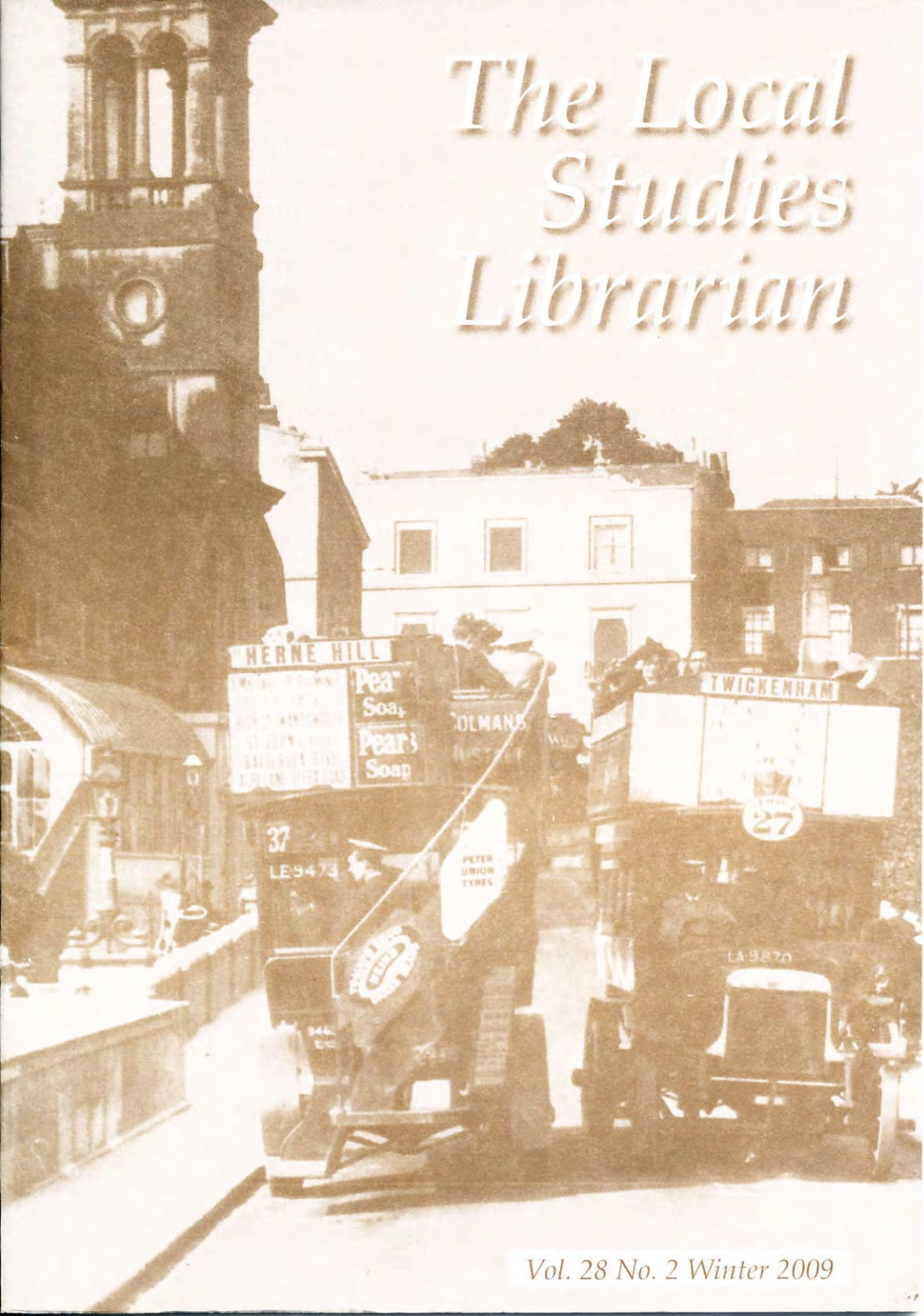


The Local Studies Librarian



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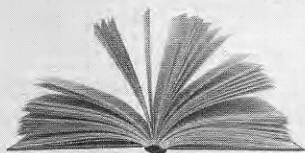
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EDITORIAL

The Local Studies Librarian is the main means of direct communication between members of LSG, because it is sent to all members: not everyone can be in a subgroup and the Committee cannot have members in every area, though it does have members from most parts of the country. The subgroups cover much of the country and they carry out their own activities, usually very successfully, and some papers from these meetings or day schools are sometimes published in LSL. But what is published depends on the editor finding out about activities and someone being willing to write reports. The editor cannot find out about every activity everywhere: he needs people to tell him about activities. He also needs offers of articles and reports, for instance of new developments in local studies libraries, whether they be new services, new buildings or new publications: communication cannot be all one way. LSL may be the "official" journal of record for LSG, but it is much more than this, and sharing of information between members can only be good for local studies. For instance the Editor would like to receive copies of library/local studies newsletters, the contents of which are often useful to others – an example is the *Sheffield History Reporter* and its note about the Archives Department's publication on conservation. Such publications might be printed or published on the web, as long as the editor is alerted to new issues, as Sheffield does. If you have any ideas for subjects for articles, please let him know. If you have ideas for day schools, contact the secretary of your subgroup or LSG Hon Secretary Helen Pye-Smith. Remember that meetings might be run in cooperation with another group.

Feedback from members is very important if the Committee is to meet their needs, but neither the Committee or the Editor receives much even when comments are specifically asked for. For instance we would still like to know the opinion of members about the possibility of electronic publication for LSL – the editor only received one comment.

Awards for local studies librarians can be at national level, such as the Walford Prize, or specifically within local studies, such as the McCulla Award (Local Studies Librarian of the Year) and the Alan Ball Awards for local studies publications by local authorities. The organisers of both of these are seriously concerned about the lack of entries in recent years. We know how overworked local studies staff are, but winning awards is excellent publicity both inside and outside your authority, so it is probably worthwhile taking a bit of time to think about the possibilities.

A further channel of communication is our website, which carries much useful information. Do have a look at it: the address is

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/localstudies>

This editorial may seem very heavy going, but communication is important. So, finally, the Group's officials and committee wish you all a happy and successful New Year.

LOCAL STUDIES, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY LIBRARIES IN SOLIHULL

Tracey Williams

At Solihull Libraries, we have been developing and refining a formula for using local studies with primary school classes visiting community libraries. Heritage and Local Studies staff, together with other specialist teams, are based at the Central Library, operating a 'hub-and-spoke' approach of support for community libraries, whose staff deliver a basket of library services at a local level.

It can be daunting for non-specialist staff to offer local studies visits to school groups as, although library staff are usually very experienced and confident in dealing with groups of children, they often feel that they do not have sufficiently detailed knowledge to be able to run local history sessions. However, with careful planning, it is possible to use sources in such a way that the sessions build on existing staff skills and confidence, with little local history knowledge actually being needed by library staff.

History teaching in schools has changed considerably over the years and the emphasis is now much more on cross-curricular links and on young people acquiring investigative and interpretative skills rather than having to remember facts and dates. This can help us in terms of offering library-based visits that focus on sources and historical enquiry. Sessions can be constructed in such a way that the children themselves use selected sources to complete short activities and report back with their findings, rather than library staff having to prepare a talk about the area's history.

Over the last three years, staff from the Central Library-based Solihull Heritage and Local Studies Service have been refining a model, which has been rolled out to community libraries in the borough following successful trials with school groups. Each of our twelve community libraries has a designated Community History Champion who has responsibility for tailoring the local studies offer in a way that is most relevant to their local community. This offer now includes the option of local studies school visits, and all of the champions have received training and access to support in selecting sources and creating their own local activities.

Format of the visits

The format of the visits is fairly simple and fits with a visit length of approximately one hour for a class of up to 30 children. The session begins with a brief introduction by library staff, outlining the planned activities and dividing the class up into groups of no more than 5 or 6 children. It is helpful if the class teacher is aware of this in advance and has already assigned the children into these groups and designated their teacher or parent helper.

Each of these groups then sits at a table on which are placed some local history sources, together with an information sheet about the sources and an activity sheet containing a list of tasks relevant to the source material. After

6 or 7 minutes, the activity ends and each group moves on to the next-table and a different activity. Once all of the groups have had chance to tackle all of the activities, the class comes back together and reports on what they have discovered.

The sessions seem to work well, especially with the physical movement between tables of activities, which prevents the children from becoming bored. Having short activities of only 6-7 minutes duration keeps the children's attention and varying the activities by using a range of sources maximises the chances of the children engaging with some, if not all, of the documents.

Sources and activities

Ideally, the range of sources should be selected after consultation with the teacher and a discussion of how the visit will link with what students are studying in the classroom. It is our experience that the information from teachers varies considerably, so library staff need to have a ready-prepared selection of activities that can be used off-the-shelf!

The activities are linked to skills that are identified in the Key Stage 2 curriculum, mostly using the theme of continuity and change in the local area. Key skills include chronological understanding, using historical vocabulary, studying a range of sources, asking and answering questions and recognising that our own lives are different from those of people in the past.

The reporting-back elements help to fulfil the requirement for students to communicate their knowledge and understanding. We also usually ask them to tell us one thing that they've learned that they will remember and tell other people back at school.

A simple activity that has been used in all of our sessions is to have undated extracts from a range of Ordnance Survey maps and ask students to put them into chronological order. For this to work well, especially with younger children, each of the map extracts needs to be at the same scale and cover an identical area. We have most of the county series maps in digital format, courtesy of colleagues in the Council's GIS Team, so it is fairly straightforward to import the image into Word or Publisher and crop the image as required. Our GIS colleagues have also been very helpful in supplying copies of current maps to fit the scale and area we need. They have also supplied us with two identical modern maps in colour and black and white, which is useful in emphasising that it is the information on the map that is important, and that documents in colour are not necessarily more recent.

This activity seems to work really well and can incorporate extension activities relating to finding symbols on the maps. Some teachers have said that using maps is especially helpful as it also covers elements of the geography curriculum at the same time. Other teachers have also said that the task sheets tie in with their literacy curriculum as regards creating and following instructions.

- Other activities we have used include: Finding the site of the library or school on a modern map, then finding the same site on the tithe map and looking up the details in an extract from the tithe apportionment to see who lived there and what the land was called.
- Comparing recent aerial photographs with a specially-created composite 1920s map covering the same area to see if ancient field patterns and field names from the tithe apportionment can still be identified.
- Reading entries from Edith Holden's *Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady* (written in a suburb of Solihull) and following the routes she walked and cycled on modern-day maps, comparing and contrasting her illustrations and observations with those of the children today.
- Using census returns to look at family size and make-up, occupations etc. and comparing that with households today.
- Comparing photographs of houses in a particular street with a building plan of a property in the same street to decide which, if any, is the property depicted in the plan and whether it was built exactly according to the design.
- Watching a promotional DVD by developers of a new village and assessing what they are trying to achieve and whether the village was built according to the artists' impressions
- Looking at aerial photos and maps on the Internet and comparing these with historical versions

Copies of the printed sources are printed onto A3 pages and are encapsulated to aid longevity. The page of information and the activity list of tasks are printed onto different, coloured A4 sheets, which are then laminated. These activity sources can then be retained in the community library and used as required. By adapting the task sheets and changing the questions, the same sources can then be used with different year groups.

Promoting the offer

We are now starting to increase the active promotion of our local studies offer to schools. Much of our success so far has been through direct approaches from schools and then word-of-mouth by teachers who have experienced the sessions and returned for repeat visits.

Solihull, in common with many authorities, has a local Grid for Learning and an element of this is the Schools' Extranet. This is a private network that teachers, support staff, parents and pupils can log onto in order to support the curriculum. Solihull Libraries already have an existing page on the Extranet for the Learning Resources and Advice Service (formerly Schools Library Service). In addition, Solihull Heritage and Local Studies Service now also has a presence on the site. The aim is to provide easily-accessible pages for teachers, pointing them to resources and support that may help them to develop lessons with a high degree of local content. An advisory teacher once said to me that the local study

should be the part of the curriculum that is the most relevant and engaging for students but that, in practice, is usually the area that is done least well, because of the work that needs to be done by teachers. By having a presence on the Extranet, the intention is to reduce the barriers to teachers by indicating what resources and support are on offer via their local community library and our website.

Duplication

In order to minimise the amount of duplicate editing that staff may have to do, the information on the Extranet is closely linked to that on the Council's website. For example, we wanted to make available to schools some casualty sheets filled in by cemetery staff during the Second World War. Realising that these would also be of interest to the general population, staff created web pages relating to local air raids and included digitised images of the casualty sheets as downloadable attachments – follow the link to 'Solihull in Wartime' from www.solihull.gov.uk/heritage to see the content. Our Extranet page on wartime Solihull also links to the website and also includes information more specific to schools as regards the services we offer, lesson ideas and other related material available on the Internet.

Comments

Feedback from library staff undertaking the school visit sessions has been extremely enthusiastic and positive. Any initial concern over the level of local history knowledge required has always disappeared once the first session is under way. Our experience is that these sessions are an extremely enjoyable experience for all concerned. The fast pace and change of sources mean that children are engaged and on-topic and the sessions can be a real source of wonder for the adult helpers, as well as the children. The format of reading/listening to instructions, discussing the tasks, using the sources to find answers and reporting back to the group suits all learning styles and enables most children and adult helpers to have a real learning experience. By holding the sessions in community libraries, the links between the school and the local community, past and present, can be emphasised and strengthened.

Tracey Williams is Local Studies Librarian, Solihull Heritage and Local Studies Service, e-mail: twilliams@solihull.gov.uk

BEATING THE CRUNCH: Delivering Local Studies and Heritage Library Services in Challenging Times

Anne Sharp

With little sign of the recession lifting, increasing pressures placed on local authority budgets, and ever more complex demands placed on local studies and archives services, how can we continue to maintain, develop and deliver these services to meet current and future demands? Do we admit defeat or do we explore other ways of doing things?

This article shares some of the challenges faced by South Tyneside Libraries, and steps we have taken to overcome the barriers and constraints.

South Tyneside, once part of County Durham, now standing alone within the Tyne and Wear conurbation, is geographically small, but with a comparatively large population and fascinating local heritage. The Great North Run leads some 54,000 runners to the stunning coastline at South Shields every year. Heritage and Tourism are recognised as vital to the local economy. The riverside can be alluring and intriguing, with clues to the former businesses along the river and the industries that have declined and disappeared: fishing, boatbuilding, coalmining, salt-panning, glass-making, chemical industries, and shipbuilding. Part of the Durham coalfield, Tyneside drew people from Wales, Scotland and Ireland, to work in the coalfields and other industries, and to take advantage of other opportunities which grew up alongside. The river carried coals from Newcastle, to London and beyond, and brought sailors to Tyneside, for work and training.

When interviewed for the post of Local Studies Librarian in 2005 the strengths and weakness of the service were made known:

Strengths

The collection is a wonderful treasure trove, with printed works covering Northumbria generally and South Tyneside specifically. The South Tyneside collection comprises photographs, maps, ephemera, newspapers, microforms and audio visual materials. There are five microfilm reader printers, one fiche reader, and four People's Network terminals. All printed works are catalogued on card. Many local printed works have been indexed on card. The department is within the central library, and is open six days a week, with late night opening to 7pm on four days. The Local Studies Library is situated in the basement of the Central Library, in South Shields, which is on the metro line from Newcastle and Sunderland, and accessible from the north side of the river Tyne by ferry. There is a car park outside the library. The department can be reached by stairs or lift, and the service is enhanced by the proximity of a cafe, toilets and library theatre. There are two full time members of staff, a librarian and senior library assistant.

The services of the library are well used by family historians, local historians,

schoolchildren, students, teachers, councillors, other librarians, museums and archives, planners, architects, authors, and browsers.

Weaknesses

Non-book materials seemed to disappear into a chasm. While the knowledge of staff within the department was recognised, the collection remained a mystery to the uninitiated. There were backlogs of photographs and donations waiting to be sifted, indexed and catalogued. Many items of the collection, including the card index, were not publicly accessible, for reasons of security and lack of space. Retrieving items for enquiries often necessitated leaving the department unattended. There was insufficient capacity within the department to make a meaningful impression on the backlogs, and insufficient capacity within the rest of the library service to bring additional staffing in. The option of disappearing into the stack to sort, index and catalogue was not an option in the climate of project and partnership working. So we turned to the bigger picture to look for solutions. We needed to create a balance.

Opportunities to meet the Challenges

The first three months in post provided time to take stock, to get to know the collection, how it was used, and individuals and teams within the library service, colleagues and potential partners outside of libraries, the needs of regular customers and occasional visitors; to assess the wider picture and to consider the challenges set. This involved a process of exploring the chasm, mapping the collection, identifying gaps, assessing the scale of backlogs, considering priorities, finding funding and support.

The traditional local studies service remains essential: acquiring, cataloguing books and non-book materials, indexing information, answering enquiries, supporting research and publishing. However, the service also has a vital role in meeting council and government priorities, which change as the needs of society change. Sense of Place is high on the Council agenda, along with community engagement, family and informal learning opportunities. The value of the local heritage to the area and potentially to the economy is recognised: the Cultural Services department had developed an exciting heritage trail and walks, which enhanced the experience of visiting the local area, and uncovered the amazing heritage. There was a wish to develop this further, by digitising the photographs and publishing these to a website, but funding had yet to be found.

How could we balance the traditional role with the new challenges without additional staff?

Developments

Access to websites such as Ancestry has enabled aspects of the family history service to spread across other departments and branch libraries. All library assistants across the service have received introductory training in Ancestry and how local studies resources, such as maps, photographs and trade directories, help to build up a picture of the past. The Council's online register search service

is one of the most popular parts of the Council Website: made possible with the drive and support of the Web team and volunteers, this service has enabled researchers to make preparatory searches at home, before visiting the library.

Support

Recognising the need for support, we set up a local history group of, and for, individuals interested in local heritage. The group developed a role to support the local studies library, with projects which enable volunteers to contribute to collection care, (for instance a glass negative repackaging project) outreach to schools and homes, to create and support displays in the community, and to support programmes for local history month and heritage open days.

Strategy

The first step was to map the collection and list all things that needed doing, - everything from labelling a drawer on a filing cabinet, bringing card indexes into the public domain, sourcing and purchasing copies of maps to plug gaps, and putting the 19th century posters into order.

The next step was to develop an action plan to deal with the major backlogs, and identify priorities. Dropping a collection, for instance indexing the newspapers rather than cutting and filing the articles, did not meet with approval. As main articles in the local paper are now archived online, and there are microfilm copies of the local newspaper at Colindale, although the newspaper cuttings collection required attention, this is a lower priority compared with the photograph and map collections. Plugging the gaps in the map collection was achievable with a planned acquisition strategy.

Support Services took on the task of putting catalogue records online. Mindful of the size of this task, we approached this challenge strategically, working not from 0 – 999, but from 942, and then to titles most relevant to South Tyneside, then Tyne and Wear, Durham, and so on.

The pictorial survey was the most vulnerable and least accessible area of the collection. The photographs are stored carefully in any available space in the basement stack, a store shared with other library service collections. The full potential of the collection is not realised, in terms of access and income generation.

Opportunities

If the photograph collection could be digitised, and incorporated into a searchable electronic database, many problems could be addressed. In addition, copyright information could be linked directly with electronic copies of each image. Published, the website would address issues of access, supporting education, research and provide resources for reminiscence. It would also create a memorial to the changing heritage, and possibly address many of the issues of loss experienced by local people. The digital surrogate images would prevent further

wear and tear on photographs, and provide a back up to be stored elsewhere, to meet disaster management issues. Unprecedented access to a valuable collection of images would create opportunities for income generation. In summary, digitisation offered a solution to many of the problems that we faced. Digitising the photographs became the main priority and focus for attention – a project that would eventually become a mainstream activity.

The next challenge was finding the funding to achieve this. An earlier bid for heritage lottery funding had not been successful – a large bid providing opportunities for community engagement. We looked to turn this idea upside down and to build our digitisation programme project by project. To this end we put in a pre-application for lottery funding from Your Heritage. This was a project to digitise up to 4,000 images which describe the considerable changes to the riverside - a regeneration area and a council priority. Our application was supported and we received funding to purchase image management software and website frontend, with opportunities to work with local communities and volunteers. Library and Council ICT provided support in sourcing and evaluating image management software, and developing the procedures to enable volunteers to support the project (CRB checks and log-ins for volunteers).

Building capacity to support community engagement was developed through a second project: *Respecting the Past – Remembering South Tyneside Wartime Memories*, funded by the Big Lottery through TPYF2 (Their Past Your Future 2 – coordinated nationally by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council). This was an inter-generational reminiscence drama project, which explored the impact of World War 2 on the local area and people. This project encouraged engagement across the Borough, breaking down parochial boundaries and bringing in material about bomb damage to areas outside of South Shields, oral histories of women shipyard workers, and so on. There were local history and creative writing workshops for different generations. The drama, based on the experience of local children in World War 2, was taken out to schools and performed to public audiences.

Both projects have been supported by other initiatives, for example Creative Partnerships, Opening Cultural Doors and Find Your Talent, which have enabled colleagues in libraries, museums and archives to engage schoolchildren, ESOL students and Homereaders (housebound) with project activity, by coordinating visits, paying transport costs and organising crèches.

Volunteers support the collection and projects, giving time to a range of activities: listing donations, putting images into the main sequences ready for indexing, sharing their knowledge of the local area to describe images for the website, scanning images, inputting information, creating and taking displays out into the community, supporting heritage open days and local history month, organising and delivering a programme of monthly talks, and project meetings, recording memories and helping to evaluate project activity. The volunteers have come forward from local and family history groups in the area, as a result of the

librarian giving talks about the collection, and also from Culture Works – an initiative funded by One North East and administered locally by Age Concern, to provide opportunities to engage with and contribute to local heritage.

Results

Outreach displays, events and photographic competitions have created opportunities for media coverage, and for individuals, colleagues and partners to give time to support a valuable heritage resource which in turn will support education, research, publishing and regeneration. Local people have an increased awareness of local heritage and access to sources within the collection. The local studies collection has an increasing presence on the online catalogue and an increasing number of images are now accessible on our pilot website. Customers can research from a distance and prepare their visit in advance. When they arrive they can use the indexes independently and have access to nearly a full range of maps representing the history and development of South Tyneside.

The traditional roles of acquiring, processing and cataloguing material, thus making this material accessible are still important, as are assisting customers and answering enquiries. However, the role of local studies has been enhanced through the coordination and development of the volunteer role, in caring for and increasing access to the collection. Working in partnership to deliver projects to targeted audiences has brought in funding to produce better quality publicity material, media opportunities, to develop the service and enable outreach – helping to find ways to beat the crunch.

Anne Sharp is Local Studies Librarian, South Tyneside Local Studies Library

JUST ONE WORLD – OR IS IT? Information Skills for the Small Museum

Diana Dixon

As a newcomer to managing a small local studies museum I started to question whether my traditional library skills would transfer comfortably to this new environment. Southwold Museum opened in 1933 as an independent museum and it was completely refurbished in 2008. Its permanent exhibition was highly commended at the Museums and Heritage Awards in 2009 and this year it attracted over 7,000 visitors. With some 4,000 objects of all shapes and sizes ranging from 14' high Viking rudders to a tiny light bulb from our operational lighthouse, prints and paintings, over 4000 photographs, archives and a local studies library, it covers a wide range of materials. We also answer a large number of queries relating to local and family history. Some knowledge of local studies work was certainly a help but I soon realized that there were glaring gaps in my skills.

'Local studies stands at the cutting edge of modern library and information work and demands a variety of skills and techniques' ¹ so my first task was to identify these skills. To a large extent my task was made easier by Jill Barber's

excellent presentation at Umbrella in 2007 when she examined training for local studies². Local studies provision in libraries, museums and archives is being influenced by ICT advances and the numerous online and digital resources that are available result in increased expectations from our customers. All this is far removed from the traditional view of local studies as being almost exclusively concerned with local history provision. Some years ago the LSG committee looked at ways offering training to its members and as a first step decided to identify the knowledge and skills needed for local studies work.

A small electronic survey in April 2007 came up with the following results:

1. All the respondents placed information technology and communication skills first. In the local studies context, everyone regarded image capture and digitisation as vitally important, along with web-site design and dealing with issues around born digital archives and records. Genealogical online resources have expanded and these are creating enormous demands on museums, archives and libraries. As far as my work is concerned IT skills are paramount. We have developed an extremely well-regarded interactive website with over 25,000 hits a year. Almost all our photographs have been digitized and are publicly available. We are looking forward to digitizing more of our archive and to developing digital records management and we have a relational database for our catalogue.
2. The second major area was that of management. Of course, management is an essential component of local studies work. Most of the respondents placed customer care, marketing and promotion, staff training and project management high on their lists of priorities. Customer care is regarded as vital, as the initial impressions are of long-lasting importance. We have been gratified by the positive comments from our visitors on the welcome they receive. More specific is working with volunteers. Everyone is a volunteer at Southwold so that all tasks, from front-of-house to identifying new acquisitions, are done by volunteers. Similarly, many local studies libraries rely on volunteers to index their newspaper collections, prepare displays and carry out minor conservation work, and of course there are training implications. Marketing, promotion and fund raising are also important components of the day to day work. Day to day office management, budgeting and maintenance fall within our remit. Project management is likely to be important. In our case, we received a Lottery Grant of £312,000 for a complete refurbishment and modernisation. This would not have been accomplished without the considerable management skills of my predecessor, David de Kretser whose background was in the construction industry. We are always seeking grants for essential improvements and recently we acquired a small grant for remounting some of the objects in our display cases.
3. The third major area of concern to the local studies librarians covered

preservation. Local studies collections hold unique resources that require careful handling. In the local studies library and in museums it is of vital importance. Terry Bracher commented on the dangers of not being aware of preservation materials, techniques, and standards. 'When I first arrived there had been some wonderfully talented and committed people working with Local Studies but through no fault of their own none had any training in preservation and consequently we have a lifetime of work putting it right'³. Other respondents drew attention to e-preservation and traditional preservation skills; all of which need continual updating. In the museum context it is essential that curators are aware of the need to care for their collections. It is often claimed that the worst enemies of objects in museums are the curators, through ignorance rather than malpractice. Museums like ours contain a wide variety of objects: we have fossils dating from 7000BC, stuffed birds and animals, fishing nets, a doll's house, beer bottles, textiles, gas masks and a brass fireman's helmet. All have different conservation needs. Maintaining ambient conditions (temperature and humidity) to create a sympathetic environment and regular monitoring is essential to ensure there are no insects attacking vulnerable objects. This is an area where skills additional to those needed by most local studies libraries are needed. A recent example brought this home to me. On a regular inspection I discovered evidence of moth infestation in the stuffed otter. How to deal with it was outside my experience and I had to find expert conservation advice as a matter of great urgency. The support offered to small museums in East Anglia is excellent and within days the otter was enjoying a holiday in sub-zero temperatures.

4. Knowledge of community profiling and of local associations and societies is also essential. Local studies librarians are also very committed to learning and outreach, as are museums. In this category local studies librarians saw communication skills, including giving talks to schools and adults, as well as preparing exhibitions and displays, as extremely important. This links back to promotion and marketing, as many local studies prepare informative leaflets on using resources as well as preparing newsletters and booklets based on their collections. We are actively involved in producing booklets on fishing, and religious activity in Southwold. Such skills are more likely to be acquired on the job rather than as part of formal education.
5. What was fascinating was that knowledge of the locality and of the resources in the collection came last in their list of priorities. My own experience has shown that it is impossible to answer most of the queries we receive from the public without detailed local knowledge. These can cover topics such as, 'My aunt was an evacuee in the war, do you know which house she lived in?'; 'did Conan Doyle stay in an hotel in Southwold?'; or 'what was the name of the Norwegian ship wrecked on the beach?'. Of course, such enquiries can only be answered by someone familiar with the locality and its resources. For newcomers to any local

studies post, it is essential that some local induction is provided. A willingness to read and absorb all you can about the area helps. We are blessed with several volunteers in their eighties who can identify people in photographs and answer queries about former residents.

Jill Barber⁴ examined recent advertisements for local studies posts and was able to identify the skills that employers required. These are:

- ICT skills
- Customer focus
- Marketing
- Publicity and promotion
- Staff training and user education
- Organizing activities and events
- Identifying external funding
- Working with community groups
- Partnerships
- Forward planning
- Ability to precipitate change
- Interest and enthusiasm for family and local history

All of these are highly relevant in the museum context.

Local studies is no longer taught as part of first professional training in the United Kingdom. Aberystwyth used to offer a post professional qualification in its part-time Distance Learning Programme with a local studies module but this too has been discontinued.

Training for museums is slightly different. As with information studies there are postgraduate courses, completion of which will assist candidates in achieving the qualification of AMA. There are a large number of courses on offer with titles as varied as Heritage Management and Gallery Studies, and this is an encouraging trend towards a more interdisciplinary approach. More innovative is an undergraduate degree course in Cultural Studies at Anglia Ruskin University which is multidisciplinary and directed at libraries, archives and museums. Museum courses are less likely to offer much in the way of dealing with the sort of local studies queries we receive in Southwold.

Currently, in the United Kingdom, most local studies training either takes place in-house or by attending short courses. Michael Dewe recognised the importance of in service training⁵ Many local authorities such as Hertfordshire, Warwickshire and Devon organise their own in local studies training. In Devon a training module for use by staff involved with local studies was envisaged as 'a module for the internal training of staff who have to work with local studies collections'. It is worth remembering, that since much local studies work is conducted by para-professionals, training should encompass them and that professional local studies librarians need to acquire the necessary skills to be effective trainers of their own staff.

Because local studies is rapidly changing, it is vital that museums' personnel and librarians take advantage of whatever courses are offered. Professional organisations are active in running day schools on subjects of topical relevance. LSG regularly runs affordable courses. They are organised at different venues throughout the country and they are generally booked to capacity. Recent ones have included: Beating the crunch; family history resources, newspaper digitization, and local studies and education.

MLA in the regions used to offer cross sectoral courses for libraries, museums and archives. Courses of this kind offer the chance to network with professionals in related fields. Our own survey revealed that several respondents recognised the importance of cross-sectoral working, especially with archivists.

Renaissance has taken a lead in the museum world and is offering numerous courses for people in small museums using the expertise of the professional staff in larger museums in their area. These courses, under the auspices of the SHARE programme, offer courses on a wide variety of relevant topics from textile and costume care to engaging with the community and are heavily subsidized by Renaissance and fees are minimal and many are free. I have attended a number of excellent courses on topics as diverse as Flints and Museum Documentation. All are well attended. We are fortunate in Suffolk that the Association of Suffolk Museums provides modestly priced day schools and I shall be attending one on Safeguarding children in January. Also there are relevant courses organized by our Museum Development Officer in Suffolk on topics such as Digitisation and by the Suffolk Record Office which recently offered a day school on care of photographs. We all need to keep a vigilant eye on courses offered by our sister professions as there is much that is equally appropriate to local studies in museums or libraries.

By providing effective training courses, the Local Studies Group can ensure that it maintains a high profile in an area of librarianship that is extremely well-regarded by its public. There is little doubt that being well versed in local studies serves as a vital launching pad for work in small museums. Our skills are highly transferable and I am sure that my task would be considerably more difficult without a firm local studies grounding.

Diana Dixon is Hon. Curator of Southwold Museum, Suffolk

- 1 D. Dixon (2001) *Local studies librarianship: a world bibliography*. Facet, p.xii.
- 2 J. Barber (2007), 'Do we need webbed feet? Training for local studies librarians', *Local Studies Librarian* 26 (2) Winter pp 2-6.
- 3 T Bracher 'What makes a good local studies librarian?', Unpublished e-mail to D. Dixon 14.03.07
- 4 J. Barber (2007), pp 2-6.
- 5 M.Dewe ed (2002) *Local studies collection management*. Aldershot: Ashgate, p.xii

FROM OUR CILIP POLICY FORUM REPRESENTATIVE

The Policy Forum met once again in November at Ridgmount Street, around forty-one representatives of the branches and Groups. There was agreement that this meeting had not been working as well as had been hoped – exactly what our table had determined at the last Forum meeting when we openly suggested that the Policy Forum should be closed down. It is just too large an assembly and takes on most of the unfortunate aspects of the previous CILIP Council.

However dismissing the Policy Forum was too radical a conclusion for our peers – and the representatives present agreed on another and somewhat different model using smaller groupings (with expertise in subjects under consideration). This may work better until the on-going Review of Governance considers future options, and, in fact, this meeting was more productive than I might have anticipated. Meanwhile the the Branch and Groups Forum will convene as before.

- The delegates considered the document, *User Privacy in Libraries: Guidelines for the Reflective Librarian*, headed by Margaret Watson on behalf of the Privacy Task and Finish Group. Several suggestions were made and there will be future consultation through coverage in Update and through CILIP Communities, blogs, and the CILIP Website.
- A paper from the new Vice-Chair, Peter Beauchamp, suggested policies that should be developed within the Policy Forum – only four Groups and two Branches had responded to his emails, but within his list the following may have most relevance for the Local Studies Group:
 - ✓ Public Library use of Web 2 functionality
 - ✓ What access means in the light of the move towards providing more online services
 - ✓ Community engagement
 - ✓ Value of library and information services in a recession
 - ✓ Strategies to combat cuts in library services

Other suggestions such as membership recruitment, the CILIP website, the preservation of CILIP archives, and better communication with the membership, especially about Council and Policy Forum deliberations were also flagged up.

- CILIP's A5 leaflet *What makes a Good Library Service?*, aimed at local councillors dealing with Public Libraries – with a five-point list of the requirements of local councils taken from the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964) and a ten-point checklist of good library provision – was commended.
- The Forum supported the campaign to make school libraries statutory. A small group of members is to move this debate forward.
- Other news is that the Deputy Chair of the Forum is chairing a Task and Finish Group overseeing a CILIP Manifesto; the CILIP Trustee Elections 2010 were taking place; and Brian Hall, a one-time member of the Local Studies Committee had been elected unopposed as Vice-President of CILIP. This ensures that he will be CILIP President in 2011.

Elizabeth Melrose, Local Studies Group representative on the CILIP Policy Forum

IFLA MILAN 2009: The Poster Competition

Elizabeth Melrose

A popular feature of the annual IFLA Conferences is the Poster Competition. This attracts many entries from library organisations world-wide. The resulting exhibition is a highlight of the IFLA Exhibition Hall. At IFLA Quebec last year, the Genealogy and Local History Section discussed the possibility of bravely attempting a first-time entry. The Committee organises a successful programme of genealogical interest at each IFLA Conference, a twice-yearly Section Newsletter and has to its credit a published volume of the Section Conference presentations – so why not a Section Poster entry for 2009?

Over the next months the prospect of a Poster cropped up from time to time in Committee emails but was rather overshadowed by the creation of our Section pages on the the new IFLA website, and our programme for the 2009 Conference in Milan. Four days before the last date for the entry of the Poster abstract, I decided that the time was now or never, and dashed off a two hundred word paragraph on *Heredity and Environment – Genealogy and Local History for All*. This was circulated to our Committee and, several breakneck amendments later, we sent the text to IFLA Headquarters on the official form.

Heredity and environment, we claimed in the abstract, contribute to who we are and how we live – and reveal the significance of local and family histories. With the increasing fascination in our forbears and their past lives, we hoped to demonstrate that individual family ancestries, once disconnected in various archives, and often muddled by war, emigration, or boundary changes, could now be linked digitally and studied by researchers in countless other locations.

Soon, to our great surprise, we learned that our abstract had been accepted. From more than 250 primary submissions, 103 entries had been selected for eventual exhibition in Milan. We had moved on to the next level – we had a Poster to prepare. Email is a wonderful device and, in co-ordinating the project, I made full use of it in the next few months, with significant encouragement from each of our Committee members. Our budget was limited, so I enlisted the help of a sympathetic designer in London whom I knew would not overcharge. We settled down to consider the Poster design, deciding after much electronic discussion on using genealogical family trees from around the world to illustrate the theme under the heading, *Your Family History: Our Collections make Connections*.

The family trees, sent by the Committee members and emanating from many countries, were very different and truly amazing. Eventually a choice had to be made. The images had to be of a very high resolution – this cancelled out several options – they had to be appropriate and they had to endorse the nature of genealogy and local history. To this end the designer used a copy of a family tree from Taiwan, a 16th century pedigree from the National Library of Wales, a document of a Norwegian family, a family chart from Montenegro, images of Chinese genealogies, a family pedigree from the United States, and family

trees of the Ethiopian Kings. Seeing all these examples made me decide that we should have two Posters, each with the same heading and script but using all the dazzling genealogical images that had been sent in. To broaden the scope we added two historic photographs of country families from Yorkshire and a vignette of a Danish village taken from a nineteenth century autograph album.

There were the usual unnerving moments. For several periods in the early summer I was out of internet contact while dealing with legal matters in Scotland; the designer realised he had, in error, used a low quality illustration and needed a replacement in a hurry; Committee members queried grammar and punctuation within the text; the commercial printer's internet access failed at a crucial stage with British Telecom claiming it was not their problem! On the other hand I had planned just enough time to compose a leaflet giving more information on the Posters and the family trees, ready to hand out at the IFLA sessions. These were printed and packed along with a massive double Poster tube for the journey to Milan. At Stansted, despite my worries, even Ryanair officials were sympathetic and set aside the charge usually claimed for extra baggage.

A great variety of posters were exhibited at the Poster Sessions in the IFLA exhibition hall. Over lunchtime on two separate days, along with the other representatives of libraries, associations, and organizations from around the world, I stood and reported on our exhibit to groups of Conference delegates, handed out our leaflets and made friends with neighbours at the Poster boards. Nearby was the Publika Hungarian Library Group Poster whose presenters knew friends of mine working in Hungary. Another Poster, organised by colleagues from Taiwan, illustrated their project on *Digitising and networking through international co-operation*.

I was obliged to use the Conference photocopying facilities to provide many more leaflets giving the detail on the Poster images - and I began to run out of our Genealogy Section Leaflet in several languages. The time passed very quickly, but I was able to take photographs of those Posters that appealed to me so I could show our designer on my return to England. One initiative, featured by several presentations, was to give Post-it notes for comment to the audience - there was a specific space on the Posters to stick these remarks.

Entering the IFLA Poster Session was a great project for our Committee. Our members come from different countries on all continents. We had to work together and pool examples of genealogical source material from our various archives and local history collections. Once the Section has paid the bills there is the possibility that our IFLA Posters may be displayed in the Library of Congress and in the libraries in the Virgin Islands. Our Poster may not have won the coveted top IFLA Poster award - that was given to an entry from China, *New vs. Old Photos: Keep Cultural Heritages in Guangzhou Alive* - but it was a contender.

Elizabeth Melrose is a member of the IFLA Genealogy and Local History Section Committee and edits the Section's Newsletter.

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE LOCAL STUDIES AND FAMILY HISTORY COLLECTION

Kath Cassidy

An extensive and often unique collection of books, illustrations, newspapers and maps. Newcastle's Local Studies and Family History Centre houses the largest collection of local material in the region. Established in 1884 the collection covers Tyne & Wear, Northumberland and Durham with special emphasis on Newcastle upon Tyne. There are in excess of 65,000 volumes, ranging from incunabula to current material. The aim is to acquire all relevant titles published. Other printed material includes a wide range of reports, pamphlets and periodicals. There is also a significant collection of ephemera such as newspaper cuttings, election leaflets, community newsletters and posters. It also holds the largest collection of regional newspapers in the area, dating from 1711 to the present day.

The collection is significant and as such, is used by a wide cross section of the public. A large proportion of the material is rare and irreplaceable: therefore most of the collection is not on public access. In the new City Library the majority of these resources are stored in a secure environmentally controlled (BS5454) stack area which also includes a strong room and a photographic store. An inergen gas fired suppression system has been installed as an added safety measure.

A new home for our service

The Centre is situated on the sixth floor in the new City Library building. Its position on the top floor is significant, as from here visitors are able to enjoy panoramic views of the City and beyond. Visitors can access the floor by either the main staircase or one of the two scenic lifts. Apart from the ground floor, the area is the only other public floor with a full floor plate: three of the five public floors are built around the four storey atrium, resulting in a totally self contained space that is large, airy and uncluttered. The position of the service area within the building and the deliberate visual link features that are incorporated in the design, are valuable and positive elements. The intent is to utilize the position of the service area in creating an integral link between the vista and the core function of the section as a provider of resources pertaining to the region.

The deliberate emphasis on engaging the library customer with the material held in the centre and the built environment surrounding it is emphasised in the viewing gallery. This fully glazed area featuring distinctive artwork by local artist Katherine Hodgkinson is directly accessible from either the stairway or the main floor. It contains six stylish Swan and Egg chairs, sponsored by Ryder Architecture Ltd, who were responsible for designing the building; resplendent in cerise leather, these rotate, allowing visitors to take full advantage of the panoramas. These include local landmarks like Grey's Monument, The Baltic Arts Centre and the Millennium Bridge. The gallery is a popular destination area, with people using the space to read or meet friends. Many visitors appear to just enjoy spending their time in quiet contemplation far above the madding crowd. The main floor includes 84 separate study spaces with task lighting, fourteen with

free computer access, twenty four with microfiche readers and six with microfilm reader printers. In common with all floors there is an attractive informal seating area adjacent to local newspapers and magazines. The floor also houses two self contained meeting rooms, the larger seating thirty five, the smaller twelve. With the attention to detail that characterises the building both rooms feature original Fritz Hansen chairs from the previous 1960s library building. They have been recovered in teal leather to mirror the accent colour in the section. On this floor there is also a download station with a CD listening and DVD viewing point. There are two plasma screens in the section: one allows the public to find out what is going on in the rest of the building, while the other is suspended at the entrance to the Newcastle Collection display area and gives information about the collections that it contains.

Showcasing our special collections: The Newcastle Collection

This area is inspired by the King's Library in the British Library. An important part of the design for the new building was to provide features that allowed material that was previously 'hidden' to be displayed. The Newcastle Collection area is an opportunity to 'showcase' some items from the City Library's heritage and special collections previously kept in strong rooms. Lined with slate from the floor of the last City Library, this environmentally controlled area allows the City's most significant printed heritage collections to be displayed in secure conditions. Since it opened in 1884 Newcastle City Libraries have acquired and built up extensive and significant collections of rare books and heritage material. These are of regional, national and international significance, including some of the first books printed in the city in the 1600s. In the past these items have been housed in strong room repositories and have, in many cases, been the preserve of academics and researchers. The rationale behind The Newcastle Collection display area was the opportunities it afforded to promote and display the material allowing people to discover, use and enjoy the heritage collections in Newcastle Libraries. Items in the display can be easily changed to meet service needs and allow visitors to see the full range and diversity of the special collections. An award from the Heritage Lottery fund for the two year Newcastle Collection project provided the means to conserve some of the material and design a dynamic website to promote it. The website can be found at: www.newcastle.gov.uk/newcastlecollection

The focus of the project was to concentrate on the collections that were of the greatest significance to local heritage. These collections are:

- **The Avison Collection.** Local composer Charles Avison (1709 – 1770) is regarded as England's greatest 18th century concerto composer. The collection, formed in partnership with the Charles Avison Society, has unique autograph manuscript workbooks. It was acquired by the Society with funding from the Heritage Lottery Memorial Fund in 2000.
- **The Bewick Collection.** Considered the finest collection of printed books in the world of the artist and engraver, Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), John

William Pease (1836-1901) spent forty years collecting his work. When he died he left the collection to Newcastle Libraries. In addition to over three hundred volumes in fine bindings, of first and later editions of illustrated books, it also contains over one thousand woodblocks by Bewick and his pupils. In addition there are letters, drawings and watercolours as well as Bewick's own tool chest and work table.

- **The Collinson Collection.** Consists of three volumes of exquisitely detailed watercolour paintings of the flora of Northumberland and Durham. Richard Collinson (1811 – 1883) was a naval officer and arctic explorer. He donated the work to the library but it is not known who actually painted the works.

- **The Crawhall Collection.** The Crawhall family of the North East is one of the most ancient in the region. Between the late 18th and early 20th centuries there were three members whose artistry has since been recognised as among the most distinctive the region has produced. The collection contains works from each of these three artists:

Joseph Crawhall I (1793 – 1853)

Joseph Crawhall II (1821 – 1896)

Joseph Crawhall III (1861 – 1913)

- **Gibson's Conches.** Gibson's Conches were bought by public subscription in 1890 and presented to Newcastle Public Library where they have been housed ever since. The collection consists of seven thousand, two hundred and sixty watercolour prints of three thousand and twenty five species of sea-shells painted in meticulous detail by local entrepreneur George Gibson.

- **The Mackey Collection.** Purchased by the City in 1919, a collection of pre-1701 items of local businessman Matthew Mackey. Includes a collection of local tracts 1640 -1660, about the activities of the Scottish army in the North East of England.

- **The Merrifield Library.** Pre -1701 and 18th and 19th century volumes on science and mathematics.

- **The Thomlinson Collection.** The first 'public library' in Newcastle. A collection of volumes dating from the 15th to the 18th century, including theology, history, science and medicine. It was originally the private library of Dr Robert Thomlinson (1668 – 1748) and was bequeathed to the people of Newcastle. There are over 5,500 volumes in this collection, with many rare items including two incunabula printed in 1489 and 1490.

Greater public awareness and promotion via the Newcastle Collection website has resulted in a marked increase in interest in special collection material. We now receive related enquiries from all over the world.

Making heritage accessible

Another initiative that is proving popular is a series of events that we host to promote collection material and give members of the public an opportunity to study and handle a variety of collection items. We have called these events Touching the Past sessions. They are held regularly and people can book a place in advance. A typical session lasts around ninety minutes. They take place in our large meeting room and we will introduce the session with a short overview of the collection we are featuring. Our Newcastle Collection sessions will typically feature material from each of the individual collections that it includes. We ask all those who attend to wear white archival gloves and we pass individual items around the table on conservation pillows; this allows members of the audience to handle and look at the material in more detail. While this is happening we describe the history of each collection and point out particular features of the individual items. These sessions really seem to have captured the public's imagination and the feedback has been extremely positive; we often have waiting lists. Because of this we have widened the brief and are now running sessions relating to our comprehensive Theatre Royal archive and our Illustration Collection. In the coming year we also plan to run sessions using our newspaper and map collections. As the collection is so diverse and varied there are many possibilities for utilising and promoting other collection areas that we can explore and develop.

New IT developments

Running alongside these more recent developments we are still dealing with a large number of enquiries related to core collection material. We receive these in a number of ways; in person, by telephone, email and letter. We have found that since we have reopened in the new library, enquiries by email and letter have increased by 40%. We feel that there is a direct correlation between this and developments to the libraries web presence. This has been updated and now features a number of interactive web 2.0 features that include a library blog and a library presence on My Space, Facebook and Twitter. While these developments have not been aimed specifically at local studies, they have succeeded in signposting new audiences and have allowed a level of interactivity that has resulted in an increase in enquiries. Our digitised illustration collection consisting of 6,506 images is now hosted through flickr. Since mid November when this first went live we have had 65,221 hits, a figure that far exceeds equivalent usage in the past. Many visitors have made comments and left tags. The website can be accessed at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/newcastlelibraries/>

Other heritage provision in the City

Our links with the metropolitan archive service that is based in Newcastle city centre are close and well established. Tyne and Wear Archives covers the cities and metropolitan districts of Tyne and Wear: these are Newcastle upon Tyne, Sunderland, Gateshead, and North and South Tyneside. The collections of both institutions are totally separate, although they have areas of synergy that can assist researchers. Reflecting a national trend, genealogy is a popular

topic. Many researchers regularly use the resources at each service, utilizing complementary material that provides comprehensive regional coverage. Our individual collections of Parish Records are a good example of this.

Facing the future

Although the public service sector is facing uncertain times, the past six months have been an exhilarating and exciting time for Newcastle Library Service. When the new library opened this year on the 7th June we were unsure how it would be received by the public. Six months down the line the footfall, number of new members and visitor comments tell their own story- the public seem to like the building and are using it in the way that was envisaged. The position of the Local Studies and Family History Centre on the sixth floor, its adjacency to the viewing platform, and the fact that the Newcastle Collection showcase is clearly visible from outside the building, are all felt to be factors that have had a direct impact on the number of visitors to the floor. We still have a great deal that we want to achieve. Plans for the coming year include the introduction of a programme of regular heritage events in community libraries and planning and implementing a vibrant public events programme for the City Library. 2010 is shaping up to be another busy year.

Kath Cassidy is Service Manager: Heritage, Newcastle Libraries and Information Service.

FROM OUR SUBGROUPS

Our **Midlands and Anglia** subgroup reports that its annual Day School was held in Nottingham in October, and incorporated the subgroup's AGM. It attracted 41 delegates (one more than last year's event) and showed a significant number of delegates from outside the region. Feedback indicated that the day was rated excellent or very good by all respondents, with many positive comments. The theme was 'Beating the crunch' and speakers looked at how services could work with partners and volunteers, as well as use low-budget activities and events. The keynote paper by Anne Sharp is printed elsewhere in this issue. A request for venues in East Anglia for future events was requested - most recent meetings have been in the West or East Midlands - and some locations are being investigated, along with some suggestions for future course topics. The date, location and topic for the 2010 Day School should be decided in February and will be publicised thereafter. The Newsletter is to revert to two issues per year, with the next one due in February 2010.

The **North West** subgroup continues to be active. The Autumn day school, with the theme 'Local and Family History in the Modern World', was held at the Lancashire Record Office in October. It was oversubscribed and the organisers have a list of people who would like to attend a re-run should that be possible.

The subgroup's AGM was held during the day. In the future it is hoped to have a day school related to oral history at the North West Sound Archive, which has reopened in new premises in Clitheroe. There have been several changes to the committee, including one member who resigned due to support for membership being withdrawn by the relevant chief officer. The subgroup monitors developments in the area and notes that after the reorganisation of Lancashire County Libraries twelve community history posts were created and that all of these have now been filled, but that local government reorganisation in Cheshire has led to the loss of local studies posts. A new issue of the Newsletter, edited by Jane Metcalfe, was produced and circulated with the publicity for the Autumn day school.

Our **Scottish** subgroup, LocScot, reports that it had a slot at the Groups and Branches day at the CILIPS conference in June. Two Committee members made presentations – Christine Miller on her project 'Family History with Families' and Elizabeth Carmichael with a presentation about burial grounds. LocScot also held its own successful autumn day school at Perth in October on 'Publicity – raising the profile in Scotland'. LocScot is organising the Scottish Local History Week for 2011, which it has already been decided will be themed around the 1911 Census. The subgroup is investigating an e-petition to the Scottish Parliament about the decision of the General Register Office Scotland not to publish the census on microfilm. It is also reported that the Scotland's People voucher scheme continues to be very successful with sales of £86,347 in the 13 months to the end of July. Ask Scotland, an online enquiry service developed by the Scottish Library Information Council is being piloted, and will be expanded in the near future.

The **Southern** subgroup reports that, after the success of its first study day, it is in the first stages of planning its events for 2010. It is also working with the Society of Archivists South East branch for an event to be held at Crawley Library on 27 February 2010. LSG South is also very conscious that Local Studies Librarians in the South East do not have an opportunity to come together as a group, and it is cooperating with the Society of Chief Librarians South East reference group who are looking to establish a South East Local Studies Forum.

AWARDS FOR LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARIANS

Libraries, organisations and sponsoring bodies promote various awards for librarians each year and many of these are suitable for local studies librarians to enter. However, there are two major annual awards specifically for local studies libraries and their staff:

The Dorothy McCulla Memorial Prize.

This is the LSG's own award to mark outstanding work by a member of the Group in the local studies field. It was established in memory of the late Dorothy McCulla, who was Local Studies Librarian for Birmingham for many years and who first proposed the setting up of the Local Studies Group. The award is for an outstanding contribution to local studies librarianship and the recipient is often known as the Local Studies Librarian of the Year. The award may be made, for instance, for a specific new development or for sustained contribution to local studies either in a specific library or in a wider context.

There must be many librarians who have been carrying out work in their own areas in developing their own services to a high standard for the benefit of the local community, but who receive very little recognition in the profession or outside. Similarly, there are others who have encouraged their colleagues to develop new ideas or techniques through their teaching or writing.

Before the award can be made each year there must be nominations – and sadly this year there were no nominations. It cannot be that there are no longer any librarians worthy of the Award. Maybe everyone is too busy to prepare a nomination, or feel that they are not sure about the criteria, or that there will be others doing it. Please, everyone, think about someone you know who is contributing positively to local studies work and consider nominating them, perhaps after talking about it to someone else. While ideally there should be positive support from the top the nominator does not need to be a chief librarian – nominations are welcome from line managers, colleagues or service users who are aware of the candidate's achievements.

This Award is important to the winner because it is awarded by colleagues. It is also important to the employer because it usually generates publicity in the local press and draws attention to the local studies collection and its quality. On all counts it is worth taking a little time to think about someone you know that you think should be a recipient and preparing a nomination for them – don't leave it to someone else. The closing date for nominations is 30 September 2010.

For full details about the Award and a nomination form contact our Hon Secretary, Helen Pye-Smith, email helen.pye-smith@national.archives.gov.uk tel: 020 8392 5278 or see the Local Studies Group website.

Alan Ball Local History Awards

This is a different kind of award, as its object is to encourage local authorities to produce local history publications of a high standard. The Awards were initiated by The Library Services Trust in 1985, so 2010 marks their twenty fifth anniversary, and the Trust is keen to make them a success by attracting a record number of entries. Initially there were separate awards for authors and publishers, but now there is a maximum of three awards for the publication as a whole: this goes to the publisher, who may be a library or a local authority. The awards criteria include subject matter, authorship and quality of design and production, all combining together to produce a production of high quality, taking into account its purpose. At the beginning the awards were all for printed material, but as libraries have developed their publications over the years, the judges now welcome entries in all formats, including databases and websites or, for instance, as with a recent winner, a printed book and CD and an associated website giving more detailed information. Publishers, too, are varied, from a parish council (which used a commercial publisher, but which was clearly the sponsor of the first ever fully recorded history) to large public libraries, one of which, with a large backlist, has its own publishing name. The Award winners for most years are recorded in LSL, so you can see the range of organisations and judges comments.

While entries must be made by the publishing organisation, there is nothing to stop anyone suggesting to that body that a work be entered. Has your authority published anything, large or small, in any format, which is of a good standard, recently – or have you seen one from another body? Why not suggest that it be entered: the larger the number of entries the more representative the list of winners can be.

To make it easier some further information and an entry form appear on pages 28 and 29, and you can find out even more from Eric Winter.

These are prestigious awards: both authors and publishers get good publicity, and usually there is good coverage in the local and professional press at least. This year, too, the Trust hopes to have a national Awards ceremony, to celebrate the anniversary.

HAVE YOU SEEN...?

Some recent items of interest to local studies librarians

Susan J Mills. Probing the past: a toolbox for Baptist historical research. Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2009. 199pp. £9.50 + postage. Available from the Rev. Dr. R. Hayden, 15 Fenshurst Gardens, Long Ashton, Bristol BS18 9AU. ISBN 978 0 903166 39 3

In effect this "toolbox" is an annotated bibliography of Baptist history. It is a substantial volume by the former librarian of Regent's Park College, Oxford. This library holds the major Baptist archive, and over the years the author has become an expert on the subject. The work covers sources for Dissenting history in general, then for Baptist history, though the author points out that it is largely UK, and even

England based. As so many students automatically do today when starting research the toolbox starts with electronic sources, from the general bibliographies to the more specific works and the author quite deliberately sets out to show what the internet can do, but also what it cannot, using relevant examples. After a section on dissenting history it proceeds to works specific to Baptist history, listing electronic then printed sources. A section on secondary sources is followed by one on primary sources, including local church records and Baptist organisations such as the Baptist Union and the Baptist Colleges' records. In conclusion, the author reiterates the importance of using all kinds of information resources at the beginning of a search and establishing and refining a search strategy and then gives a detailed example of a strategy for a specific search. Apart from the list of references there is a list of Baptist websites and a substantial list of printed sources. The whole work is an excellent comprehensive guide for graduate, undergraduate and ministerial students at the outset of research into aspects of Baptist history: one wonders, however, whether it is quite as suitable for the other target of the author, the private individual who is starting out on a history of his or her church or a biographical researcher into his or her family history. This is the kind of work which should be in the general reference library, but the local studies librarian should certainly be aware of it in order to guide enquirers to it.

Hints and tips on looking after your family photographs, documents and books. Sheffield Libraries, Arts and Information, 2009. 13pp. Available to download free at <http://www.Sheffield.gov.uk/libraries/archives> (click on 'publications')

This is a handy guide for people looking after important family documents. Everyone has precious items that they want to keep safe and usable for the future. They may be books, certificates, letters, deeds and photographs which have passed down, as well as well as other formats such as films, CDs, videotapes and audio cassettes: all of these deteriorate over the years. With this in mind, Sheffield Archives Conservation Unit has produced this brief guide to introduce the need for conservation and to show how basic conservation can be easily carried out by the owner so that treasured items can be passed on to future generations. It is full of handy hints which can be used, such as the use of gloves in handling material and the use of archival (polyester) sleeves or albums for photographs rather than using the self adhesive photo albums commonly available, and the use of photocopying or scanning for items such as newspaper cuttings, where the paper can deteriorate very quickly. The "tips" are presented very clearly as a series of bullet points, providing an easily understood set of guidelines for looking after your family papers, based on the expertise of a professional conservation unit. There is a list of further readings and contacts, and a list of suppliers, though some of these are Sheffield based.

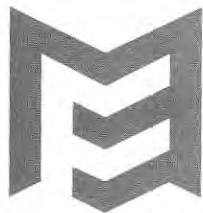
NOTES AND NEWS

The Group's new Web Editor is Tracey Williams, Local Studies Librarian, Solihull Local Studies Collection. She can be contacted at twilliams@solihull.gov.uk

The recent Bishopsgate Library Newsletter reports that since the library closed in June 2009, a good deal of progress has been made with their refurbishment works. The enlarged basement archive store has been created and the opening in the Library office floor has been made in readiness for the new staircase which will connect the new researchers' area with the archive store and provide a book hoist to bring material up for study. The excavation in the basement for the lift shaft uncovered some unexpected finds when the contractors found a circular course of bricks.

An archaeologist confirmed that this was the remains of a well, which probably dated from the same time as the Institute: however, it was not judged significant enough to need to be retained in situ, so was removed and the bones and pottery found at the bottom of the well are being kept by the Museum of London. It is also reported that during the closure the library has been digitising many of the most popular items from its collections. Early items to be digitised include the typescript autobiography of East End gangster Arthur Harding, written in the late 1960s, and the handwritten journals of J J Woodroffe, curate of St Matthews, Bethnal Green, detailing his meetings with and impressions of his parishioners.

The *Sheffield History Reporter* is always interesting to read because it always contains information which could be helpful to other librarians, and issue 125 is no exception. There is a brief obituary of Fred Hobson, one of a dedicated team of local volunteers who transcribe documents and compile indexes. It also refers to the guide for the public on looking after family documents (reviewed in "Have You Seen?"), and to the conservation of an illuminated Scroll of Honour of parishioners of a local church who fought in the First World war, including an indication of those who did not return: this was found in a cupboard in the church and has been deposited with Sheffield Archives. However, this issue is the last in its present form – "After 20 years it's time to say goodbye and hello". As a result of a review of their communication methods by Local Studies and Archives the *Reporter*, which has been published every eight weeks, will be replaced by a quarterly Newsletter. This can be picked up at either Local Studies or Archives service points, or can be subscribed to at £3.00 per annum. It is also possible to see it via the library website: you can receive an email notification each time a new edition is published by sending your email address to michael.spick@Sheffield.gov.uk



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ALAN BALL LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS

The object of the Awards is to encourage Local Authorities to produce local history publications to a high standard. Publications will be deemed to include books, maps, manuscripts, prints, drawings, exhibition catalogues, bibliographies, CDs, websites or any other audio-visual or electronic format.

Library Services Trust is a registered charity. The Trust has a range of awards, one of which is the Alan Ball Local History Award.

Alan Ball is now retired but was formerly Chief Librarian of the London Borough of Harrow. He was for many years an officer and member of the London and Home Counties Branch Committee of the Library Association, which has published a number of books written by him on local history topics. This Award is named after him in recognition of his service to the branch.

ALAN BALL LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS ENTRY FORM

AUTHOR Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr (Forename)

..... (Surname)

TITLE OF WORK

DATE OF PUBLICATION

LOCAL AUTHORITY

NAME OF CONTACT

CONTACT ADDRESS

.....

.....postcode

TELEPHONE

EMAIL.....

FURTHER DETAILS On a separate sheet, please give any available details about the publication which you would like the judges to consider.

DESPATCH Please enclose works in a padded book bag with an entry form for each work and addressed to:
Eric Winter
Library Services Trust (Alan Ball Awards)
7 Ridgmount Street, London, WC1E 7AE

ENQUIRIES Queries about the Awards may be addressed to:
Eric Winter tel: 020 7255 0648
email: eric.winter@cilip.org.uk

CLOSING DATE 30 September 2010