band, for example, had a skiffle band - and in coffee bars. In the coffee bars it was more necessary to improvise musical instruments, as drums and a string bass were not to hand as in a jazz band, and so the washboard and the tea-chest bass joined the guitar or guitars.

Although bursting suddenly in on the popular music scene in 1956 - much to everyone's surprise - skiffle had, as indicated above, a short gestatory period in jazz bands and coffee bars, mainly in London's Soho area. Skiffle drew on the black (and to a lesser extent white) folk music culture of the USA. Skifflers adopted the repertoires of blues, work, gospel and train songs of America and in particular the black musicians' use of home made, improvised and novelty instruments, such as the tea-chest/washtub bass, the kazoo and occasionally the jug. The guitar, and to a much lesser extent the banjo and the ukelele, was used to provide the basic chords to back a song. Skiffle was essentially a vocal music whereby a song was accompanied by a strong rhythmic backing. Certainly as far as the amateur groups were concerned the music skills did not usually exist to accomplish much more than that.

By early 1957 there were a number of skiffle groups on the music scene in addition to Lonnie Donegan. A number had some recording success among skiffle fans but by late 1958 skiffle was dead as far as commercial music was concerned, although at grassroots level it continued on a bit longer.

Grassroots skiffle

The grassroots aspect of skiffle was truly a local phenomenon: there were amateur groups all around the UK from Ballymena to Ipswich, from Glasgow to London,

from Cardiff to Newcastle and Warrington. These local groups were important because firstly, they brought people into music-making, many of whom would otherwise never have considered the idea; and secondly, they provided people with a platform to move into jazz or folk music or transform themselves into a rhythm 'n' blues or rock band, some achieving considerable success in their new guise: the Quarry Men Skiffle Group from Liverpool, for instance, eventually became the Beatles, and it was skiffles who got together in London to form the Shadows.

Skiffle and local research

Skiffle, as I have indicated, is not just about the groups who recorded and broadcast and made a name for themselves nationally for a short while (the commercial dimension of popular culture), but also about the many amateur groups operating at grassroots level in towns and villages throughout Britain - this was the *real* skiffle craze, with young people creating popular music. In my research, as well as looking at the literature, I used two other approaches. One was to include the reminiscences of middle-aged men (and women if possible, though skiffle itself was essentially a male preoccupation): the other was to exploit the material I expected to be held in local collections - contemporary ephemera, photographs and recordings of local Fifties skiffle groups. They would probably sound pretty awful by today's standards, but it was important to know. Both ideas met with varying success.

From my base in Aberystwyth I established contact with a number of people elsewhere via letters to various magazines and as a result I was able to include reminiscences from fifteen people, including myself, in the book. What the reminiscences show is that people came to skiffle in various ways, via school or the youth club, often with no or very few musical skills: in many cases they went on, after skiffle had died, to play folk music, jazz, and of course rock and pop music - and even with the Halle Orchestra. Skiffle was the beginning of a whole range of different musical journeys.

Asking my contacts for skiffle memorabilia such as programmes, photographs, leaflets and recordings proved less successful, although it did produce some results, especially from one group who had photographs and had even made a recording of themselves in a local studio - really someone's house - back in 1957. But generally I was surprised at how little there was of a personal nature, although like me some people had kept their skiffle records and sheet music from the Fifties. Perhaps this dearth of a personal record reflects the days before so many teenagers had access to equipment such as cameras, tape player/recorders, and computers. Perhaps I was just unlucky with those I made contact with, as one skiffler I later talked to over the phone had some sort of scrapbook and promised to send me photocopied material, but it never materialised. Interestingly, one skiffler's mother had kept a diary - known as the family archive - and he was able to check dates with it. My contributors were a source of material but there was no consistency about what was available from them.

My second approach was to look at local studies collections. I had made my interest in skiffle material quite well known in our professional press but only received one

unsolicited reply, from the local studies librarian at Leicestershire Record Office. It had a popular music cuttings collection that covered the Fifties and the librarian there sent me photocopies of items relating to skiffle, so Leicestershire figures quite a lot in one chapter in my book. Other libraries referred me to unindexed newspapers when I made enquiries directly to them. One library in Northern Ireland, however, which indexed its local newspaper, sent me a list of index entries and I was able to order photocopies. I approached a number of libraries, museums and other organisations that had sound archives but only one, the Scottish Music Information Centre, had any recordings of groups of which I was able to order a copy.

Implications for local studies

What my experience in one area of popular culture seemed to show is that local studies librarians need to be more concerned with local popular cultural activities, including music-making, of their community, and not just those which reflect high culture. There also seems to be a tendency, in collecting local studies material, to ignore the activities of the young. Why is oral history generally concerned with the old, and visual recording largely with occupations and arts and crafts? Why was nobody recording what the young were up to in the Fifties? Perhaps it was simply not seen as history. But local studies librarians must be concerned with the present as well as the past. The problem, also reflected in students of local studies, is, to exaggerate to some extent, to get them to take an interest in anything much after Queen Victoria's death.

It is, of course, not sufficient to collect without organising access to the contents of the material, even if that is done in retrospect. I hope that my enquiry set people in libraries asking themselves why they could not produce material on a major local phenomenon of popular culture in the Fifties. Libraries today are under so much pressure that it may not have occurred to them. Nevertheless if local studies collections are to reflect the local community they must be all inclusive in their approach. The young must have equal standing with the old, and local aspects of popular movements and cultures equal standing with more traditional concerns. It is not, to take newspapers as an example, that material was not collected but that collections were not organised to reflect the broadest possible range of enquiries, including those related to popular culture.

How many local studies collections today are looking to the future and collecting the documents, sounds and images of the local rock, jazz or folk group? This example of popular music, which happens to be my own particular interest, is of course only one topic among many; others will have their own views about gaps in the popular culture coverage of local studies collections. The main point is that this aspect of life should be properly represented in these collections.

Michael Dewe is a member of the LSG Welsh Branch committee.

Editor's note: This article originated as a paper at UmbrellA 5, Manchester, July 1999, where it was the keynote address for LSG's theme of "Popular Culture".

MARKETING THE LOCAL STUDIES COLLECTION: SOME OBSERVATIONS.

Elizabeth Melrose

What do we mean by the term 'marketing'? A recent course advertised in the Library Association Record was entitled *Putting marketing ideas into practice*. The day included sessions on ...*choosing your marketing messages...tasks, projects and action*.

Nowhere in the job description given to me when I applied for my last information and local studies post was the word 'marketing'. There was a lot about developing and co-ordinating, applying standards, training, selecting material, and promoting the County Library as a major source of information of all kinds, but 'marketing' did not appear. If it was considered at all, it was part of the useful catch-all paragraph about the performance of other duties, commensurate with the designation and grading of the post, which might be from time to time be approved by the County Librarian.

There is always plenty of promotional work to do, however. Is this what we are thinking of when we speak about marketing? In my view marketing is a wider concept, of which promotion is just one part. I shall come back to this later.

Promotion

The Library Association is celebrating 150 years of public libraries this year. All this time librarians have been collecting and promoting local history collections not just for themselves but to share with people who have a genuine interest. Steady acquisition has built main central local studies collections into what can indeed be called major local research collections. Branch libraries were less well endowed, but have in recent times been stocked with photocopies backed up by standard texts and phone lines to librarians and experts in the locality.

It is very rare for a local studies librarian to neglect the promotion of the collections. The pages of the local press report the way in which local studies librarians invite the public to come into the department and the way they take collections into the community. Among the many examples here are just a few:

- prints and illustrations always create interest: journalists and television companies, for instance, frequently request photographs for their articles and programmes.
- local studies librarians contribute to local history magazines in their area, or use information from their collections to write about local personalities.
- they may produce publications such as local history books, calendars, postcards and facsimile reproductions of old histories and directories to encourage further studies - and perhaps generate donations.
- they continually give talks about resources in their collections, offer training sessions to the public and contribute to WEA and academic history courses.

Even with all this and while attending to the constant stream of pupils, students and researchers coming into the department, local studies librarians do go into the

community outside their libraries, for local studies is a means of reaching individuals and groups who are not traditional library users. For instance, the librarian from Longsight library in Manchester led guided local history walks in the area, while in Merthyr Tydfil the local studies librarian organised displays in every shopfront in the main street and in York the *Photograph your street* competition resulted in 1000 entries and a big addition of illustrations to the collection. Scotland and Northern Ireland have each established Local Studies Weeks, with many libraries providing activities on a common theme. Local studies librarians are now involved in publicising their collections through web sites to widen their audience: the Knowsley (Merseyside) site has gained national recognition and the EARL *Familia* site gives genealogists remote insight into the family history holdings of the majority of library authorities.

Local Studies librarians are conscious of all the varied aspects of their communities. They have branched out from the traditional (and popular) research subjects such as the history of the parish or particular ecclesiastical buildings - for instance at the Umbrella 5 conference the Local Studies Group presented a programme on popular culture including research and sources on cricket, skiffle and newspaper advertisements.

All this is promotion but is it part of marketing? There are many activities which are passed off as marketing our service, but which are only part of the Service Plan. Why should we be considering the question at all?

Times are not easy and the effects of local government reorganisation have still not been overcome. In many authorities service points have been closed or hours of opening reduced, as has funding for acquisitions. Four years ago a simple survey across local studies libraries in the North West, Lancashire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, indicated a wide range of concerns about reduced working hours, shared or low staffing levels, cramped storage, and lack of funding to keep up with an ever-increasing public demand for local studies material. Developments which librarians felt they could not implement were more work with schools, introduction of new technology, improvements in stock and finding aids, publishing programmes and conservation work. Outreach by staff had decreased and those who still gave talks or organised displays felt that they could not increase this work.

Promotional work, therefore, is suffering. Local studies librarians want to publicise their services to all sectors of society, but how they do it varies to a large extent according to the resources of the particular library authority. In this situation there must be a greater emphasis on pre-planning, rather than simply responding to events, and promotional activities must be seen to be effective relative to the amount of work which goes into them. We can no longer be amateurs.

It is important to stress that there has been a noticeable upsurge of interest in local history in recent years. Ten years ago the estimated annual figure for public visits to museums was over fifty million and a recent estimate suggests that there are around 1500 local history societies in the country, with many others devoted to related disciplines such as archaeology and family history. There are, too, many courses and lectures advertised. Even if the numbers of members of societies and courses

who are actively researching and using the resources of our libraries, archives and museums is far less than we have allowed ourselves to believe, especially when we are particularly busy, it does constitute a pressure on staff time and energy.

In any community the proliferation of material in so many formats today may be produced by a small number of enthusiasts, but the less committed happily attend local history fairs and reminiscence exhibitions. They may later come into a local studies department. History can be a passive hobby - but do we not want our collections to be used more actively? Who are we not reaching?

Marketing

There has been a shift in the perception of marketing. In areas of the so-called service sector marketing has often been ignored, but it is foolish to think that because we work in a service sector we need not consider the concept. Services to the public, information and communication are a special kind of product, but what differences there are from, for instance, the commercial sector may be differences of degree and of emphasis. In our case, marketing local studies in a businesslike way could bring income - for which there is a serious need. Marketing the service may gain increased funding by, for instance, impressing local councillors.

Again, we cannot ignore the fact that competition has increased. For instance, the North Yorkshire Trading Standards Unit has always had an assertive approach. At the last reorganisation it took over responsibility for the County's Register Offices. It closed some of the country offices but expanded the main Office in Harrogate as a Family Records Centre and genealogists are now charged £18.00 for a six hour session. If we do not market ourselves we will lose out to other organisations - societies and bodies such as Barnardo's Image Archive or the History Units at Hull College and the University of York. Local history magazines are full of their enterprises, many now rewarded with lottery grants. We must market our resources and cooperate with such groups as a principal partner. It is also true that we can no longer consider that we are reaching all sectors of the community - in an article on researching local history in *Local History Magazine* in 1998 local historian Simon Fowler shows lack of awareness of what a local collection really is, and there must be many others who are less than aware of the wealth of material held in local studies departments.

There is the need for a professional approach to marketing. Promotion, however good it is, and how wide-ranging, is only one side of marketing. All promotional effort must be part of a marketing strategy that targets its efforts and identifies the benefits to users and to the library. Marketing is about deducing what the customer wants and doing our best to supply it. It is about asking customers what they want and sincerely trying to deliver it. It is about concentrating, not on ourselves as custodians, but on our role as intermediary giving access to information. It is about customer focus.

We cannot afford not to market both our collections and our knowledge, however busy we are already. It takes time and effort to devise a complete marketing plan and to involve all members of staff in this, but if we decide to withdraw from the effort

this has to be a conscious decision, thought through and backed with solid arguments. A more astute policy is to decide what can be achieved within a strategy that can be regularly reviewed. We need a plan which informs staff and end users about what our aims are. What will the library hope to gain and, even more important, can the effort be justified in the long term? What will be the benefits to the customer? We need a blueprint based on accurate knowledge:

- we need to know who our users are now, and who they could be
- why do they wish to visit the library? Where else might they go? How often have we given talks on resources, only to hear the response 'I didn't know you had all that information'? How many of the audience have never even considered coming into a library?
- we need to understand the curiosity and needs of customers and have an understanding of their backgrounds - what questions are they asking, and what questions would they like to ask?

We need to have a complete understanding of our local studies collections: for instance

- what material do we care for in the department, and what kind of promotions can this material support?
- what future subject theme could the material support that may not have been considered in the past, some new or contemporary matter?

We need to plan any enterprise for a definite perceived need rather than a presumed one and we must be honest. There are many reasons for compiling a local studies book or mounting a display or hosting a speaker and some of these may be unrelated to our main plan. Discussion about a potential publication must include consideration of likely sales and an indication of its relevance to the public, for instance, rather than personal interest or career development. The needs of the community and our users are paramount: we must listen as well as talk to them.

We must exercise imagination, because consumer statistics and surveys tell us more about the past than the future. Local studies is not just about history - we have to think about what might be important in the future to the community and be prepared for this. Will GM modified crops and their effect on an agricultural region, or relations with Kosovar refugees be topics that will be asked for in years to come? What kinds of enquiries might be spawned by the advances of remote E-mail access? We must try to forecast future local studies developments that must be safeguarded by the material that is collected today. How much will we be affected by the internet, so widely used by genealogists today? We must be ready to look at new technological innovations as they occur to see whether we can make use of them.

We need to know what resources are at our disposal:

- what will the departmental budget allow? This is reality, because however we crimp and cut we will not be able to accomplish everything. There are, therefore, decisions to be made on the basis of the needs of the community, whether they come into the library or not; and on the basis of the scope of the collection, present and near-future - near-future because collections are organic.

Promotion can encourage donations which fill gaps in stock, which can lead to greater promotion, perhaps with a different emphasis or to a different section of the public.

- we need to place our marketing plan high in the list of library policy objectives, stressing the necessity for enough funding to undertake tasks that will prove the worth of the collections to the public. Only in this way can we ensure that standards are maintained and interest shown in local studies projects.
- we need to review recent developments in technology that can assist us to give those who are disadvantaged in some way equal access to their heritage. The success of the electronic local studies picture galleries developed by several authorities - for example Durham 2000 - show that not only are these initiatives popular, but that they address the interests of nostalgia, of the many customers with limited vision and of remote users.
- we must not neglect that modern necessary bugbear - the bidding for funding from any available source, time-consuming and frustrating though this can be.

Within any strategy, however, the key to useful marketing is people. We must *market* local studies marketing:

- we must market the plan internally to our own colleagues and other members of staff, some of whom will be trying to protect their own areas of interest and their own departments. We must persuade them to our side and cooperate with them. There is plenty of scope, for example, in the field of oral reminiscence work with the elderly with colleagues in Special Services or national curriculum work with schoolchildren with schools and children's librarians.
- we must liaise and cooperate with other organisations such as libraries, museums, record offices, council planning departments, the National Trust and so on. Advantages of cross-sector working include the opportunity for developing new contacts and relationships and learning from other disciplines.

There is a constant need for evaluation and review. In North Yorkshire, for instance, the information/local studies librarians group obtained funding from the cross-county marketing group to have posters and bookmarks printed for our specific Year of Reading month - Reading for Information - last February, but in retrospect these were not as successful as we had anticipated. Evaluation of such events is essential, so that we can learn from them, and adapt the plan accordingly.

Marketing is essentially dynamic and forward looking. It is more than the mere promotion of the local studies collections and yet it includes this important aspect of our work. It requires thought to produce a local studies plan that is realistic and yet leaves room for innovation and serendipity. It concentrates on the end-user, considers the resources and creates an atmosphere where the collections can be shared and new readers motivated. It may even generate income. Above all, successful marketing of the collections underlines the role of the community and the local studies librarian within the library service as joint-heirs and keepers of a common heritage.

Elizabeth Melrose is Information Services Adviser, North Yorkshire Libraries and Chairman of LSG.

Editor's note: this article is based on a paper given at a one-day school on Marketing organised by the LSG's Midlands and Anglia Branch in May 1999, where it was the keynote address.

A QUESTION OF CRICKET

Peter Wynne Thomas

When I was asked to give a talk at UmbrellA on how local history librarians tackle customers with cricketing queries, my reaction was immediate. I rang up the main library in Nottingham and fired the question at the person who picked up the phone in the Local History Department. The answer came back "I just pass the query on to Peter Wynne-Thomas at Trent Bridge", so that is why I am here. What I am going to talk about today is my current project, which, as it happens, is all about local history.

A couple of years back a statement from Lord's indicated that 2.4 million people in England and Wales played cricket, of whom 1.5 million were children. Statistics of this kind always irritate me, but it did seem a lot. Then, in July 1997, Tony Woodhouse, the most erudite of cricket historians, wandered into the Trent Bridge library and said "That's a lovely ground you've got at Thurgarton." I'm ashamed to say that I'd never been to Thurgarton's ground, though I'd driven through the village a dozen times.

The 2.4 million figure and Tony's chance comment joined forces to persuade me that I should undertake a survey of cricket grounds in Nottinghamshire - I might not be able to tell the number of cricketers, but the grounds are static and can be counted.

However, a couple of early expeditions around the county changed my project to some extent - there seemed to have been so many grounds which had simply disappeared that I decided that on my travels I should count both existing grounds and those which were no more, logging down the present use of the land for those which had gone. I also enrolled my wife in the scheme, both to drive the car and to take photographs of what we discovered. With my architectural hat on I drew plans of each ground and took the basic measurements of land and pavilions. The survey began in January 1998, and we puzzled the villagers of the county somewhat - to stop a stray pedestrian in mid-January and demand directions to the cricket field is odd, but when the village stopped playing cricket fifty years ago, it raises eyebrows.

Now, in June 1999, the job of visiting all the 204 villages in the county and searching every suburb of each town, as well as attacking anyone and everyone who might recall local cricket fifty or sixty years ago, is nearly complete. I don't think it will ever be totally complete, because so many local firms seem to have had cricket teams in the 1940s and 1950s, playing on a field at the back of the factory: now, very often, the firms have long gone and the factories have been demolished or changed utterly. Shortly, however, we will be able to say with some certainty what has happened to cricket since 1945, at least in Nottinghamshire.

This research had some amusing spin-offs. In the course of a preliminary article on our work last year the reporter casually noted that we normally do a complete day's research at a time and stop at a pub wherever we are for a pub lunch. This offhand comment was picked up by the newspaper's Food and Drink columnist, who then

produced a two page spread of our researches into pub lunches, complete with a large photograph of us eating one! The story didn't even end there. Tony Francis, who edits a TV programme called 'In the Heart of the Country' picked up our rambles and we spent a day with a TV crew, alternating between eating Ploughman's Lunches at five pubs and attempting to play cricket on present and former cricket grounds - the middle of a ploughed field and the middle of a street being examples. The programme has not yet been transmitted and if seen at all will probably emerge in Denis Norden's disasters series.

Now to return to research. Back in the 1950s I started work on my first book - the biographies of all the cricketers who had represented Nottinghamshire. Of the four hundred players, about a quarter were in their time well known and they had been written about. The other three hundred were my main concern. In order to build up background information I set about combing every Nottingham paper from 1770 extracting all notices related to cricket. In those days it was easy. In the main Nottingham library in Shakespeare Street a room was lined with bound copies of newspapers from the 1760s onwards and I could go through them. After several years of days here and there I had twenty or thirty exercise books filled with cricketing notes up to the 1880s. I feel sorry for present day researchers who cannot now do what I did, as nowadays looking at the original papers is rarely permitted, and sitting for seven or eight hours at a microfilm reader trying to decipher blurred images of 6 point type setting must deter the stoutest investigator.

Having obtained background on virtually all my Nottinghamshire players, I then listed them under the towns and villages from whence they came and went to each locality banging on doors to find people who knew them - sons, widows, grandsons and others. It was a slow progress, though I found the phone book was a help as were electoral registers. The story of my researches and the people I met in the course of ten years or so is perhaps more interesting than the 350 pages of biography I had completed by 1970 - and that was only cricketers who played before the first world war. I bought dozens of birth and death certificates - about five shillings (25p) each in those days. Today the army of family historians have to pay 25 times as much. In those days in the 1960s one walked into Somerset House and woke up a uniformed attendant to get a form and bumped into an occasional solicitors clerk or historian. Now on a slack day one can just about find space to open a ledger.

No one knew what to do with my 350 pages of manuscript. A book like this had never been written before - how many people would buy it? The County Cricket Club had no money for such projects. However, I was fortunate that the club Chairman was interested, and he happened to be the Company Secretary at Boots the Chemists. Provided I paid the costs the Boots printing works - which normally did bottle labels, diaries and calendars and so on - would print the book. It was very well produced and 250 copies cost me £1000. I advertised the work at £5.00 each, and it took me ten years to sell out. I notice that today a copy in a dealer's catalogue is priced at £120 - I wish I still had a few in the attic!

From that book grew the million word 'Who's Who of Cricketers' for which I joined with two other authors and dozens of helpers to give basic details of about 90% of

the cricketers who have played in a first-class cricket match in England since 1864. We are actively trying to track down the 'lost' 10% and since the book was published in 1983 have managed to cut the figure to nearer 5%. So when someone comes into the public library and says "My great uncle played cricket for Somerset, can you tell me anything about his career?", the librarian first checks the "Who's Who". If you can't find the person listed, beware: it doesn't necessarily mean that he didn't ever play for Somerset, so don't send the enquirer off with a flea in his ear.

You have to be careful over enquiries. Each year I talk to several thousand schoolchildren when their school brings them on a visit to Trent Bridge, and they are brought into the library. Some twenty years back, when I was a tyro at such events, a group of schoolchildren with their teacher were in the library. 'Tell us about my relative, Joe Bloggs, who played for Nottinghamshire', he asked. 'No one called Joe Bloggs ever played for Nottinghamshire' I replied, without thinking. There was an embarrassed silence. He had clearly told his class all about his 'famous' relative. Hastily I said 'I'll check again', but the damage had been done.

All the counties over the years have played matches which have largely been forgotten, rarely reported and have contained one or two local players to make up the squad. - benefit games, charity games and games during the second world war and so on. When someone comes into the library nowadays with a similar 'bogus' claim, my immediate interest is to discover from where the enquirer obtained the idea that 'Joe Bloggs' played for the County; there usually is a worthwhile tale behind their answer, and one never knows whether it might uncover some 'lost' cricketer who really did play in a serious county game.

Peter Wynne-Thomas is a cricket writer and is Archivist and Librarian for Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club at Trent Bridge, as well as being Secretary of the Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians.

This article is based on a paper originally given at UmbrellA 5 in Manchester, July 1999.

HELP WANTED

Yvonne Millbank, of 90 Tirohanga Road, Lower Hutt, New Zealand, writes that she is currently researching local studies collections in New Zealand, and in particular the collection at Lower Hutt Community Library. In connection with this she would be interested to contact anyone anywhere who has done research or a survey on end user studies of local studies collections. In particular she is interested in who uses the collections, what they use in the collections, what they have not been able to find, and what they use the material for. Would anyone who can help please contact Yvonne direct: as well as the address above she has an email address: millbank@xtra.co.nz.

COMMUNITY HISTORY AND IDENTITY

Jan Horrell

Exchange of information provided the impetus for the second event jointly organised by Plymouth Library and Information Services, the City Museum and Art Gallery and Plymouth and West Devon Record Office which took place in August 1999. This followed up a week-long "Festival of Local History" held in September 1998 which had presented a varied programme of talks and events culminating in a two day Local Studies Fair where local organisations were invited to raise awareness of their activities with the general public. This year previous Festival participants and other organisations were invited to attend a seminar that aimed to present a forum that enabled local agencies and organisations to discuss current developments and the format of future public events.

The intention of the programme was to present a range of projects and developments that were based within the city. The subjects were varied. The City Archivist outlined the benefits of the implementation of a CAIRS system at the Record Office, and the City Museum introduced *Tales of the City*, a locally collected and stored sound archive that will link with the development of a contemporary collection policy for artefacts. There were also a series of shorter presentations which considered the role of oral history from the point of view of an enthusiast and for use in a series of local radio programmes, the changes that E-mail and Internet use have brought to family history research, and the integration of the information role of the regional Film and Sound Archive.

All participants actively contributed to the discussion sessions that were particularly aimed at structuring the next Festival of Local History in March 2000. The public Local History Fair will be staged again as all representatives felt that this was a useful way of involving and informing a wider audience. It is hoped that another day seminar can be arranged to bring together organisations with the spectrum of interests that contribute to the local studies field.

The organisers found the day stimulating and encouraging. A number of small initiatives have been started including the collaboration of the library service with the local branch of the Devon Family History Society to produce a resources leaflet.

In March 2000 we shall be building on the experiences of this year and aim to move towards an annual event at which we are facilitators rather than organisers.

Jan Horrell is City Reference and Information Librarian, Plymouth.

LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARIAN OF THE YEAR 2000

The Dorothy McCulla Memorial Award, organised by the LA Local Studies Group, is the award for outstanding work in local studies librarianship. The winner this year will be presented with £100.00 and a specially designed certificate. Nominations are invited from anyone who knows of somebody who has made an outstanding contribution to local studies work: the judges' main criteria include good overall service provision, excellent promotional work and innovation. The nominee must be a member of the Local Studies Group.

For further details and a nomination form, send for an information pack to Patrick Baird, Hon. Secretary, Local Studies Group, Birmingham Central Library, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3HQ. Tel 0122 303 2615, fax 0121 233 4458. Email: patrick.baird@birmingham.gov.uk

This is your chance to ensure that your candidate is nominated for this prestigious award - send for your information pack now. Closing date for nominations: 31st March 2000.



Eileen Hume of Knowsley Libraries, winner of the 1999 Dorothy McCulla Award, (Right) with Jill Martin, the Group's Liaison Officer with LA headquarters, at the Award presentation at UmbrellA 5.

NOTES AND NEWS

Shropshire County Council's Records and Research Centre has produced its first annual review of 'Shropshire's Past Unfolded', a millennium-funded project to preserve and improve access to Shropshire's documentary heritage. The Heritage Lottery Fund has provided £662,000 over three years to the project to allow the cataloguing and conservation of a large number of collections from among the archives held by the Shropshire Records and Research Service - over 3,800 boxes in all. The collections included in this current project are all asked for by users, and without this work the documents cannot be used and many will rot away. This Review deals with the achievements of the first year. As part of the matching funding required, over forty volunteers have done more than 2000 hours of work during the year. The review shows that the amount of work undertaken and completed so far is impressive. For further information contact Samantha Mager, Project Leader, Shropshire Records and Research Centre, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ, tel (01473) 255350, or E-mail m.mckenzie@shropshire-cc.gov.uk.

Backtracks is the title of the new newsletter of Camden Local Studies and Archives. To be published twice a year, it aims to keep users informed about current news and future developments. This first four-page issue contains a wide range of short items about the service - for instance that in 1998-9 15,302 enquiries were received and that 3793 items were added to stock. There is also an item on conservation of material in domestic circumstances - mostly commonsense precautions - and an appeal for people to think about offering items to the library before throwing them out. There is also news of the Camden History Society's Millennium History Project.

Tameside Local Studies Library also produces a regular news bulletin, the latest of which includes a wide range of short items from digitisation to census indexing and information about courses and local societies. The Local Studies Library has also announced the winners of the 1999 Tameside Family History Award. The judges considered family history studies and finding aids created for use by family historians and decided to award two first prizes, one for each category. Pauline Storrs gained her prize for her study of her family after many years of research, while the other First Prize went to George Clark for his mammoth index of the registers of St. Paul's Church, Stalybridge and his painstaking record of the graves in the graveyard. A special prize was awarded to 13-year-old James Bolton for his study of the history of brick making. All the studies and finding aids submitted for the competition have been added to Stalybridge's local studies collection. The library also reports that about 3000 people attended a Family History Day at the Local Studies Library. As well as providing talks for visitors the day was designed to encourage people to volunteer for a project to index the 1891 Census for Tameside and to draw attention to some of the newly available sources for family history at the Local Studies Library.

Devon Library and Information Services was instrumental in bringing together ten heritage collections in Exeter to mount an exhibition of more than 300 items reflecting both the large and the small worlds of the written word in Exeter over the past two millennia. The exhibition brought together items from all ten collections, including a time-line of documents starting with an ABC scratched on a tile in Exeter in the first century and finishing with a series of ABCs written by children in a first school in Exeter during 1999. In between was a series of ephemeral items on

a wide range of topics reflecting daily life in Devon. Reflecting the wider range of ideas was a series of twenty major themes running alphabetically from "Art and architecture" to "Younger readers", all displaying historically significant items. A catalogue of the exhibition has been published by Exeter Museum at £4.95. A website was also prepared for the exhibition and this is to be expanded as an educational resource: the address is <http://www.devon-cc.gov.uk/library/locstudy/millexpo.html>.

Charles Dunn, who many will remember as a director of Riley, Dunn and Wilson Ltd, has now joined the senior management team of Blissett Bookbinders, based in Acton, West London. He will be responsible for the marketing of their library services throughout Britain and with consulting with libraries in Scotland, Wales, East and West Midlands and the North East of England. He can be contacted by E-mail: charles.dunn@blissetts.com or by phone on 01422 246848 or mobile 07712 107298. Blissett Bookbinders will shortly be celebrating eighty years of continuous supply of library binding services to UK library services and the library supply trade.

In the recently announced Library Association/Emerald Intelligence + Fulltext Public Relations and Publicity Awards, Dundee City Council was the winner in the category for promotional campaigns with a budget of under £250.00: the award was for *The Photographic Collection, Dundee*. The purpose of the campaign was to promote Dundee's collection of local photographs dating from the late 1800s to the present day.

Most local studies libraries today have close relationships with local museums, and may therefore be interested in this recently published work on Wales (*Figgis, N.P., compiler. Welsh Prehistory: catalogue of accessions in the county and local museums of Wales*). It lists all the Welsh pre-Roman material in the 33 county and local museums in Wales and in over 30 museums in the rest of Britain and Ireland. Designed as a versatile resource aid to help researchers at all levels, it includes all the prehistoric remains in the listed museums, mostly with bibliographical references. In many cases Museums Registers and indexes have been collated, transcribed and presented as a formal List of Prehistoric Accessions for the first time, to produce a comprehensive, fully indexed single-volume catalogue covering nearly seventy holdings throughout Britain. There is a special discount price of £9.75 including p&p for libraries and it may be obtained direct from the publishers, Atelier Productions, 2 Bontfaen, Forge, Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 8RN (Tel 01654 703 626 or 0171 435 5628).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

LSG North West Branch is holding a Day School entitled *Looking forward to looking back*. There will be four papers by experienced local historians: Alan Crosby on "The amateur, the professional and the internet: local history since 1850"; John Tiernan on "Twelve good and lawful men.....and Miss Procter"; Geoff Timmins on "Local history teaching: issues for librarians and teachers"; and Diana Winterbotham on "In me, past, present and future meet": local studies libraries at the millennium". Date: 28th March 2000.

Place: Chorley Library, Lancashire.

Contact: Susan A. Halstead, 8 Pinewood Drive, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 6UG
tel 01254 385977, E-mail susanhalstead@hotmail.com
or at Burnley Library tel 01282 437115 ext 120.

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

Copyright in public libraries. 4th ed, revised and updated by Sandy Norman. LAPL, 1999, 94pp. £9.95. ISBN 1 85604 325 8.

Since 1996 there have been big changes in the laws relating to copyright both nationally and internationally. This work has been completely revised and rewritten since the last edition to take into account the adoption of WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation) treaties and the draft EU directive on copyright in the Information Society, and it also covers changes in UK law due to the implementation of the EU directive on Databases. The work is logically laid out and leads the reader clearly through the ramifications of the UK Copyright Act. There is a section on possible changes to legislation due to the controversial proposed EU copyright Directive. The interesting Case Study section has been expanded. While there is a disclaimer pointing out that this work cannot claim that the statements made are definitive and do not constitute legal advice, this useful volume will be of great help to librarians needing a handy guide.

With the increasing emphasis on collecting material of the present as well as the past in local collections, and the expansion of copyright date limits, copyright law will have an increasing impact on local studies collections. Apart from the value of the general information, the 'Miscellaneous Advice' chapter includes a short section specifically on local studies material which reminds readers of the importance of establishing the copyright status of collections, including donations. There is a helpful list of suggestions to try to make sure that your position is unambiguous - the last point is 'Seek legal advice if at all unsure'.

Marcan, P. Greater London history and heritage handbook. Peter Marcan Publications, 1999, 184pp. £14.95 + £2.00 p&p from PO Box 3158, London SE1 4RA. ISBN 1 871811 15.

This is a much revised and expanded new edition of the work previously published as *Greater London Local History Directory*, which had editions in 1987 and 1993. It gives descriptive entries for over 600 organisations within the 32 London Boroughs, with the local studies library always coming first in each borough's list, followed by museums. A wide range of organisations such as historical and amenity societies is included, and the boroughs are now arranged in five geographical regions within London. Following the Boroughs section is one on London-wide and national organisations and a list of relevant publishers and small presses.

One of the major features of this work (and of its predecessors) is the attempt at lists of publications from the organisations concerned, including in some cases contents lists of organisation's journals. The whole work is considerably different from the last edition and is up to date enough to show the new London telephone numbers. At 182 pages compared with the former 112 it includes many more entries: in total 867 organisations are listed compared with 348. Publications listed are from 1993 onwards. It should be noted that the compiler warns readers that all the predecessor works should be retained in order to build up a bibliography of 'non-commercial' publications back to the 1960s: all the previous works and editions are

still in print. It is also well worth noting that the price of the present work, despite its huge increase in size, is the same as that of 1993. How does he do it?

Trubshaw, R.N. How to write and publish local history. Heart of Albion Press, 1999. 122pp. £9.95. ISBN 1 872883 33 8.

There are plenty of books today which tell people how to do local history. But what happens after the research is finished? Many books have a short section on disseminating the results, but this useful work starts at the end of the research process and goes on from there. Its aim is to guide the novice through the stages necessary to produce and promote professional-looking books and booklets on local history. It is a very practical volume, starting with the writing process and then moving on to a very thorough and detailed description of all the stages of publication of books and booklets. The treatment seems very thorough and is based on the author's own experience. It is wide ranging (the 'writing' section spends five pages on citation and references, and the need for compilation of indexes is also covered), and legal matters such as copyright are dealt with briefly. The practical side of production includes typesetting, dealing with the printer, publicity including the launch, and selling, including trade terms. Overall, though much of the information can be found elsewhere, this book is written specifically for the local historian, and it clearly explains the processes involved and gives helpful advice. It would be an excellent manual to show to readers who are thinking of self-publishing.

Chelsea settlement and bastardy examinations, 1733-1766, ed. by Tim Hitchcock and John Black. London Record Society, 1999. xxii, 177pp. £20.00 + £3.50 p&p from Heather Creaton, London Record Society, c/o Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU. ISBN 0 900952 33 4. (London Record Society Publications, vol 33).

Hertfordshire lay subsidy rolls, 1307 and 1344, ed. by Janice Brooker and Susan Flood. xxix, 204pp. £20.30, ISBN 0 9523779 3 4. (Hertfordshire Record Publications vol 14). 'Observations of weather': the weather diary of Sir John Wittewrong of Rothamstead, 1684-1689, ed. By Margaret Harcourt Williams and John Stevenson. lvii, 79pp. £20.40. ISBN 0 9523779 4 2. (Hertfordshire Record Publications vol 15). Both published by Hertfordshire Record Society and obtainable from the Hon. Treasurer, 14 Westbury Close, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 2NE. Prices include postage.

The establishment of Record Societies dates from the nineteenth century and from that time most have provided transcripts of primary sources on a particular area or topic, properly edited, so that they can be more widely used. By the middle of this century, doubts were being expressed about the viability of such societies, but in more recent years, presumably because of increasing interest in local and family history, new societies have been established, and their future seems more assured. Of the societies listed here, the London Record Society was founded in 1964 and the Hertfordshire one in 1985.

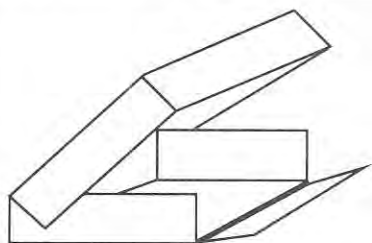
The London volume is concerned with poor relief, which was at least partly concerned with establishing the legal place of settlement of paupers and the paternity of bastard children. Here the registers concerned with Chelsea have been transcribed and this shows that during the period concerned 469 cases were heard. The editors provide an introduction explaining the legal system and comments on

evidence provided by the enquiries, for instance migration both inside and outside London. The index covers persons, places and some subjects.

The two Hertfordshire volumes cover two very different topics. Vol. 14 transcribes the Hertfordshire Lay Subsidy Rolls of 1307 and 1334. A lay subsidy was essentially a tax for a specific purpose levied on the property of the lay (ie not clerical) population, and these were therefore levied at irregular intervals. Effectively, then, these rolls list the wealthier inhabitants of Hertfordshire in the early fourteenth century, arranged place by place. The introduction deals with background to the documents and their evidential value to historians, in particular local historians. There is an index of places and subjects, and one of names.

By contrast, Hertfordshire's other volume contains the records of a private individual with a specific interest. It briefly describes the weather day by day at Rothamsted, along with information about seasons and crops, for instance, showing something of Sir John Wittewrong's agricultural activities. This is a fascinating record of the weather, and activities affected by it, between 1684 and 1689. There is a very full introduction, including a good deal of information about the weather generally in that period with tables and diagrams, together with an analysis of other topics dealt with in the diary, all of which help to give a picture of contemporary agriculture.

While all of these volumes are produced by local organisations and deal with local topics, all of them, both through their introductory matter and the sources themselves, are valuable to historians far outside their immediate catchment area for comparative purposes. All are well-produced hardbacks, well edited and are produced at reasonable prices. The Hertfordshire society records the assistance of various grants and donations towards the costs of publication.



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