

Inside:

Poetry promotion in public libraries

Academic libraries in challenging times

Book Reviews, Conference Reports ...



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CONTENTS

7-13

Academic libraries in Challenging Times

- John Cox

14-19

Public Libraries and the Recession

- Liam Ronayne

20-24

Social Networks - Jane Burns

25-29

Poetry Promotion in Public libraries

- Brian Hegarty & Clare Thornley

30-33

Conference Reports:

Conference on Conceptions of Library

and Information Sciencw - Eva Hornung

LILAC 2010 - Aoife Geraghty

34-36

Books: Acquisitions

Information Policy

Academic Libraries

Marketing

Student Research Support

37

News from the Stacks

38

Obituary - Bob McKee

Guidelines For Contributors

An Leabharlann: The Irish Library publishes articles on libraries, librarianship and related topics of interest to the library and information community on the island of Ireland. The Editorial Board invites original, unpublished articles for publication. Articles should be between 1,500 and 5,000 words. Occasionally, longer articles may be published.

Articles

Manuscripts will be reviewed by the Editorial Board.

Authors are asked to submit an informative abstract of not more than 200 words. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of statements and references in their articles.

Images which visually support the article are welcomed. Authors should also submit a photograph of themselves. Original photographs and/or high-resolution scans (300 dpi) would be most helpful.

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Manuscripts should be submitted by email attachment or on disc as Rich Text File (RTF). Text should be formatted in Times New Roman 12 pt., double-spaced, with margins of 2.54cm (i.e. standard A4 margins). Formatting of text (e.g. italics and bold) should be kept to a minimum.

Authors should provide their name, organization, position and the title of the article at the top of the first page. If the article was presented at a conference, details of the sponsoring organization, the date and title of the conference should be given.

Book reviews should include the full title, author or editor, publication details and price.

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All aspects of the public service have been under scrutiny in terms of efficiencies and value for money. Academic, public and special libraries in the wider public service have had to state their case. Colleagues in the corporate sector have also had to make their case.

The challenges for libraries in the recession are discussed at some length in this issue. John Cox considers the challenges from the perspective of academic libraries, while Liam Ronayne examines the challenges facing public libraries. Both authors note how libraries have had their stock budgets reduced in the last two years and the public service recruitment embargo means that staff are not being replaced.

The importance of statistics can be seen in both articles as the increase in usage is noted. Librarians have always kept statistics because of their usefulness in monitoring usage and other house-keeping information. At the most basic level, they are a management tool. Using various measures, we can demonstrate how efficient and cost-effective libraries are. Statistics are essential for promoting libraries to a range of interested parties: from stakeholders in the parent organisation, to the public, the media and potential donors.

In the current economic climate, statistics are useful in demonstrating how libraries in all sectors are valuable to their institutions. The collection of accurate statistics has been simplified with automatic reporting included in library management systems, digital resources, PC booking and print management services among others.

Liam Ronayne notes the Annual Statistics published by An Chomharle Leabharlanna which cover a range of inputs and outputs on library collections, library users, opening hours etc. More recently, interesting statistics have become available through the Public Lending Remuneration Scheme.

In terms of advocacy, statistics can be powerful tools in demonstrating relevance and value for money. Academic libraries use bibliometrics to assist their institutions in demonstrating research performance. All Irish academic libraries are engaged in a range of activities which show value for money and added-value. The PLUS survey in public libraries shows high levels of use and

borrowing. Public libraries are also engaged in several cultural heritage activities which give added-value.

Six months ago, IFLA Governing Board approved the *IFLA Library Statistics Manifesto*. While not all libraries are the same, the intention of the *Manifesto* is that statistics will be standardised and that national and international comparisons can be made. While there are anecdotes about how busy libraries have become, only facts – and statistics – will speak for themselves.

Librarians are working smartly to make sure that limited resources are used to maximum effect. While libraries will not have any budget lines for marketing and promotion, colleagues are using social networks to engage with users and potential users. Jane Burns reports on a small scale study of the academic and special library sector. In their article on poetry promotion in public libraries, Brian Hegarty and Clare Thornley note that the online environment is especially suitable as a means of promotion. One book review also considers the promotion of library services using social networks.



The importance of forging partnerships and alliances both within and outside the institution is a topic also considered by both Cox and Ronayne. The examples they give should inspire us to look at the recession as an opportunity rather than a threat. Alliances and partnerships are also useful in the promotion of library services. Libraries are the acceptable face of most institutions- there is often a good news story.

Conference reports always broaden our horizons and the two reports featured in this issue are no exception. The LILAC report mentions the Lay Information Mediators using public libraries. These are people seeking information on behalf of others. As we only count users who visit the library – in real time or virtually – we miss a count of the people on whom information will impact. But, in all libraries, it is difficult to quantify the impact any piece of information retrieved from the library is going to have. However, we can state that the return on investment in libraries is valuable to society. The investment will not yield returns immediately. Rather, current investment in libraries will produce long-term, recurring results.

Marjory Sliney, editor@libraryassociation.ie

1. <http://www.ifla.org/en/publications/ifla-library-statistics-manifesto>

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Academic Libraries in Challenging Times



John Cox

Abstract

This article identifies three key challenges facing academic libraries in a period of recession: resourcing, technological change and proof of relevance. A series of strategies is proposed to maximise the value, actual and perceived, of academic libraries in challenging times. These are based on clarity of message, cultivation of partnerships, service leadership and performance optimisation. Although it is clear that the global recession has placed a major strain on resources, it is argued

that there are real opportunities to enhance the relevance of academic libraries to the scholarly mission and to provide leadership through innovation, creativity and an outward-facing perspective. Collaboration on and beyond the campus is a recurring theme of the article and a joint approach to resource deployment and service development can pay dividends. A culture of opportunism, agility and flexible skills development will enable academic libraries to emerge stronger from the recession.

Introduction

Academic libraries were already facing significant challenges before the current recession but the global economic downturn has added new pressures, while also opening up new opportunities. The challenges are many but may be summarised under three headings.

The first of these concerns **resourcing**. After enjoying more than ten years of progress in staffing and non-pay budgets, growth has been replaced by a relatively sudden and steep contraction. Irish universities are now grappling with the Employment Control Framework which has mandated a reduction in staffing numbers of nine per cent by the end of 2011 relative to levels at the end of 2008. Purchasing power has also been reduced as a result of budgetary cuts occasioned by the need to reduce public spending. Libraries have suffered losses accordingly. To take the James Hardiman Library at National University of Ireland (NUI), Galway, as an example, staffing is down by 11.7% and the non-pay allocation, including that for information resources, is 15% lower than in late 2008. This is hardly a good platform for meeting the needs of a growing user population, with student numbers

rising strongly in the same period, an increase partly spawned by the recession itself which has seen many newly unemployed people return to study in order to obtain new qualifications.

Technology continues to pose major challenges for academic libraries across a number of dimensions. Information is increasingly published online, but print remains a vitally important medium for libraries. Both formats, online and print, have differing but significant management overheads in terms of cost, presentation, access and preservation. The “hybrid library”, a concept first identified in the 1990s, can be expected to endure for some time, with major calls on resourcing and skills. Online access to information has also had a profound effect on the way in which academics and students view the library. Academics, particularly in the sciences, rarely visit the library building. Students, although still favouring the library as a place of study, take an increasingly self-sufficient approach, often seeing little need to develop information skills despite the complexity of the information landscape they navigate. The “library brand” is somewhat compromised in the online environment, with users frequently unaware that their library has negotiated access to the online journals on their screens. Content, free or subscribed, ▶

‘Online access to information has also had a profound effect on the way in which academics and students view the library.’



local or external, can appear to be merged and its delivery is most commonly credited to Google, a highly agile competitor to libraries but also potentially a partner. Agility is the major challenge with which technology confronts academic libraries, demanding rapid changes to business models and evolution in staffing skills in order to meet new needs and opportunities.

The first two challenges have combined to produce the largest of the three, which is to prove **the ongoing value of academic libraries**. The prominent place once assumed for the library on the university campus is now being questioned in all sorts of ways. Funding reductions have turned the spotlight on universities themselves in terms of the return on investment they offer in the context of scarcer public funds. Their libraries are equally subject to questioning within the campus, not least as they cost a lot to run. Academic libraries typically have a larger staffing complement than many other service units and struggle to find savings in the face of journal inflation and the need to sustain legacy operations related to printed collections of continuing value, while expanding support into new areas generated by technological evolution. Further questions are raised by a tendency towards loss of local library identity in the online environment, greater user self-sufficiency in access to information, increased reliance on low-barrier providers like Google and Wikipedia and alternative study locations to the library building. This combination of tighter funding and apparent lower reliance on the academic library to meet information needs makes it a major challenge to prove the value and relevance to universities of their libraries in a recession.

However, all of these challenges are definitely surmountable, by adopting appropriate strategies. Four proposed strategies are the focus of the remainder of this article which argues that academic libraries remain highly relevant to the scholarly mission and have the potential to provide leadership through innovation, learning and an outward-facing perspective.

Clarity of Message

Those of us working in academic libraries need, more than ever before, to be very clear about our own value and purpose and to

communicate this eloquently and indeed passionately at all times. A key imperative is close alignment with the strategic plans of our universities. This has always been important but is even more vital in a recession when the resourcing of academic libraries is under close scrutiny. Whatever is important to the university must be important to the library and all planning activity and reporting needs to be geared towards this. Slavish adherence to university planning is not advocated, nor would that be sufficient. There is scope for imaginative initiatives, underpinned by evolving partnerships, which can take the library in new directions while maximising its role as a key strategic asset for the university. Some such initiatives are explored later, but common themes throughout are the value of partnership, the opportunity for libraries to provide leadership and the scope for embedding our value further in the mission of the university.

A clear sense of direction is vital, particularly when resources are tight and despite ongoing change and uncertainty. This is not a time for enormously lengthy, complex and long-term planning documents. Identification of core themes, informed by university strategy and customer needs, coupled with achievable annual targets which are backed by a highly focused collective effort, can maximise the effectiveness of the library in the university and provide scope for development in new directions. A focus on selected core objectives can helpfully drive library service development during the current recession. These might include: providing an excellent, high value-added customer experience; maximising the value of staff expertise; ensuring the full exploitation of collections; and managing space effectively.

Communicating what academic libraries offer, be it through traditional or newer activities, is critical, and failure to gain institutional acceptance of their value proposition has been identified as a particular risk for research libraries (Michalko et al., 2010). Universities are political institutions and perceptions are vital. A low profile on campus does the library no good and a strategy of continuous communications to highlight the contribution of the library is vital. This can take a number of forms. The creation of a post of Service Promotion Librarian at NUI Galway has brought structure and continuity to library marketing efforts, ensuring a series of campaigns throughout

the year and systematic use of press coverage for public events. Closeness to the customer is vital in understanding our business environment, and service planning is now better informed by focus groups, observation and survey data. Investment in the identity of the Library, particularly through publications and a redeveloped website, has been a valid priority.

However, there is more to marketing than frequent communication. The language and tone of communication are vital in embedding the value of academic libraries. Others may still see the library as a relatively passive storehouse of past knowledge. But how do we see ourselves? If we take care over the language of communication we can implant a sense of academic libraries as places of active knowledge creation which stimulate curiosity and enable scholarship through staff who are information agents and skilled partners in the academic mission. Language of this kind can create a new and distinctive impression of the library on campus. Recessions tend to spawn planning exercises but the right use of language can focus these exercises and turn them into a communications opportunity, highlighting the value of the library. The tone of library communications also needs to take on a new passion and conviction in tough times. A sense of pride in what we have achieved previously, allied to the diversity of contributions we can make and the goodwill felt by the academic community towards libraries, provides an excellent platform for positive communications and further achievement.

Cultivation of Partnerships

Recession promotes partnership. There is a realisation that resources can go further through joining forces and sharing expertise, often resulting in innovation. Academic libraries are very well placed in this regard. They tend to occupy a central place on campus and to have a strong service ethic. Another advantage, often overlooked, is that academic libraries are generally a “good news” story for the academic community, positively enabling its work rather than generating a lot of administrative effort for it, as can be its perception of other service units. This set of circumstances creates goodwill and makes us ideal partners with a range of parties on and beyond the campus. Such collaborations can also attract new funding streams even in recessionary times.

A new series of partnerships has emerged on campus. Centres of teaching and learning have become established in universities in the past few years, offering good collaboration opportunities for libraries. This is particularly true in the area of information literacy which has achieved a higher profile in recent times, with high quality programmes increasingly embedded in courses and reinforcing partnerships with academic units. This improved profile stems in part from an increase in non-traditional learners, for instance mature or distance students who need extra support in using libraries. The major factor is, however, the concern for academic standards raised by the highly variable quality of information on the web and the tendency for students to use it uncritically, often practicing very basic search skills and sometimes plagiarising other work. This has given libraries and centres for teaching and learning a common cause and really opened the door for initiatives to improve information

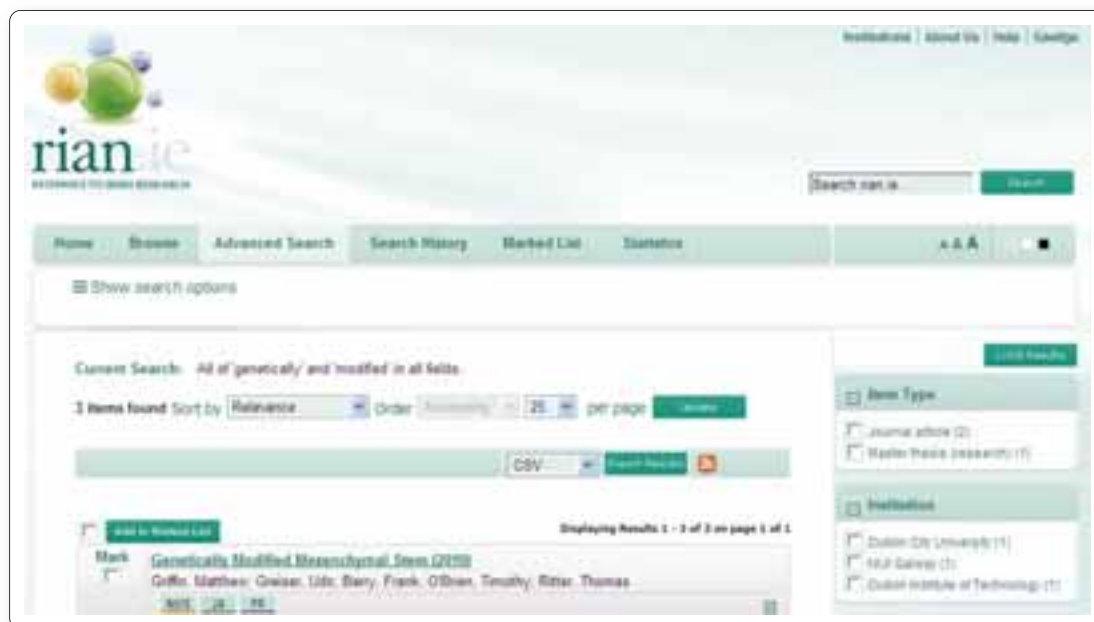
handling skills and critical thinking. There is scope for collaboration across a broader skills agenda too. Concerns with the level of writing skills possessed by students has led to the development of writing centres which offer support with essay composition and project work. The library is a common and logical location for such centres and there are clear synergies with not only information literacy but also with a range of study skills which can improve success rates for students and also secure stronger student retention.

There is increased focus in universities on the quality of the student experience as numbers grow and as competition between institutions increases. The number of services with which students need to interact is large and can involve treks to many locations around the campus. This, along with a general drive towards greater efficiencies in the recession, has led to efforts to consolidate services into fewer locations. The central and well recognised location of library buildings on campuses makes them a strong candidate for collocation of student-facing services. This may be limited to having IT support desks in the library, or can go somewhat further, as at Liverpool John Moores University in the UK, where a wide range of services including finance and registry is accessible. This has been called superconvergence (Heseltine et al., 2009) and is symptomatic of a move towards maximising the library building as a versatile asset to the university. There is a need to take an open-minded view of this, keeping a balance between the opportunities for stronger embedding of the library’s centrality on campus and the risks of diluting its identity.

Research is another area where libraries are deepening their partnerships with academic staff. The importance of archives and special collections as sources for original research continues to grow and Irish universities have rich holdings. There is an increased emphasis on broadening access to such material, as well as enhancing its preservation, through digitisation. Two notable examples are the 1641 Depositions project, which has encompassed the transcription and digitisation of 3,400 documents held in the Library of Trinity College Dublin (Lillington, 2009), and, at University College Dublin, the Irish Virtual Research Library and Archive (University College Dublin, 2010). The field of digital humanities is a real growth area, rich in opportunities for academic libraries in terms of new services and spaces. Humanities researchers continue to place a very high value on libraries and University College Cork boasts an excellent new research library building. New modes of research need new buildings and a recently funded Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Building at NUI Galway, adjoining the University Library, will bring a range of researchers together in an innovative space which will promote collaboration, knowledge generation, archival research and online dissemination of outputs. This investment is proof that innovation can still flourish in a recession.

Beyond the campus, Irish academic libraries have established a fine tradition of collaboration. Shared services are very much in vogue in the current recession and the Irish Research eLibrary (IREL) is an excellent example. The IREL consortium has delivered over 28,000 e-journals and other information resources, accessible at lower collective subscription costs than would be

**Rian: a single route to over
12,000 open access Irish
research publications**



realisable per institution and underpinning research and teaching. Scholars see IReL as a key part of the academic infrastructure and this has been evidenced in recent times by survey feedback (IReL Monitoring Group, 2009) and by the fact that additional money was voted to retain the service when one of its main funders, Science Foundation Ireland, discontinued its support due to budgetary pressures. This endorsement of IReL shows the value of partnership between Irish academic libraries, particularly in recessionary times.

Another well established collaboration is the Academic and National Libraries Training Co-Operative (ANLTC). ANLTC was established in 1994 and continues to deliver a wide range of training courses every year, accessible to all member institutions at a highly economic rate and vital to library staff skills development in changing times. A more recent partnership is Rian¹ (Rian, 2010) which provides a single point of access to over 12,000 research publications harvested from institutional repositories developed by the libraries of the seven Irish universities and Dublin Institute of Technology. This library-led initiative is highly relevant in making Irish research publications openly accessible and has been applauded by university presidents and by the Irish Universities Association. Looking to the future, there is scope for developing early work in the area of collaborative storage of printed material, delivering valuable savings by obviating the need to duplicate retention of lesser used materials at multiple institutions. More formal collaboration between certain universities, exemplified by the recent strategic alliance between NUI Galway and the University of Limerick (Healy and Flynn, 2010) will promote the development of shared services at library level too. Such partnerships are of their time, offering the potential to make scarce resources go further and to share talents in support of innovation. An interesting model from further afield is 2CUL (Cornell University and University of Columbia, 2010), a partnership between the libraries of Columbia University and Cornell University which aims to

maximise collective effort in areas like digitisation, collection development and cataloguing.

Exercising Service Leadership

Academic libraries can influence their future positively by exercising service leadership, thereby creating new roles for themselves which can enhance the academic mission. Some of the partnerships already mentioned fit this bill but there are other areas where libraries can open up new frontiers proactively. Open access publishing of institutional research outputs is a striking example. The Irish university libraries anticipated its importance by winning funding for three years under the Strategic Innovation Fund in 2007 to establish institutional repositories. These repositories are now very much of their time, not only in having published a critical mass of Irish research papers on open access, but in both driving and supporting a culture in which researchers and funders expect research outputs to be freely accessible in the public domain. It is now estimated that about 20% of the world's scientific journal literature is available on open access, bringing significant benefits to the research process (Bjork et al., 2010). Libraries have played a vital role through the skills of their staff in areas such as metadata and preservation and particularly by taking a lead in advocating change. Open access has been something of a slow burner among the academic community to date but persistence by librarians, along with the stronger focus on value for money and return on funding investment occasioned by the recession, has increased its momentum. Growth areas on the shorter and longer term horizons are the inclusion of research theses in repositories and the digital curation of research data sets, the latter an area of neglect to which librarians could bring valuable leadership (Brown and Swan, 2007).

Academic library leadership is also in evidence in another aspect of research output. This is in bibliometrics, the measurement of the impact of published research. Such measurement, primarily based on the extent to which research papers are cited, has become highly important as a criterion in deciding the allocation of research funding or, as in the UK Research Evaluation

1. National Portal for Open Access Research. *Rian* is the Irish word for path.



A simpler search interface based on Primo software

Framework, ranking the performance of research units. Irish interest in this field is increasing, as illustrated by a recent Higher Education Authority/Forfás report on research strengths in Ireland (Forfás and Higher Education Authority, 2009). Librarians have long been engaged in establishing the citation frequency of individual articles but have now extended this expertise considerably to encompass the analysis of citation trends for larger collections of papers from whole research groups (Coughlan, 2010) or comparatively among different disciplines and institutions. This new expertise is recognised and valued on campus, particularly by central research offices which are often charged with the provision of complex citation data to illustrate research performance. Bibliometrics extends well beyond number crunching and librarians' knowledge of the literature of different fields is invaluable in data interpretation. This expertise is likely to find further outlets due to a national bibliometrics project funded under the Strategic Innovation Fund and led by the Irish Universities Association. This project will afford access to a major dataset for Irish citation performance, the National Citation Report, and librarians will play a vital role in its use and analysis.

Digital preservation in its widest sense is a field where librarians can make a real difference. As previously noted, the field of digital humanities is growing and needs the right infrastructure in which to flourish. Academics value the increased volume of digital information available, enabling detailed textual analysis which, for example, throws new light on the evolution of language and ideas over time. However, there are two areas of particular frustration and concern. Firstly, global mass digitisation projects like Google Books generate sub-optimal tools through scanning errors and odd gaps in coverage (Henry and Smith, 2010). Secondly, research funding enables the creation of digital objects during the lifetime of a project, but long-term preservation and storage may not be provided for due to lack of technical knowledge. There is a definite opportunity for academic librarians to broaden the base of local expertise in digital preservation and to work together with academics and the Digital Humanities Observatory at the Royal Irish Academy to provide a stronger platform for digital humanities research in

Ireland. This is all the more timely following the award of funding for this field of research under the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL 5). It also makes sense in light of a likely increase in emphasis by academic libraries on the curation of a wider range of institutional digital outputs, perhaps ultimately at the expense of traditional roles in the provision of access to third party publications (Lewis, 2007).

Empowerment of users represents another lead role for academic libraries, especially in recessionary times when staffing resources are being reduced, although the key is to achieve an appropriate balance between self-service and the availability of expert in-person help by staff. Major strides have already been made in areas like self-issue which now accounts for the majority of book loans in many libraries, freeing up time for more detailed interventions by library staff. The delivery of e-journals to the desktop is another example which has improved access to information dramatically in terms of both volume and flexibility. The next such opportunity for libraries may well be the e-book which holds the promise of easier access to textbooks if academic publishers embrace the online medium for this purpose. Irish academic libraries will want to build on their earlier work with e-books (Cox, 2004) by taking the upper hand through expert advice on available content and licencing and by researching the range of access devices on the market.

The ongoing proliferation of online content, while promoting self-sufficiency to some extent, places the onus on academic libraries to ensure excellent interfaces and easy access to staff expertise. Google has increasingly become the yardstick for search systems and there is undoubtedly a need for academic libraries to make the online experience of their users as effective as possible. This often involves simplification, and libraries have implemented a range of metasearch tools to support simultaneous retrieval from a range of catalogues, databases, e-journals and other sources. There is, however, an ongoing need to provide expert staff help, sometimes online but often in person and at different levels of complexity, to students and researchers. Excellent customer service is something which libraries have always emphasised and its value is even higher in



‘Academic libraries continue to be distinguished more by their printed than their online collections.’

a climate which combines recession, higher student numbers, greater complexity in information provision and increased pressure on time.

Collections, print and electronic, remain the lifeblood of the academic library offering, and ensuring their ongoing development and ease of access is an ongoing priority. Although online publications often appear to attract most attention, printed collections continue to provide significant challenges and opportunities for leadership. Space is a particular consideration, and there is a growing realisation that the high cost of providing printed material on open access in the library building (Courant and Nielsen, 2010) can only be justified by high usage. Although it compromises the opportunities for discovery offered by serendipitous browsing, the trend is now towards the removal from open access of lesser used or online-available printed material. This allows repurposing of space to support new, often collaborative and technology-enabled, modes of learning. A gradual rather than sudden shift in this direction makes sense and the University of Glasgow offers a good example of progress on a floor-by-floor basis.

Academic libraries continue to be distinguished more by their printed than their online collections. Thus, all seven universities enjoy access to the online resources purchased by the IREL consortium but each of their libraries holds unique material in printed format. This is particularly so in the case of special collections and archives. Such collections not only underpin research but also enable libraries to make a strong contribution to the public profile of their institutions through seminars, exhibitions and other events. The acquisition of archives of local, regional or national significance often attracts media attention and public engagement, while the wealth of such material held by a university library can also interest prospective donors. There is a definite opportunity for academic libraries to promote awareness and exploitation of heritage collections and to take on an increasingly public function in their institutions.

Optimising Performance

It is said that what cannot be measured cannot be improved. The tightening of resources occasioned by the current recession has placed a strong emphasis on service measurement and this, far from being a threat, actually provides opportunities for academic libraries to prove their worth.

Irish university libraries have been active in surveying their users, whether institutionally or collectively (Cox, 2006), over the years and this activity has generated valuable data. When funds are tight, decisions on service development or curtailment need to be strongly evidence-based and a good understanding of the views, needs and habits of users is vital. Comparative data for performance benchmarking are increasingly called for and many of the members of the Consortium of National and University Libraries (CONUL) are participating in the LibQual (Association of Research Libraries Statistics and Assessment Program, 2010) survey process during 2010. LibQual is used worldwide and the deployment of a standard survey instrument enables a level of benchmarking of service performance with similar libraries in Ireland, the UK and beyond, highlighting gaps between users’ desired, acceptable and perceived levels of service. It identifies areas for development against which progress can be tracked by participation at annual or other intervals. Regular evaluation itself conveys a positive culture of improvement to institutional management and can assist the case for resourcing. Collection of statistical data on relevant aspects of service performance offers further possibilities for benchmarking and inclusion in the SCONUL statistics database can broaden the range of comparator institutions.

The recession has also heightened the focus on efficiencies in general, and value for money in particular. As already noted, the IREL initiative has been highly successful in both respects and attracted very positive comment. Other collective purchasing opportunities will continue to be promoted within and between institutions to maximise return on investment. The drive for efficiencies is placing an emphasis on reviewing all processes in terms of costs, effectiveness and necessity such that only the most valuable activities are sustained and, in the face of non-replacement of vacated posts, often delivered via different, less staff-intensive models. Optimal use of all resources, from energy to staff, is essential. The most effective deployment of staff is a key issue and the way academic libraries organise themselves needs to achieve maximum performance, promote teamwork and support delivery to institutional priorities, with the customer at the centre. Accordingly, a restructuring of library senior management posts at NUI Galway has seen the four Head of Division posts for Bibliographic, Information and Reader Services and for Library Systems redefined as follows:

- Head of Information Access and Learning Services, bringing together the subject librarian, collections purchasing and cataloguing teams with online resource and interface specialists to maximize information access.
- Head of Customer Focus and Research Services, uniting research support services previously spread across three divisions, enacting a sustained marketing strategy and embedding the customer focus agenda.

- Head of Staff Development and Service Environment, maximising staffing capability for customer benefit, ensuring a fully-functioning service environment and planning new or existing space optimally.
- Head of Organisational Development and Performance, driving forward annual planning, process analysis, performance measurement, environmental scanning and technology strategy.

This structure is still new, but early gains are wider knowledge distribution within the management team and beyond, the emergence of some new synergies and a focus on shared strategic priorities and values which has driven a range of recent planning initiatives. One certainty is that staffing deployments will continue to be reviewed and adapted, with more fluid boundaries than before.

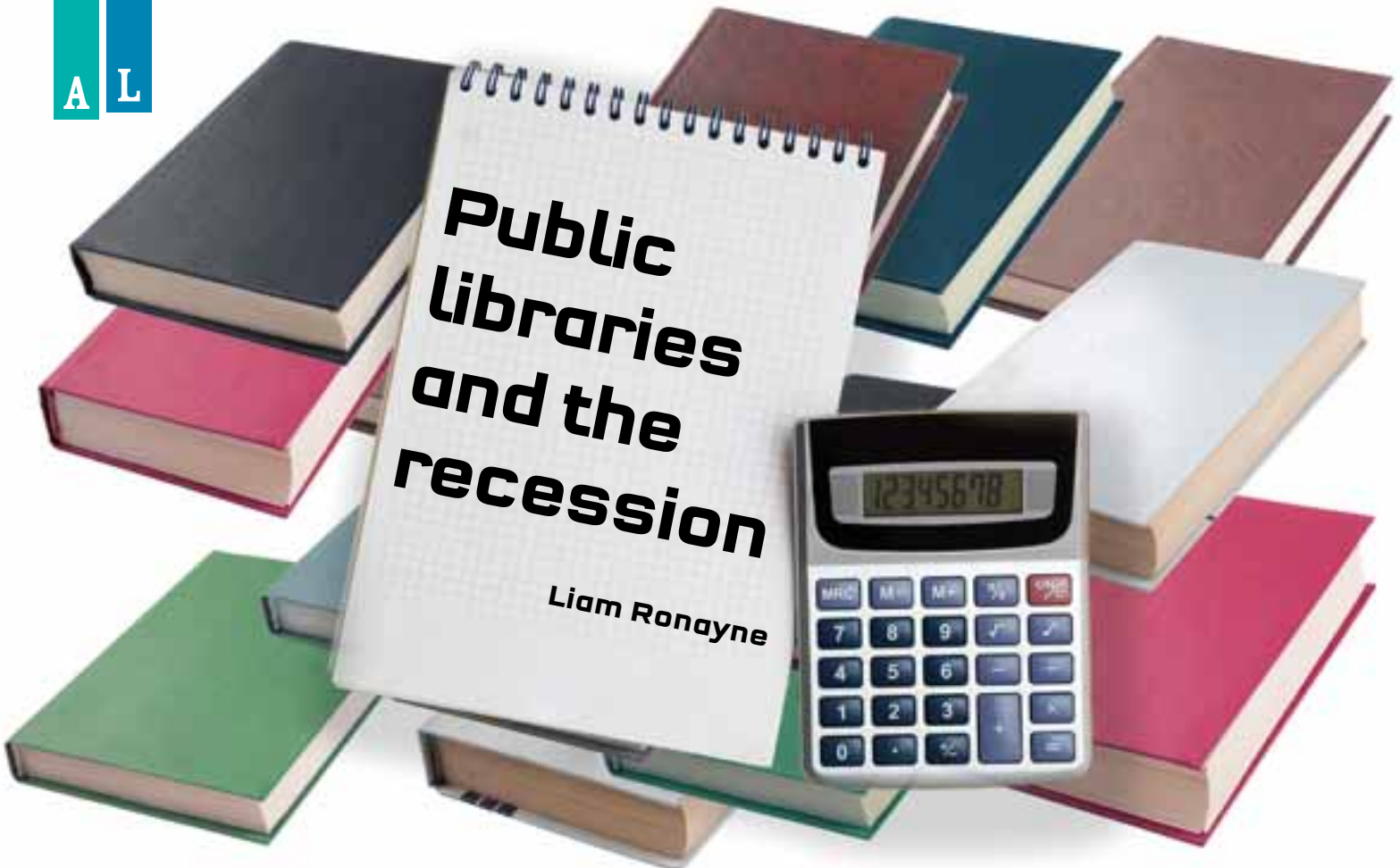
Conclusion

The global recession has certainly brought its share of pain to academic libraries (Cox, 2010). Staffing positions have been lost, budgets cut and expenditure on ongoing maintenance compromised. Tighter resources and alternative routes to information have challenged the status of the library on campus. It needs to be remembered, however, that libraries are not alone in this set of circumstances and the whole modus operandi of universities, including traditional hierarchies of knowledge creation, is being questioned by technology-enabled developments such as social networking. By refusing to give in to adversities arising from reduced funding, and by fighting back to develop new partnerships, roles and services, academic libraries are exercising a new brand of leadership on campus. Confronting recession is about more than just being more operationally efficient, although that is important too and is another area in which libraries can excel. Challenging economic times are actually facilitating academic libraries in enhancing their centrality to the scholarly mission and a culture of opportunism, agility and flexible skills development will serve all who work in them well.

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Introduction

The major global recession, now well into its third year, has affected almost every aspect of Irish society, doubling unemployment levels, and leading to reduced incomes for those in jobs, a huge drop in the price of houses with many households losing their homes, and a reduction in services of all kinds. It is widely accepted that public libraries are essential services with the potential to empower, educate, and transform the lives of individuals and communities, and this is especially true in times of societal and economic crisis.

The past eighteen to twenty months have seen a significant increase in usage of public libraries in Ireland. An Chomhairle

ABSTRACT

While the economic downturn which began in 2007, and went global in September 2008, has created many opportunities for public libraries, they are facing serious challenges and dangers, as a direct result of this recession. This article examines the increase in usage, the reasons for it, the threats public libraries face, and the opportunities they must take to successfully emerge from this crisis. The greater need for public libraries in a recession is discussed.

The increase in usage is no surprise, as we know from past experience that public library usage rises as the economy declines. Similarly public library authorities in the UK and North America have reported huge increases in visitor numbers, shifts in societal expectations, and demands for specific “job related” resources and services. At the time of writing very little research has been conducted to investigate the impact of this latest recession on public library usage. This article is intended as a small contribution to understanding the current situation in Ireland.

Keywords: *Public Libraries, Recession, Ireland*

Leabharlanna released figures, during the Bord Gais Energy Readiscover your Local Library Week in April 2010, indicating that people borrowed a record 16 million books nationwide from Ireland’s almost 360 public library service points during 2009. This is the highest figure ever recorded on Ireland’s library reading habits.¹

This increase in usage, as much as 20% in some areas, has been widely reported in the media, both newspapers and radio. Seamus Heaney, speaking at the launch of Libraries Ireland Week in March 2010, noted that

the Latin word ‘liber’ means both ‘book’ and ‘free’.² He traced the link “between the general literacy of a population and the

proper functioning of a democracy”. Heaney endorsed the role of libraries which are “there for the common good, to serve the whole population” and noted that they “are against relegation – not only against the relegation of any group among their potential audience, but against the relegation of any of that audience’s interests”. Written and spoken endorsements of the important role of libraries by public figures such as Joe O’Connor, Fintan O’Toole, George Hook and others in the recent past have also been widely reported.³

All of this recent media coverage is, of course, both welcome and useful. It comes at a time when public libraries need all the allies they can get because just as we see more and more people using libraries, so our library services have been put under extreme pressure because of cutbacks in both staffing and spending on new books and other materials.

Public Library Usage

Why then are people using public libraries in increasing numbers today? In the recently published *The Spirit level*, the authors, health researchers Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, state

“People’s sense of identity used to be embedded in the community to which they belonged, in people’s real knowledge of each other, but now it is cast adrift in the anonymity of mass society. Familiar faces have been replaced by a constant flux of strangers. As a result, who we are, identity itself is endlessly open to question”. (Wilkinson, 2009)

In such a time of change, libraries are places where people can help to anchor themselves, to gain a foothold through a shared love of books, through learning, simply as a place to come to and be accepted, no questions asked.

Libraries are much more than places, however, whether they are state of the art modern buildings, or libraries that have seen better days. More important than the resources and facilities provided by libraries are the people, the library staff both professional and para-professional. It is no harm, from time to time, to remind ourselves, despite our trenchant modesty, that libraries are effective because they are staffed by trained and committed people led by professional librarians who:

- Ensure that the public receive a quality service in keeping with best national and international practice;



many more besides.

- Use their experience and specialist skills to:
 - Work with children, and teenagers, engaging them so that they make the most of the huge resource that is the library;
 - Help members of the public find the book, other material or important piece of information they are looking for, and in the process help them to develop their information handling skills;
 - Provide access to all available resources for a variety of purposes: lifelong learning, a specific query, local history or genealogical research, or recreation;
 - Work with people with literacy difficulties, people with learning difficulties, and other disadvantaged groups;
 - Steer library services in the provision of new digital information services, to enable libraries and their users make good use of social media;
- Work with local and national partners to develop initiatives which enhance the services they can provide: e.g. the Children’s Book Fest, Bealtaine, Heritage Week, Science Week, as well as a plethora of local initiatives around this country, from Taobh Tíre in Donegal, to innovative access programmes in Cavan, to the International IMPAC Literary Award in Dublin, to the Year of the Constant Reader in Cork, and

It is a commonplace that when non-librarians, especially writers, are asked to speak at some library function they almost always

‘Public libraries represent a great return on investment by Irish society, by countering ignorance, social exclusion, and low expectations.’

focus on how staff in public libraries have helped change their lives. Public library staff are acknowledged as helpful, quietly knowledgeable, and trustworthy, a trust not afforded to all professional sectors.

Public Libraries and Literacy

Public libraries represent a great return on investment by Irish society, by countering ignorance, social exclusion, and low expectations. People use libraries for a range of reasons: ▶

1. See An Chomhairle Leabharlanna <http://www.librarycouncil.ie/publications/statistics.shtml>
 2. Seamus Heaney Libraries Ireland Week address available as podcast from http://www.libraryirelandweek.ie/images/stories/podcasts/LIW_Heaneyweb.mp3

3. Joe O’Connor Drive Time RTE March 9 2009 <http://www.rte.ie/podcasts/2009/pc/pod-v-050309-4m58s-drivetime.mp3>

- the library is a gateway to the world of knowledge for children, helping them to develop their literacy and information skills, and acting as a centre for culture for children and young people, for focused activities and peer socialization;
- the library promotes interest in literature, books and reading; it meets the public's need for recorded and printed music materials and a range of other media;
- the library acts as a focal point and a welcoming space for reading and social and cultural activities for everyone in the community:
 - a gateway to local events and organisations
 - a local meeting space and resource centre
 - housing exhibitions, author events and other activities;
- the library is a key focus of learning in the community, from the cradle to the grave, enhancing formal education and supporting adult learners and education generally; providing information for everyday living, bridging information gaps, and meeting the citizen's right to know by providing accurate and up-to-date information of all kinds;
- through lending of books and other materials, and by offering an increasing amount of content on their websites, the library enables people to read and study at home, connecting them to the larger community by that, often overlooked, inclusive process;
- the library also acts as the collective memory of its community and city or county, by comprehensively collecting, making available, and promoting local historical and cultural material of all types of events; the library is a resource for people to learn locally and learn globally;
- the library provides internet access for the entire community, and a space for people to use their own laptops and other devices, such as web-enabled phones etc.;
- the library is a powerful agent of interculturalism, helping immigrants to find their feet in their new home, and providing space and facilities for different cultures to meet.

Public Libraries and Children

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) set up the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 43 countries in 2000. It assesses children every three years, randomly selecting between 4,500 and 10,000 children in participating countries, depending on the population of that country. PISA endorses the view that children who read a lot and have books widely available to them perform much better in school. Children who have access to books and other reading materials acquire greater literacy and information-

handling skills than those who do not; indeed access to books, and a positive attitude to reading, are more important factors than the socio-economic status of their parents. Many parents will feed their children's appetite for books. In an unequal society like Ireland, however, many other parents are either unable or unwilling to buy books for their children. Public libraries offer all children in the community direct access to knowledge, learning and works of the imagination. Investing in children's futures, especially in their reading and comprehension skills, is a vital step in ensuring a more equal Ireland, a society where everyone can achieve their potential.

Culture and Heritage

In recent years the publication of report after report has impacted on, perhaps traumatised, Irish society: the Ryan Report (May 2009), the Murphy Report (August 2009), and this year's reports on the performance of the financial regulator, the state of the banks, for example (Ireland, 2009a; Ireland, 2009b). None of these Irish publications, however, has had a fraction of the

'This ... reminds us of the importance of the irreplaceable treasure which libraries and archives hold in trust for Irish people, people of Irish extraction all around the world, and those interested in the history and culture of this island..'

international impact of the online publication of the 1901 and 1911 censuses. This once again reminds us of the importance of the irreplaceable treasure which libraries and archives hold in trust for Irish people, people of Irish extraction all around the world, and those interested in the history and culture of this island. Local Studies is an often overlooked aspect of the work of public libraries. It is not, as some may assume, the preserve of a few local historians; it is used by and valued by many. Its continuing relevance is because it is not 'dry' history, rather it is about people, where they live now, and where and how they lived in past centuries. For school children doing projects local studies departments are the first port of call, for North Americans and Australians seeking a tangible link with the place(s) their ancestors came from, they are the primary reason for coming to Ireland.

As we will see later, libraries are successful agents of social and cultural inclusion, and have been for over a century. This facet of public libraries has never been more important, and needs a new focus in the changed Ireland of 2010.

Effects of Recession

The very welcome increase in the level of usage of libraries – even if the immediate cause is not welcome – will not necessarily save public libraries from cutbacks. In fact, in both 2009 and 2010, Irish public libraries have already been subjected to very damaging cuts. Even though they have

emerged as more vital services in times of recession, there is no reason to believe they will escape further cuts as government and local councils attempt to deal with the collapse of the public finances, and slash public spending. All public library authorities have been forced to reduce their investment in library services this year, most noticeably on staffing and on the purchase of new stock.

Expenditure on public library stock has fallen drastically in 2010 according to figures published this year by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna – from €13.5 million in 2009 to €10 million this year; a fall in the annual amount spent on books and other materials for every citizen from €3.17 to €2.37. The 2010 reduction follows a reduction of 11% between 2008 and 2009.

The imaginative efforts of library staff around Ireland to counter the impact of reduced bookfunds by moving stock between service points, and generally freshening up displays by drawing on the enhanced stock built up over recent years, has helped to alleviate things in the immediate term. The cuts in bookfunds will inevitably have long term implications for library use, as libraries are in very serious danger of returning to the less inviting, even shabby, places they were perceived to be in past years. The cuts in bookfunds will also impact negatively on two stated government objectives: the development of the 'smart' economy and the cultural economy – both of which are central to the economic recovery of the country.

For the second year running the Department of Education and Skill's primary school grant to library authorities has been removed, and there is little indication that it will be reinstated. The loss of this grant further diminishes the ability of libraries to provide the range of materials which children need to access fairly the world of knowledge, especially in rural counties with a large number of small schools at some distance from the nearest branch library.

The reduction in staffing budgets is, of course, directly related to the government directive on the non-replacement of staff. In common with other departments of local authorities and most other parts of the public service, library services have lost staff through normal retirement, special early retirement packages, and career breaks, as well as losing temporary staff whose contracts could not be renewed. The non-replacement of staff has directly led to reductions in hours of opening, even the closure of libraries, to reduced availability of staff to help the public, and a general diminution of the quality of service built up over the ten years of the first *Branching Out* policy, from 1998 to 2008 (Ireland, 1998; Ireland 2008). The non-replacement of staff is affecting all levels of the service. At the time of writing a large number of county library services are without a chief librarian, which inevitably leads to a loss of direction in the service, even without the other cuts.

It is crucial to recognize that we are not just observers looking on at the economic collapse from the outside, we are integrally involved: our services have suffered and will continue to suffer, our staffing has been reduced by ca 10% and is likely to be cut further through non-replacement; we are in danger of being submerged, and it would be foolish to imagine that it could

never happen. So far, however, the resilience that has seen public libraries survive for over a century has helped us adapt ourselves to the changed economy.

We have no stake in the discredited social and economic model that led to this collapse. Rather, the public library service is founded on an ethos that was always inimical to that model. Not only must we renew ourselves to serve a people suffering recession, we must serve as a beacon for another way of doing things. To quote Wilkinson and Pickett again

“The transformation of our society is a project in which we all have a shared interest. Greater equality is the gateway to a society capable of improving the quality of life for all of us and an essential step in the development of a sustainable economic system.”

“The strength of the evidence that a more equal society is a better society has a key role to play in changing public opinion. Many people have a strong personal belief in greater equality and fairness, but these values have remained private intuitions which they fear others do not share.” (Wilkinson, 2009)

Public libraries embody a different, fairer way of organizing society – equality of access to information, and to learning and cultural expression, an active and informed citizenry, freedom of thought and expression – in short a society where we can all achieve our potential. Libraries can, simply by doing what we do best, make a unique contribution to a more equal society, never more important than in times like these.

Public Library Response

How well are libraries responding to the situation created by the global recession? What are they doing to meet the needs of the newly unemployed, those seeking scarce jobs, those with more time on their hands, and less money in their pockets? What more could they, and should they, be doing? Considering the speed of the economic collapse, and the fact that library services are operating with fewer staff and with reduced budgets, the response in 2009 and so far in 2010 has been very heartening.

The socio-economic model that we adopted, or, more correctly, was adopted on our behalf, has been shown to be fundamentally flawed. The metaphor of a boat or ship keeps coming up in public discourse, not surprisingly perhaps for an island nation. Sean Lemass promised more than half a century ago, a rising tide that would lift all boats; Fintan O'Toole's phrase in his devastating critique of the Celtic Tiger years is 'ship of fools' (O'Toole, 2009). The reality for many is that the tide is threatening to submerge us. Families with commitments taken on in good faith because of the apparent success of the Irish economic model – large mortgages, long journeys to work, expensive child-minding, unaffordable lifestyles – are now facing melt-down.

It would be a bad mistake to over emphasize what libraries can do in what is a very unequal society, in both geographic and class terms. By the same token one should not ignore the fact

that there is great potential to do a lot more in terms of inclusion and empowerment, in helping to make Ireland a more equal society. This chastened society provides Irish libraries with an unprecedented opportunity to put flesh on the bones of our aspirations to make libraries real agents of social and cultural inclusion. Let's look at the potential of libraries, what they are doing, and what more can be done.

Social Inclusion

Libraries are serious about social inclusion, and have been for long before the phrase was minted. Public libraries were known as the 'poor man's university' for more than a century. As Ireland struggles with recession, social inclusion presents two main challenges to library staff and their parent organizations: 1) we must meet the challenges of social inclusion as they directly affect libraries; and 2) we must foster and enhance real social inclusion in the community at large. Increasing unemployment and reduced take-home pay and benefits will, if unchecked, lead to greater social and geographical exclusion and inequality. Library services must ensure that their policies and programmes directly address these dangers.

Public libraries are highly accessible, respecting the diversity and individuality of all people, and play an essential role in community building and civic renewal. Libraries are at any one time meeting places, resources for learning, and comfortable and relaxing public spaces. They thus have huge potential to reach out and engage with everyone, and properly resourced can achieve that potential. The government's public library policy *Branching Out: a new public library service* and its successor *Branching Out: future directions* emphasize the potential of libraries to provide the infrastructure for inclusion. (Ireland, 1998; Ireland, 2008). These policies recognize the constancy of libraries in the communities they serve, and identify them as a means of realizing government objectives on social justice and inclusion and especially on digital literacy.

In the years ahead the emphasis will be on economic recovery, but social inclusion policies must provide for a wider range of goals, including equitable access to information and cultural activities. Social inclusion must cover more than the world of work, both because a healthy society should follow other priorities besides the work ethic, and because at any given time many people are outside the world of work. Among other things the library service must continue to

- secure access to all types of published information, irrespective of formats;
- offer adult lifelong learning and training opportunities; and

- enable all citizens to have access to information and communications technologies, ensuring that the 'Information Society' is not an empty phrase, but is a goal accessible to everyone in the community.

Efforts to support cultural identity and cultural diversity in our rapidly changing cities and towns must be increased. Libraries have made a very solid start in this regard, and we have much to learn from library services in other countries which have welcomed immigrants in previous decades.

Libraries have responded to the recession by enhancing the resources they provide for job seekers. They are responding to the needs of people who have been laid off and are looking to improve their literacy skills, for example former building workers who left school early. Libraries are organizing or hosting events focused on jobs, career development, and interview preparation. One such event, organized by Cork City Libraries in October 2009 under the banner 'Get that Job! Create that Job!' proved very successful, with a variety of advisory agencies setting up stalls in the Central Library and large numbers of people present, from lunchtime to late evening.

Libraries are also producing reading lists and book promotions geared to the needs of persons affected by the recession, and giving greater emphasis on websites to jobs, budgeting and dealing with reduced incomes, etc.

Advocacy

There is certainly no room for complacency. In fact we need to radically improve our advocacy and promotion. Seamus Heaney's fine words, quoted at the beginning of this article, are very welcome but huge swathes of society and of opinion formers are unaware of the benefits of using libraries. Such advocacy should encompass:

- The value of what we offer, not just value for money, although that too
- The professional and trained staff that comprise libraries greatest strength
- The fact we are the only service that can offer the resources we have, in the open and welcoming way we do.

We must conduct such advocacy through stories that connect with the general public.

We must get the message out in an effective way: identify which audiences we need to connect with, and ensure the right message for the right audience at the right time.

We have already noted the importance of library staff in bringing the library to life. In advocating the benefits of libraries, we must also bang the drum on the importance of librarians. Let us stay unassuming at a personal level, but let no one assume we don't matter.

We must also seek to learn lessons from other countries, facing similar socio-economic situations to Ireland. In England and Wales it is widely acknowledged that public libraries are going through tough times. The decision by the recently elected British government to abolish the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (MLA), with a public library remit broadly similar to An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, removes an important voice for the sector when it is needed most. This decision raises questions about how important the British government really feels libraries are. There is a growing volume of reportage and research on how North American libraries are dealing with the recession, where some library boards have made drastic decisions in response to fiscal meltdown. The library service in Camden, NJ, for example, was threatened with closure, with its entire stock being sold off, but at the time of writing has won a reprieve, for the moment at least. Previously, though, a number of public libraries in the USA had closed their doors because of loss of funding (Katz 2010; Kellogg 2010; Steele 2010).

Although we have a unique role in local communities, we must not fall into the trap of feeling that we stand alone. Public libraries began in the era of Victorian improvements: public baths and parks, public sanitation, the beginnings of social housing, etc.; this is an important part of our heritage. It is important that we look for allies, among other public service agencies, and with community bodies to re-enforce the centrality of libraries in achieving a progressive, inclusive and equal society.

The allies are there if we look for them. For example Cork City Libraries' project 'Start Reading' is designed to radically improve young children's reading skills in a specific geographic area of the city, the north eastern suburbs. The project begins in September 2010 with children in pre-schools and crèches, and will progress over time into the early years of primary school, monitoring their progress at each stage. Cork City Libraries' input is in the form of advice and support in reading materials, programmed visits to the Frank O'Connor Library, Mayfield – the base for the project – events, including author visits, puppet shows, art workshops, and the provision of innovative programmes, to identify reading in the minds of young children as an adventure and fun. This Library will supply books on block loan to participating playschools, including picture books, predictable books, nursery rhymes and fairy tales, and story sacks where the child can explore a theme in a story through play.

The preschool years, particularly between the ages of 3 and 5 years, are very significant for language development. Both expressive and receptive language develops rapidly at this stage. Reading to a child at this time is extremely helpful to the child's speech and language development. Through reading and listening to stories children can experience an explosion of vocabulary which can help them communicate their emotions, desires and questions. This is also a time when a child forms opinions. Cork City Libraries wants to help preschoolers to discover the fun of reading by showing them at a very young age that the library is a fun place to be, and a literary sweet shop just waiting to be discovered. The longer-term aim is to contribute to more equal access to educational opportunity and creative expression.

Conclusion

Irish public libraries are responding energetically and imaginatively to the recession. The public library is an essential resource for everyone in the community with the potential to empower, educate, and transform lives. In this time of societal and economic crisis public libraries have never been more important, and they have the potential to do much more in meeting the needs of people directly affected by the recession. The cutbacks suffered by public libraries constitute the major obstacle to achieving that potential. Public library staff can only hold the line for so long. This is a decisive time for all public services. Unless the required investment is made in public libraries a unique chance to renew Irish society after this recession will be lost. The opportunity to create a more equitable, better and sustainable quality of life for all Irish people will also be lost.

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Are social networks effective tools for delivering information to Irish library users?

Jane Burns

Defining Social Networks

You would be forgiven for thinking the term ‘social networking’ is a new one, but in reality it has been around for a long time. The primary purpose of social networking is to be in communication with other people who share your interests. In the not-too-distant past, neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools and communities were the primary means people used to network socially. However, the difference between the social networking experiences then and now is that the activity has moved to an online forum.

So why has this basic human interaction exploded into an online phenomenon? Perhaps the mechanics of how we now network have changed, and the speed and visibility of what we are communicating are contributing to this. Social networks are no longer considered trends, but rather have taken their place as communication tools. The uses of social networking are varied: from the maintenance of personal relationships, to marketing forums for companies, to the dissemination of information to library users – to name just a few.

The purpose of this article is to examine the question “Are social networks effective tools for delivering information to Irish library users?” To support the ideas that will be explored in this



article, I sent a survey to all members of the Academic & Special Library Section and to the LAI mailing list in March 2010. The responses were very informative and helpful – I am grateful for all the support. The results of the survey are discussed in context in this article and are referred to as the “Irish Library Social Networking Survey” (ILSNS).¹

The survey was targeted at these user groups in order to find out to what extent they were using social networks, if any, and if they were using them, which ones and for what purposes: work, personal or a combination. I also wanted to identify if there were similarities in opinion on the positive aspects of using social networks and, equally, if there was concurrence on the risks and negative aspects. Overall I was looking for my professional colleagues’ opinions on how useful they find social networking in delivering information to Irish library users. Specific relevant results of the survey are discussed throughout this article.

Louise Farragher and Cathal McCauley² reviewed cybersocial networks in *An Leabharlann* in 2008, concentrating on explaining what Facebook and Second Life were all about. This article follows on from there to see how, two years later, these and other social networking sites are being used in the delivery of information to library users.

Types of Social Networks

There are different types of social networks, many of which are used interchangeably on a regular basis. Users are able to use them as stand-alone tools or as an integrated suite. It seems that, as quickly as applications for social networks are developing, so too is the development of social networks for all types of communication.

Participants in the ILSNS were asked to identify which of the social networks they use on a regular basis, and to indicate whether this was for personal use, work-related use, a combination of both, or none. The top five results were not too surprising: 1. Facebook, 2. Twitter, 3. Flickr, 4. LinkedIn, 5. MySpace.

Over 50% of the respondents use social networking sites for personal use only, 27% for work only, and 33% for a combination of personal and work use. There wasn't anybody who responded to the survey that was not a user of any of social network application in any capacity.

The Many Faces of Facebook

The most popular feature of Facebook is the Profile, which is a personal account. Anyone (aged 13 and over) who has an email account and access to a computer can open a Facebook page. Most individuals have a Profile. With a Profile account you have control over who your friends are, who has access to your information (by using various security settings), and you can post messages to your wall and your friends. Content on a Profile is the content that the page owner creates and maintains that is personal to them.

Another feature of Facebook is the Facebook Group. Facebook allows for the creation of different networks and groups which ordinary users can join. Groups are used for discussions, events and so on, and are a way of enabling a number of people to come together online to share information and discuss specific subjects. Groups have limitations on the size of membership and can choose to allow members to join exclusively by invitation. Groups also have the ability to be "hidden" from other Facebook users and allow visibility to members only.

The Facebook Page feature evolved from the Group feature. The Page feature is used by most organisations, companies, libraries, brands, etc who want to communicate with a large audience.

Howard Greenstein³ has put together a very useful guide outlining the differences between these Facebook features. He points out that Facebook Groups are set up for more personal interactions and are connected to the people who administer them: when something is posted from a Facebook Group, its administrators are listed. However, when a message is posted from a Facebook Page, the administrators are not listed. Messages from a Group, therefore, have the potential to be seen as more personal communications.

Brief Guide to the Top 5 Social Networking Sites



Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) is a social networking website on which registered users can add people as friends and communicate with them; they can set up personal profiles and join other networks and organisations. Information posted on Facebook can be made public or private.



Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>) is a microblogging social network. Users can send and read messages (known as "tweets") that are limited to 140 characters. Information posted on Twitter is public, but there are some restrictions that can apply to followers.



Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com>) is a website that hosts images and videos for an online community who want to share their work. The site is also used by bloggers to display their images and social networking postings. Information posted on Flickr can be made public or private.



LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>) is often referred to as the business professional's social networking site. Very little personal information is posted here. Information posted on LinkedIn can be made public or private.



MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>) is a social networking site that was popular in the USA but has now been overtaken globally by Facebook.

One popular feature of the Facebook Page is the "Like" icon. Clicking this allows any Facebook user to indicate that they "like" an individual product or service. This in turn allows the owner of the Page to build up a profile of its users.

The Library of Congress's Facebook Page is a good example of a library using the "Like" feature to connect with users. At the time of writing this article I became the 25,807 fan of its Facebook Page. I can see at a glance the various events being held at the Library of Congress, photographs of recent exhibits and I can even see which of my friends from my Facebook Profile are also fans.

The various Irish university libraries have also added features for the users of their Facebook Pages: users can click into each library's online catalogue (they need to have user name and password), check opening hours, view special events, etc. Users ▶

1. ILSNS (Irish Library Social Networking Survey). Conducted by Jane Burns (issued April 27, 2010; closed May 15, 2010).
2. Farragher, L. and McCauley, C. (2008) 'Cybersocial Networks.' *An Leabharlann*, 17 (3): 33-36.

3. Greenstein, H. (2009) *Facebook Pages vs. Facebook Groups: What's the Difference?* [Internet] Mashable on Facebook. Available from: <http://mashable.com/2009/05/27/facebook-page-vs-group/> [Accessed 27 September 2010]

can also click through to each of the universities' main websites. There is some duplication of information between the libraries' Facebook Pages and the universities' own Library web pages, but the benefit of having this information in different places is that users can interact with the content in their own context. If they are using Facebook, they do not have to leave it to move to a website to access library information, and vice versa.

Uses and Applications of Social Networks in a Library Environment

Social networks are not replacements for existing channels of communication; rather they offer an alternative way to communicate. In particular, for libraries, they provide a solution suite for communicating with users (in many cases, multi-generational) and stakeholders with different interests, and for providing resources to points of access.

If one considers the primary users of third-level libraries, they tend to be made up of people aged 17 to 25 years. This age group is usually adept at creating their own content in their preferred context. It is an important challenge to have information organised in such a way as to facilitate this. Remotely logging into a library OPAC is not going to appeal to them; rather such things as plug-ins, apps or widgets are the way to engage with them.

Marketing library services through social networking applications is another consideration. Z. David Xia,⁴ in his article about marketing library services through Facebook Groups, examined different types of interactions between members, and his findings concluded that the success of such a Group is strongly influenced by the active participation of librarians and the use of general topics to keep discussions flowing. His findings also indicated that students as well as faculty should be targeted for inclusion. Student-managed, student-focussed Facebook Pages were not as successful. It is important to remind ourselves that it is the content as well as the management of the content that is critical. Opening up a discussion and hoping for the best just is not going to work. With most (59%) participants in the ILSNS indicating that there is no dedicated person for the development of social networking communications in their place of work, this is a cause for concern. Setting up a library Facebook page with no resource dedicated to its development and maintenance is more than likely going to fail.

Libraries can make content about events, news, and special announcements available via their Facebook pages. They could inform users about events, news, and special announcements or even offer the option of online chatting with a librarian – an electronic version of the physical experience of a user coming into a library and asking for information assistance.

Another area that libraries are starting to explore is using social networks to highlight, communicate about and disseminate their special collections. In many cases, this offers users the only way to see a collection in its entirety. Advances in digitisation have made whole collections now available to users via website links and using social media, and they are invited to take part in discussions about them. For some organisations the special collection is the “gem,” the thing that sets them apart from others. Making special collections available to researchers encourages engagement with the library, and the university it is attached to – if relevant. It also raises their profiles. This interaction can raise the potential for collaboration and, in some cases, funding. In an era when most people assume all the information they want is available freely on the Internet, there is a real challenge to provide something different and unique.

Scott Koerwer,⁵ in his commentary article entitled “One Teenager’s Advice to Adults on How to Avoid being Creepy on Facebook,” gives some insight from a teen perspective into interaction with a library on Facebook. In his commentary, he points out the importance of appropriate “friending” of students. Attempts by a librarian to individually contact a student may have a negative impact – a librarian contacting them may put off some people of this generation who are not yet comfortable in the physical library. He suggests that setting up a Facebook page that supplies content about a library event or sending a collective message only a few times a semester is a better way to go than a constant stream of news messages which would not appeal to this age group.

Access to Social Networks and Risks Involved

Social networks have, in recent times, moved from applications of personal use to marketing and communication environments for many businesses, organisations and libraries worldwide. There are issues about the adoption of these communication tools in terms of their content, content development and maintenance. The application of personal and work-related uses is very different. There is a general acceptance that libraries, like many businesses, need to have a presence in the social networking environment. But there are risks. These risks are not only about content but also, more practically, about such things as who is going to develop, monitor and evaluate the library’s presence.

In the ILSNS, respondents indicated that a number of them use social networking in the workplace. The most significant issue was their organisation’s policy towards access to these sites: 53% indicated that their organisations did allow access, 38% indicated that their organisations did not, and the balance of 9% were not sure.

Once past the hurdle of access to social networking sites, libraries must deal with other limits and risks. Using Facebook as an example to consider these limits and risks, the main issues are:

- Maintaining an effective presence on Facebook is not an easy task. It is time consuming.



- It needs to be managed in a sophisticated way to match the organisation's message – so that it is not personal, etc. ILSNS respondents were asked if their workplaces had a dedicated person/resource to manage the social networking space and 59% of respondents indicated that they did not.
- The technology is changing so quickly that it is almost impossible to have a concrete policy on access to and posting of information to social networking sites. In the survey, participants were asked whether their organisations had a policy for this and 73% respondents indicated that they did not.
- Traditional analytical tools do not tell the whole story of a user's experience of a library's Facebook page, since users flow between many social networking sites. For example, a library's content on Facebook could be reposted and discussed on Twitter without the two ever being connected. Facebook's analytical tool *Insights*⁶ is useful in that it allows the Administrator(s) of a Facebook page to see the level of user exposure and behaviour that relates to their Facebook page. This was done initially by just measuring the numbers of connections but new features give information about the content of the stream of users (fans) of the Facebook page.
- Social networking is not just about an organisation developing and pushing out content; it is also about listening to and monitoring not only what is being said about your library but in what ways your content is being repackaged or reformatted that can change your initial meaning and intention.
- Employees could inadvertently post messages that are their own opinions but could be interpreted as those of the library which may be in conflict.
- There are risks involved in giving access to Facebook and other social media sites to employees, as there is the temptation to access personal accounts. Users accessing social networks, which are essentially open networks, can pose threats to a library's IT system and the organisation as a whole.
- The issue of storage and retrieval is important – how do you get back what has been published? Or worse, how do you permanently delete something?
- Where is the line in the blend of what is "official" and what is not? Organisations can draw up guidelines for staff on what can and cannot be posted on social networking sites. However, when dealing with students, there is a limitation to what can be imposed (as they are not agents of the organisation), and it may be hard to find where they have created information – such as other social networks that are off a library's radar. ▶

4. Xia, Z. D. (2009) 'Marketing Library Services through Facebook Groups.' *Library Management*, 30 (6/7):469–478.
 5. Koerwer, S. (2007) 'One Teenager's Advice to Adults on How to Avoid being Creepy on Facebook.' *Computers in Libraries*, 27 (8): 40–41.

6. Facebook Help Center: Guide to Insights Analytical Tool [Internet] Available from: <http://www.facebook.com/help/?search=insight> [Accessed 27 September 2010]
 7. Piper, A. (2010) 'Social Skills.' *Internal Auditing*, 34 (6): 22–24.

- Another risk is under-use by members and this would result in the perception that the library content is not important.

Many organisations worry that social media communication channels are too trendy and risky for their brands, but others are making them pay dividends. Social media tools uniquely provide global reach and have the potential for fine-grained market segmentation at the same time.⁷ This model can be applied to libraries as well.

Perceptions of Effectiveness of Content on Social Networking Sites

Participants in the ILSNS were asked “From your experience of using social networking sites, how would you rate their effectiveness as sources of information in relation to your work?”

80% of respondents thought they were excellent sources of information, 47% of respondents thought they were good sources, 24% were unsure, and 21% collectively thought they were either poor sources of information or a waste of time.

These responses do not paint a clear picture of the standard view of librarians’ perceptions of the effectiveness of content on social networking sites, and these results would probably be the same in many other sectors. This is primarily due to the newness of the use of this type of technology in a non-personal setting and the rapidly changing technology that accompanies it.

Librarians are in a unique position in this arena. The key to the success of any social network is its content. The potential to make a social network an effective tool is amazing. The role of librarians (who have the abilities to develop, organise, store and retrieve information that is user specific) in these channels of information accessibility is a potential gold mine.

Next Steps and Some Recommendations

The world around us is changing rapidly. It seems the moment we adapt to some new, but only recently available, technology, it is already obsolete. Accessibility of information is now immediate. The expectations of library users have moved on from finding a seat in the library to study to 24/7 always-on remote access from anywhere in the world, with the only requirement being a hand-held device with internet access.

There is a feeling of being pulled – do we concentrate staff and time on developing a communications platform with these social networking sites and run the risk of neglecting existing communication services? To get to the answer that is appropriate for each library, the first step is the development of a communications strategy, which identifies who the library wants and needs to communicate with, and the solutions that

are currently available and appropriate. A review of existing communication channels that are working well should be undertaken. Ideally, the output of this would be a suite of solutions that combine both existing effective channels as well as an adoption and integration of new social networking channels. A key element in all of this is the inclusion of stakeholders. This can be done by means of surveys, focus groups and workshops. The overall approach to the strategy is that it should be flexible enough to evolve with the changes in communication to provide an integrated approach.

Libraries cannot solely rely on existing analytical tools to monitor usage and activity. The very nature of social networking is that it is not just about producing and pushing out content, it is also about listening to and monitoring what our users are saying and posting. Users may not even use the same medium to engage with the content you have developed. The challenge in this regard is to have regular strategic reviews of what is and is not working, and to be open to discard some things. This will leave you with time to develop existing and new ways of communication.

Finally, my overall recommendation would be to see this new technology not as a threat but as an exciting opportunity to reach more users in ways we never thought possible.

Conclusions

While the output from the ILSNS and the information uncovered in the research reviewed indicates that librarians and libraries are using social networking to deliver information to users, the measure of the effectiveness is inconclusive. This lack of definitive information is to do with the “newness” and dynamic nature of these applications. However, I do think that librarians and libraries should engage more with these applications if they wish to reach more and more users. The risks and benefits, as well as the resources, need to be weighed up by individuals and their organisations.

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‘With your unconstraining voice still persuade us to rejoice’¹ poetry promotion in public libraries

Brian Hegarty and Clare Thornley

Research

This article is based on a Masters in Library and Information Studies (2009) dissertation at University College Dublin which aimed to establish the nature and extent of poetry promotion in Irish public libraries at present, and to make recommendations for the effective promotion of poetry in the future. Does poetry matter and should libraries care? In Auden’s elegy to W.B. Yeats he writes both that ‘poetry makes nothing happen’ and also of its power, as in the line used in title of this article, to create energy and hope in desperate situations. So it does matter, perhaps, even more in these difficult times. This article suggests ways libraries can bring poetry to more people. This research was done by conducting interviews with librarians and poets to develop a detailed understanding of the topic: questionnaires were circulated to library authorities to provide an overview of poetry promotion in public libraries nationwide.

The researcher chose to focus on poetry, as despite the work done by libraries in promoting literature in general, the promotion of poetry is less often seen as central to the role of the library. Poetry, however, is both a central part of our literary heritage and future, and as such it deserves to reach as many people as possible. Public libraries can play a key role in bringing people and poetry together. Dylan Thomas stated that “the printed page is the place to examine the works of a poem, and the platform is the place to give the poem the works” (Wright and Asser, 1995). Public libraries are in the unique position of being able to provide both “the printed page” and “the platform”. This research focused on the promotion of poetry to adults rather than to children, as the promotion of poetry to adults entails a different set of challenges, and in many cases

calls for a different set of techniques. The research reveals that in many cases the promotion of poetry in public libraries entails different challenges to more general literature promotion. These challenges, however, can be overcome using tailored approaches and offer new opportunities for reaching library users.



The main challenge is that poetry tends not to be in heavy demand among the reading public. Poet and librarian Tom McCarthy describes poetry as “a high priority within a narrow profile of the reading public” (McCarthy, 1998). Poet Eileen Sheehan states that although Ireland boasts several poetry publishers and literary journals, these are dependent on Arts Council funding, rather than sales revenue. She adds that “despite our rich poetic tradition, we have been failing to engage a readership for poetry, with most bookshops refusing to stock poetry titles because poetry does not sell” (McBreen, 2009). Irish libraries, however, do stock poetry, especially titles by Irish authors. In the essay ‘Poetry and Public Libraries: the Irish experience’, Austin Vaughan reports that: “All libraries have poetry collections. All have policies of buying works by all local poets and the best of contemporary Irish poetry” (Vaughan, 2004).



Despite the aforementioned difficulty, poetry lends itself to promotion in a variety of ways. Chris Meade of the UK’s Poetry Society argues that: “Poetry books are extremely borrowable; light to carry home, easy to flick through, no danger of being stuck half way through the story when you need to return them” (Meade, 1997).

Poetry is eminently suitable for promotion in the form of visual displays, as promotional posters can “contain whole works, not

1. W.H. Auden, 1940. *In Memory of W.B. Yeats*. The last three verses read:

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining
voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to
praise.



just extracts and blurb” (Poetry Society website). Many Irish librarians take advantage of this, creating captivating poetry displays and distributing photocopies of carefully-chosen poems to bring patrons face-to-face with poetry. Throughout the month of April, which is National Poetry Month in the U.S., Galway County Librarian Pat McMahon photocopies poems to distribute around the library, for library patrons to read and to take home. He obtains these poems by subscribing to the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group’s Poem-a-Day mailing list at <http://poem-a-day.knopfdoubleday.com/>, as well as the Academy of American Poets’ Poem-a-Day list at <http://www.poets.org/poemADay.php>. These poems are carefully chosen, and are already in the public arena for promotional purposes. While librarians must observe copyright legislation, local poets, and poets who have an upcoming event in the library will often agree to have their work promoted in this fashion, and a vast body of classic poetry is now in the public domain.

A key difference between poetry and prose is that it is widely (although not universally) acknowledged that poetry, especially modern poetry, must be heard aloud to be fully appreciated. Poetry readings are acknowledged throughout the literature on this subject as an extremely important method of promotion, and most of the librarians and poets interviewed as part of this

research referred to poetry readings as the predominant method of promoting poetry in public libraries. A poem can be read in a few minutes, in contrast to a novel, and this is well within the attention span of an audience. Furthermore, the experience of hearing a poet read his or her work aloud can be particularly revelatory. Poet Anne Fitzgerald comments that “when in the privacy of re-reading poetry from the text, it is possible to hear again, the voice of the poet resonating, to hear where the stresses fall” (Lendennie: 2009). During this research, one librarian stated that the opportunity to meet a poet can overcome many people’s antipathy to poetry, as people often “find the poet less forbidding than the poem”, and are interested in hearing the poet speaking about their craft and their inspiration. Several librarians and poets agreed that a question and answer session brings a wonderful exploratory and participatory element to poetry readings.

Most pragmatically, from the point of view of librarians organising poetry readings, it is often much easier to secure a visit from a poet than from a novelist. Novelists tend to have a far busier promotional schedule than poets, and novelists’ fees for a reading are also much higher than those of most poets. Many poets regard readings as a significant part of their work, an enjoyable and affirming experience. The Poetry Archive website states that poetry readings provide poets with the opportunity



“to showcase work, meet readers, communicate with fellow poetry-lovers, try out new material and sell books” (Poetry Archive website).

Results

The research revealed the need for libraries to build strong links with local relevant persons and organisations, especially given current staff-time constraints. Links with local media will allow for efficient and effective publicising of poetry events, a generally difficult and time-consuming task. Cork City Librarian Liam Ronayne commented in his recent article *A Year of Reading Variously: The Year of the Constant Reader in Cork City Libraries*, that securing a partnership with the local newspaper and radio station was “invaluable in letting people know what was happening” in terms of literary events in the city’s library branches, even more so than securing financial sponsorship (Ronayne, 2010). Co-operation with local literature centres and writers’ groups can maximise audience numbers, as these organisations often have a loyal audience. Such links also allow libraries to facilitate poetry reading and writing groups at minimal financial and staff-time expense, by allowing libraries to launch such groups, and to connect them with experienced writers who can provide guidance, as advised by the Poetry Society (Poetry Society website). There are many examples of

productive partnerships between Irish public libraries and local organisations. The monthly *Over the Edge: Open Readings series*, hosted by Galway City Library, and run by the professional literary organisation Over the Edge, consistently attracts large audiences.

Book clubs have become exceedingly popular in recent years. Although book clubs tend to be autonomous entities, and generally choose to discuss novels, some Irish librarians have successfully introduced well-chosen poems for discussion along with novels, as advised by New York poetry advocates Poets House (Poets House, 2009).

Librarian Charlie Quinn of Blanchardstown Library advised the researcher that book club members often form a core part of the audience at poetry events, and introducing them to the work of an upcoming poet can maximise audience numbers. Mary Breathnach at Celbridge Library has recently started a monthly poetry group, in addition to existing book clubs, which meets to read and discuss poems chosen by members.

The online environment is eminently suitable for the promotion of poetry, as evidenced by such websites as www.poetryarchive.com, www.poets.org and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/poetryseason>. A webpage can provide a full and immediate encounter with the



text of a poem, and the listening and viewing experience can be facilitated by way of audio and video files. Several Irish library authorities maintain a weblog on a website such as blogspot and wordpress, and some post book reviews, publicise upcoming poetry events, and post audio and video files of poetry performances. The research found that such websites often allow library staff to promote poetry, as well as other library materials and events, with much greater ease than do local authority websites.

Among the librarians and poets who participated in this research, there was widespread (although not unanimous) agreement that library staff members could benefit from training relating to the promotion of poetry. The Frontline online training programme, currently provided to public library staff throughout Ireland, is certainly relevant to some aspects of the promotion of poetry. However, certain key aspects of training, as suggested by both library staff and poets during this research, are not covered by Frontline. In other countries, library staff are provided with training specific to poetry promotion. New York's Poets House offer on-site training to librarians throughout the US (Poets House website). In Edinburgh, the Scottish Poetry Library offers similar training, adapted for a Scottish context (Scottish Poetry Library website).

Recommendations

One of the most significant factors in the success of any library branch in promoting poetry is the attitude of library staff towards poetry. Like most of the reading public, many library staff do not read poetry, and many are not entirely comfortable with its promotion. Based on the results of this research, it is suggested that this can be overcome by the provision of training sessions. Training can give interested staff the inspiration, confidence and know-how to organise successful events and promotions, which will "allow enthusiasm for poetry to spread." (Poets House, 2009: 132). The researcher recommends, in order to alleviate inevitable budgetary restraints, that the structures already in place for the Library Council's training programmes should be used to provide a day-long workshop on poetry promotion in public libraries. Poetry Ireland, an organisation that is knowledgeable about poetry and Irish poetry audiences, and with which the Library Council have worked previously, on the 2007 *Poetry in the Library* project (The Library Council, 2008: 50), should be involved in the development and delivery of the workshop, as should certain poets and librarians.

While many Irish librarians have developed innovative methods of promoting poetry, abundant information on poetry promo-

tion is already available, much of it tailored specifically for public libraries. The Poetry Society website at <http://www.poetrysoc.com/content/archives/libraries/> provides tips for how to create a “poetry friendly library”. The Academy of American Poets website at <http://www.poets.org/page.php/prmID/102> offers extensive advice for librarians, adapted from Poets House’s Poetry in the Branches Sourcebook. The Poetry Archive website, <http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/organiseAReading.do>, provides tips on how to organise poetry readings.

Poets House offers a model of best practice for the promotion of poetry in public libraries. Poetry in the Branches is described as “a multi-faceted, replicable program model that helps librarians create a complete environment for poetry in their library” (Poets House website). A step-by-step guide to this model, the *Poetry in the Branches Sourcebook*, is available through the Poets House website. Research results indicate that a model of best practice for poetry promotion should be made available, in printed form, based on the work of library authorities within Ireland whose promotion of poetry is exemplary.

All Ireland Poetry Day, an annual celebration of poetry in Ireland, was inaugurated by Poetry Ireland in 2008. Approximately one third of the events listed by Poetry Ireland for the October 2009 festival took place in public libraries (Poetry Ireland website). This is a small proportion, given that public libraries are recognised as “the most extensive physical cultural network in Ireland, (and) play a significant part in the internal development and encouragement of literary sensibility and appreciation” (Public Libraries and the Arts Committee, 1999). The final recommendation is that the Irish public library service should recognise the potential of this festival to raise the profile of poetry. The Library Council could play an important role in renewing their partnership with Poetry Ireland, and encouraging library authorities to push themselves centre-stage as an organisation that promotes both “the printed page” and “the platform” proactively, establishing the library service as an organisation that brings people and poetry together.

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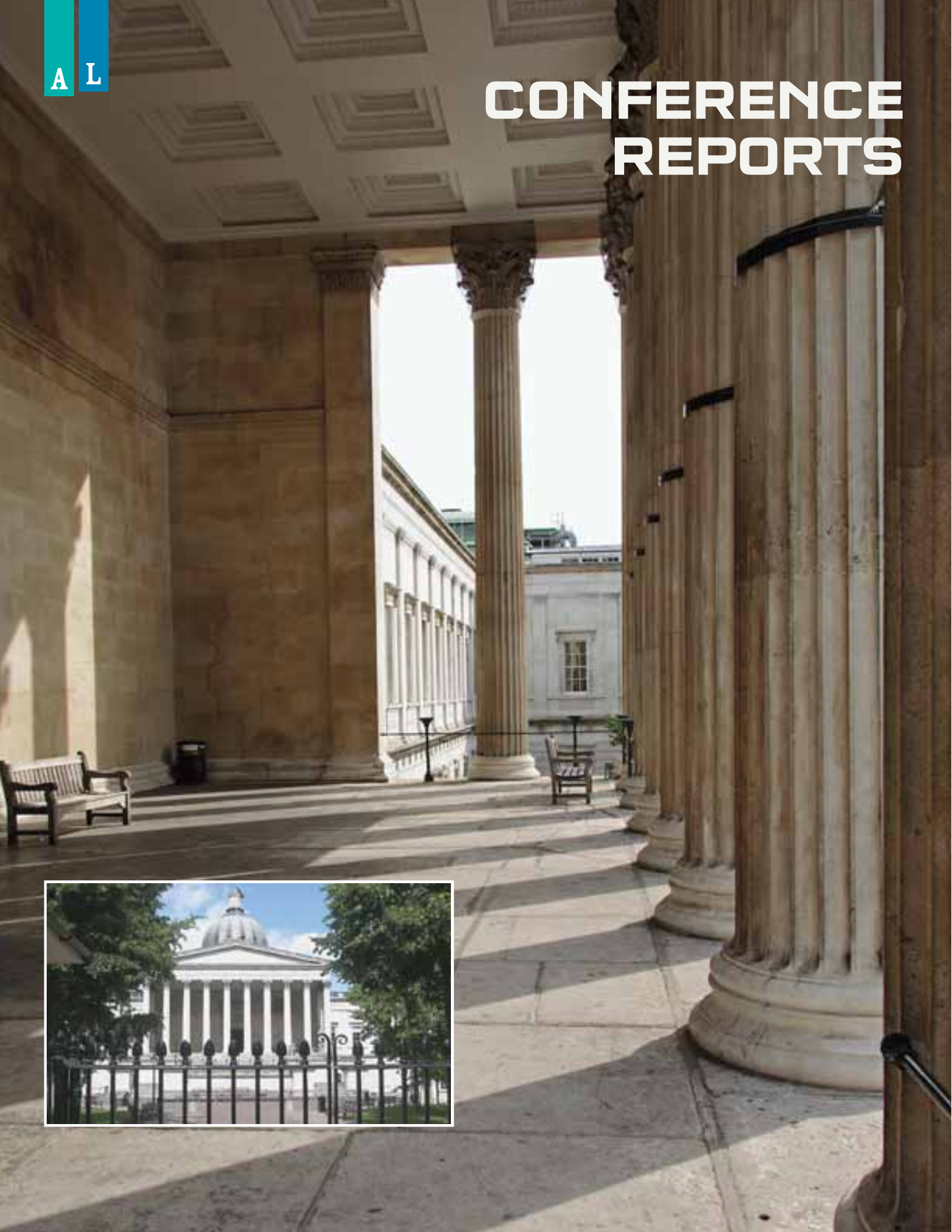
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CONFERENCE REPORTS



Integration in the Information Sciences: Unity in Diversity

International Conference on Conceptions of Library and Information Science (CoLIS 7), 21-24 June 2010, London

Every three years, LIS academics and doctoral students gather at CoLIS – the conference on Conceptions of Library and Information Science. Over eighty delegates from seventeen countries met at University College London (UCL) to discuss the latest research, exchange ideas and network with their colleagues from around the globe.

The main conference was preceded by a doctoral forum, during which twenty-one invited PhD students met with senior researchers to present their progress to date in an informal environment.

David Nicholas (Director of the Department of Information Studies, UCL), noted that UCL is based in what he called the “information heart of London”, surrounded by libraries, museums and the many publishing houses in Bloomsbury. Prof. Nicholas outlined how the department branched out into new territories, including publishing, and that journalism and digital conservation would soon be added to their research agenda.

In the first session immediately after Prof. Nicholas’ light-hearted introduction, the papers focussed on interdisciplinary research in Uruguay, systematic reviewing for evidence-based LIS and an historical overview of our field using cognitive structure analysis. Monica Lassi (Borås, Sweden) and Diane Sonnenwald (SILS, UCD) gave a presentation on taxonomy for a predictive theory of collaborative design. This was followed by a study on research circles as a method for competence development in LIS, while another

considered the potential value of joint research between libraries and archives.

Following a paper on the philosophy of information as a unifying meta-theory of information science, we were treated to a panel debate on the unity in LIS theory, with arguments for, against and neutral. Clare Thornley, Ian Cornelius (both SILS, UCD) and Birger Hjørland (Copenhagen) each took differing positions. A lively debate ensued, and not only on stage! The last session included presentations on how users evaluate individual documents, the methodological consequences of studying the concept of information needs and a research project on the credibility of Wikipedia from the perspective of Swedish editors.

Wednesday morning was dedicated to information literacy (IL) research: corporeality and practice theory as new research agendas, information literacy as an instrument of oppression, the ecological dimensions of IL and the role that “imperfect” information and uncertainty play in human creativity. Another panel session pitted champions of various meta-theories against each other – they had to make a case for “their” theory using a snowman and his information world to highlight and explain it. ▶

Right; Some of the participants of the Doctoral Forum, The author is 4th from right.

Left: University College London, the conference venue



Witticisms ensured that the audience was rolling with laughter. I never knew that cognitivism, pluralism and other such topics could be so much fun!

We had time to catch up on poster presentations over lunch. The afternoon was split into two alternative blocks. I attended the information literacy seminar workshop as an interested observer. Participants introduced their work and reviewed ways of developing this field further.

The last day started with papers on practice theory, time as a framework for information science, how the design of collections tells a story and ways of investigating oral information. We heard presentations on webometrics, social scholarship research methods and a classification model of information interactions.

The final panel saw four LIS School Heads debating the LIS domain. Andrew Dillon (Texas) pointed towards the change cycle with schools closing and merging and developing into schools¹ to compete for intellectual jurisdiction. Francis Bouthillier (McGill) argued for an expansion happening in the field: more people, research, programmes, publications, but are we dealing with new knowledge? Diane Sonnenwald (UCD) examined how the LIS discipline impacted on people's lives and society in general and how it facilitated science and business. She emphasised the values of LIS. Finally, David Bawden (City University London) suggested that as so many other disciplines are as interested in our research as we are in theirs, we should stop apologising for our research.

All contributions were of an extremely high calibre and very thought provoking. The coffee breaks were welcomed as a chance to chat with colleagues and to catch a bit of sunshine. And of course the social events, such as the receptions and the conference dinner, provided ample opportunities to network. The doctoral forum was of particular benefit to me as a novice researcher. Perhaps we could establish something similar for MLIS and PhD students in Ireland?

For more information: A full set of papers will be available on the website <http://colis.soi.city.ac.uk/> by September and also in a future edition of *Information Research*. CoLIS 8 will be hosted by the Royal School of Library and Information Science in Copenhagen from 19th – 22nd August 2013: <http://www.iva.dk/english/colis8/>.

(I would like to thank the Learned Society Fund of the University of Sheffield for their financial support.)

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1. For details see <http://www.ischools.org/>

LILAC 2010

LILAC, the Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference, was held this year in Limerick from 29–31 March. It was the conference's first year outside the UK, and the move to Ireland attracted three hundred and fifty delegates from nineteen countries, making this the most truly international LILAC to date.

An invitation from the Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) brought the conference to Ireland. LIT, with the Library Network Support Services (LNSS), proved excellent conference hosts. The LNSS, collaboration between the Limerick Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Tralee, Mary Immaculate College Limerick and the University of Limerick, had from 2008 been working to champion both information literacy and library staff development in the Shannon Region, so it was appropriate that such an innovative collaboration should play host to this prestigious event.

LILAC, now in its sixth year, is organised by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals' (CILIP) Information Literacy Group, which is a sub-group of the Community Services Group (CSG). The organisation behind the event, this year headed by Debbi Boden (Glasgow Caledonian University), was impressive, including three keynote addresses, sixty-two workshops and parallel sessions, twenty-two posters, plus a pecha kucha session. This last, a new concept for many of those attending, was an hour long session involving nine six-minute presentations from a variety of presenters, allowing delegates to get a flavour of IL projects which could be explored further at a later date. Delegates participated fully in the conference, with lively discussions and question and answer sessions following all presentations.

Information Literacy awards were presented at the conference dinner in Dromoland Castle. The UK CSG Information Literacy award went to West Cheshire College and the first ever Irish Information Literacy award, sponsored by the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) and the Consortium of National and University Libraries (CONUL), went to Wexford County Library for their Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) accredited Library Skills Course. The Irish award was presented



by Philip Cohen, Chair of CONUL, and by Siobhán Fitzpatrick, LAI President.

The conference was officially opened by Minister of State, Seán Haughey, T.D. who spoke of the importance of lifelong learning to our economic development, to our sense of social responsibility and to the development of the individual, and of the inextricable link between lifelong learning and information literacy. Delegates were gratified to see Mr Haughey remain for the opening keynote address from Tony Durcan, Head of Culture, Libraries and Lifelong Learning (Newcastle City Council).

This first of the conference's three keynote addresses looked at how information literacy might be seen to fit into the public library agenda where information is seen to be "as vital to the healthy functioning of communities as clean air, safe streets, good schools, and public health" (The Aspen Institute, 2009). Mr Durcan outlined ways in which Newcastle libraries are engaging with social networking tools, including blogs and Flickr, and how customers engage with longer learning programmes through practical courses – e.g. Holiday Planning on the Internet – which provide gateways to learning.

In the second keynote address Professor Karen Fisher (University of Washington's Information School) introduced delegates to the concept of Lay Information Mediators (LIMs) – people who, without being asked, use library services not for themselves but on others' behalf. Following a survey of 50,000 people in the United States, it has been estimated that two thirds of public library users are LIMs, with 80% of LIMs using the library daily or almost daily. Thus, with three or four people potentially benefiting from any one library enquiry, we can see that library impact is a lot wider than visitor numbers alone suggest.

The final keynote speaker, Dr Ralph Catts (Senior Research Fellow, University of Stirling), spoke of the need to provide systematic evidence for the benefits of information literacy. Too much research, he said, is gathering small scale evidence, when what is needed is a body of evidence from robust cross-institu-

tional research to show that interventions (ideally embedded Information Literacy interventions) have occurred and that in several cases, across several institutions, there is the same series of outcomes. In order to gather this evidence there must be a working together, not only across institutions, but within institutions with partners in academia, particularly educational researchers.

LILAC 2010 was a marked success, an opportunity to share and to be inspired, and we look forward now to LILAC 2011 back in the UK. It is worth noting that although two of the three keynote addresses of the conference were of particular relevance to public libraries, the majority of participants at the conference were academic librarians. Perhaps as awareness around the conference grows, and as we increasingly see an emphasis on the development of autonomous and collaborative lifelong learning including the development of information literacy, the conference will begin to attract librarians from across the complete information literacy spectrum

Aoife Geraghty is Head, Information Services, Glucksman Library, University of Limerick



Left to right: Philip Cohen, Chair of CONUL, Susan Kelly of Wexford County Library Service, accepting the award on behalf of her colleagues Anne Griffin, Celestine Rafferty and Yvonne Smith, Siobhán Fitzpatrick, LAI President and Maria Hinfelaar, LIT President. The award was presented at Dromoland Castle at the conference banquet.

“... the move to Ireland attracted three hundred and fifty delegates from nineteen countries, making this the most truly international LILAC to date.”

Acquisitions in the new information universe: core competencies and ethical practices

Jesse Holden. London: Facet Publishing, 2010. ISBN 978-185604-739-5. Xv, 135 p. £44.95. Pbk.

The format of this book suggests that it is primarily intended to serve as a basis for student seminar discussions on acquisitions processes in the digital age. The author sees the acquisitions function within modern libraries as that of broker or mediator in providing access to resources. The acquisitions function is presented as one of four core elements that also encompass collection development policies, cataloguing and reference services. Within acquisitions, the author concentrates on virtual electronic resources that are subscribed to but not added to the permanent collection. Holden recommends a radicalisation of thinking about how to deliver content, with a move away from considering items (such as books or journals) leading to a rediscovery of 'the universe as an assemblage of information, content and formats, with all that might imply' (p.116). There is little or no consideration of the budget implications of this radicalisation of thinking. Allowing vendors what I would regard as too dominant a role in content selection, there is little consideration of what the author terms 'local content' or 'rare content'. Dismissing rare books as only one example of such rare content, the author prefers to draw attention to the challenges posed by obsolete electronic formats such as video tapes or floppy discs.



- While 'ethical practices' appears in the title, there is
- disappointingly little discussion of ethical values in the book.
- The author relies largely on a 'Statement of principles and standards of acquisitions practice' endorsed by the US Association for Library Collections and Technical Services in 1994. Affirming the need for honesty, courtesy and functioning within the law in dealing with vendors, the guidelines also mention the need for knowledge of the publishing and bookselling business, consciousness of value for money, and an adherence to the policies of the institution being served.

Intended as a guide to the brave new world of electronic libraries, this short book is somewhat akin to a trainee manager's handbook for a generic branch of a multi-national supermarket chain, in a universe where there's no longer a corner shop, farmer's market, or specialist delicatessen for those that might value something just that little bit different.

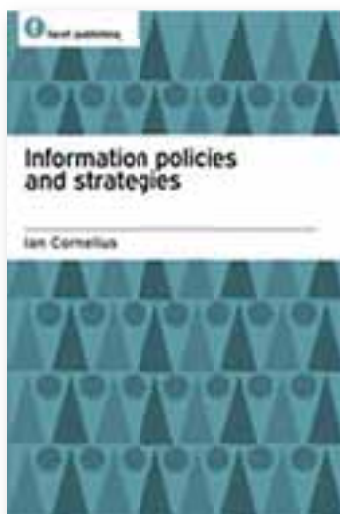
• Bernadette Cunningham is Deputy Librarian, Royal Irish Academy

Information Policies and Strategies

Ian Cornelius. London: Facet Publishing, 2010. ISBN 978-1-85604677-0. NPG

Information policy making: are we well served?

If you are concerned with respecting the increasingly complex arena which governs the right of the individual to information, you will enjoy this book. A stylishly written guide, it is divided into three parts. The first part treats the reader to an understanding of the contexts for policy making as they prevail in a democracy accountable in legal terms to the electorate. The second part details rights based issues. Cornelius clearly



enjoys describing the value afforded to the legitimate rights and duties of decision makers charged with developing information policies. He deftly balances these issues with the individual's right to know and learn how to form considered opinions and gain insight. The acceptance or otherwise of rights to Intellectual property, censorship, freedom of information, data protection, privacy and the freedom of speech all influence how we as librarians (and other facilitators of access to information) operate. The basis of extending such access through channels which the library sector does not control is transforming information policy making and practice in our environment.

- Cornelius knows that this will keep evolving and provides
- useful pointers. We will continue to be challenged to find new

Envisioning future academic libraries: initiatives, ideas and challenges

edited by Sue McKnight. London: Facet Publishing, 2010. ISBN 1-85604-691-5. 272pp. Pbk. £44.95

This collection of contributions on the future face of library services is an important set of scenarios and issues facing academic librarianship, and their ideas make for exciting, daunting and imaginative reading. The standard is high so it is an enjoyable read as well. Its authors are librarians, publishers, and academics with an international vision and they have encapsulated the book's sub-title with a series of controversial and stimulating views on aspects of the academic and information environment.

Contributions consider themes on the changing expectations, attributes and requirements of new generations of library users, wholly different to those whose experience rests on the centrality of the printed word as the medium of record and study. These 'readers' have an understanding of academic work which emanates from a digital base, where the image has a much more significant place in capturing and expressing concepts than for previous students.

The future development of electronically recording and transmitting information is also seen from the world of publishing and the chapters from publishers are particularly important for the academic librarian, since this traditionally co-operative relationship has come under strain. The various elements in the chain of academic information dissemination have sometimes been



- working with differing views of the future in their adjustment to
- the rapid changes in transmission and preservation. It is particu-
- larly good to see an article on the changes to the publishing models in the humanities, giving some understanding of how a publisher is working in these disciplines.

As a counterpoint to this, contributors look at the challenges to provide a physical space in which the new engagement with learning and research can be most effective.

The series of articles on the growing significance of data management, data mining and the management of research data as a future resource opens up areas where the greatest changes to the role of the academic librarian are likely to be found.

A constant theme throughout is the requirement for far-sighted leadership and an enthusiasm for change in the role of the profession as a response

- to the evolving landscape. Facet Publishing is an organ of CILIP,
- and together with the editor, it has put together a very important
- set of ideas and challenges as a valuable point of debate and
- discussion for academic librarians.

• *Robin Adams, Librarian and College Archivist, Trinity College Dublin*

answers for our clientele and to change our infrastructure in order to remain relevant to those who should be availing of our services particularly in the digital world. Information provision must have regard to compliance with the norms and objectives of the main public/private sphere and/ or with the national government's intentions, or as is increasingly the case the EU's actions in the global market. Cornelius describes the context in which information policies operate and posits questions as to the common good. He constructs cases and models useful to policy formation and highlights the checks and balances which might be observed. Analysis of the issues and accommodating variations to strategies enables views to be formed which in turn give expression to how information is exchanged and generated. Do we, for instance, he asks, need to protect the creative output of individuals or groups in the commercial arena?

- He concludes with an outline of the elements that influence
- our ideas on what policies intend to achieve in terms of
- process and their outputs. Respect for the law, religion(s),
- education, morality and the history of each state or nation are
- powerful indicators of how our ideas are fixed on what policy
- should achieve. This discussion on policy formulation reflects
- also on the mechanisms which give effect to policies.
- Cornelius gives us the capacity to consider a selection of
- nuanced deliberations which can be essential to setting the
- right tone in policy drafting. He details a set of constructs
- which would assist the librarian, information professional,
- policy maker and rights activist alike when formulating
- arguments and/or reviewing the complex range of issues
- which policy must address. We are in his debt.

• *Norma McDermott, Director, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna/Library Council*

Supporting Research Students

Barbara Allan. London: Facet Publishing, 2010. 192 pages. ISBN 978-1-85604685-5. £44.95

While written for a British audience this is also timely for Irish academic libraries because of the Irish government's commitment to building a world class research system and doubling the number of PhD graduates by 2013 (See *National Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation*). This commitment is having a direct effect on Irish university library services. The book's purpose is to give library staff an insight into the fourth level research process. Written in clear, uncomplicated language, each chapter has been written so that it can stand alone. Allan defines the nature of PhD research and notes common problems and issues that arise through the process for PhD students. Useful examples of current best practice of libraries supporting PhD students are presented as case studies. The author, an authority on eLearning and eMentoring, has included some of her own experiences as a PhD student.

Given the book's title there is a strong emphasis on how libraries can foster the development of key graduate skills. The chapter on skills that PhD candidates are expected to acquire according to the UK Research Councils' Joint Statement of Training Requirements for Research Students will prove useful. The Irish Universities' Association PhD Graduates' Skills statement (http://www.iaa.ie/publications/documents/publications/2008/Graduate_Skills_Statement.pdf) is similar. The recommendations in the Research Information Network's *Mind the Skills Gap* report are also highlighted. Examples of the information skills module are presented but



- regrettably there is no meaningful discussion of how the learning outcomes cultivate the systematic research skills, critical
- thinking skills and knowledge creation that are expected at the PhD level or of which type of assessment is best for evaluating the acquisition of these information skills. As most librarians are more accustomed to developing instruction for lower level taught students, this would have been helpful.

There is a useful chapter on library services in support of research students. It reminded me of a couple of simple ways of proactively reaching out to new PhD students :for instance, checking the minutes of College meetings for accepted PhD admissions and sending introductory packs to ensure these students find out about library services regardless of the time of year that they register. I plan to start doing this again after reading this book. There is also a comprehensive self-assessment inventory. Much of this will not be new to anyone who has worked as a subject librarian but the inventory is a good aide-memoire.

- This book will be especially useful for those new to supporting graduate researchers. Another related title that may be of interest is Webb, Gannon-Leary and Bent's *Providing Effective Library Services For Research* (2007), also published by Facet Publishing.
- *Gwen Ryan. AHSS Research Support Librarian, James Hardiman Library, National University of Ireland, Galway*

Bite-Sized Marketing: realistic solutions for the overworked librarian

Nancy Dowd, Mary Evangeliste and Jonathan Silberman, London: Facet Publishing, 2010. 978-1-85604-704-3. 144p. £32.95. Pbk.

The positive features of this book are its layout and ease of use. Divided into ten short chapters there is a variety of checklists, surveys, case studies and ideas that any librarian interested in promotion would appreciate. It also includes an up-to-date list of helpful websites. It is easy to read and refrains from marketing jargon that often confuses the reader.

The first chapters focus on word of mouth marketing via social networks and using customer success stories to bring the library to life. The authors suggest asking customers to tell their individual stories and post them on the library webpage and social networks such as Facebook. The chapter on how to promote the often

- invisible resources such as online databases, with ideas on targeting specific audiences, linking in with events is particularly useful.
- The middle chapters concentrate on more traditional styles of library promotion and give good advice on writing media releases and writing for the web. Guidance on setting up external library information stands for registration and information purposes is given. Advocacy is also covered with tips on gaining support for the library and library campaigns in the face of budget cuts or closure.
- Chapter seven looks at the new marketing tools. Details are given of the new promotional tools available via the web such as

Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia, blog sites and Twitter and gives practical advice on podcasting, scriptwriting and interviews. Each tool is explained with examples and ideas for promotion.

The final three chapters focus on design, branding and best practice. There are excellent ideas on how to produce quality designs on a shoe string, such as using art students, using free quality sites etc. The importance of using good designs for promotional in-house and external material is stressed as 'nothing screams amateur quite like clipart'.

The chapter on branding reinforces the idea that all library publications should be instantly recognisable, with set fonts, styles, colours and logo placement. It recommends having one staff member responsible to ensure everyone adheres to the branding agreed by the service. The chapter concludes with a checklist of the most important publications that require branding in any organisation.

The final chapter on best practice recommends the reader to take heed of the current styles used for different target groups by the media. Advice is given on setting up focus groups, getting staff on board through training and has some good tips on gaining sponsorship and best practice in dealing with sponsors.

However, the main focus of this book is not on marketing but on the promotion of library services. It does not incorporate the other aspects of marketing such as price, place, product, research or people management. Despite this, the book is a valuable tool for anyone involved in library promotion. It is a comprehensive approach to word of mouth marketing via the new social networks and other internet tools available from web 2.0.

Mary Murphy, Executive Librarian, Meath County Council Library Services.



Library Association of Ireland responds to the report:

The Public Library and the School: Policies and Prospects for Library Services to Primary Schools in Ireland

This research report was launched by Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Education and Skills last August. The main concerns of the Library Association of Ireland in relation to the report are:

- that the Department of Education and Skills says it has no direct policy involvement in the provision of libraries in primary schools
- That the per capita grant is not sufficient to permit real and adequate library provision
- that the Department expects the revised primary school curriculum to be delivered without supporting learning materials and library services
- That the public library services are already struggling with reduced resources and will be unable to provide the level of service and support required.

LAI Press release is at <http://www2.libraryassociation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Press-Release.pdf>
The full report is available from www.library.ie

Mary Burke Research Scholarship in Information and Library Studies

Inaugurated at the time of Mary's retirement from UCD, donations last year amounted to €6,335. Some of these funds were used to provide fee support to Ashwin Kailasa a PhD student at UCD SILS. The topic of his thesis is: *What is the role of librarians in supporting biochemistry research in Irish universities?*

The fund is still open and donations should be sent to Professor Diane Sonnenwald or Claire Nolan at School of Information and Library Studies, University College, Belfield, Dublin 4.

Just as last year, Mary Burke will continue to match donations up to €5,000 to the end of December 2010.

Unesco City of Literature: Dublin

This sought after accolade was bestowed by the Director General of UNESCO and recognises Dublin's cultural profile and its international standing as a city of literary excellence.

Detailed application was made to UNESCO last November by a steering and management group led by Dublin City Council's library service and was subject to a rigorous vetting procedure. Partners in the submission included representatives from literary-related organisations as well as culture, arts, tourism, government, media and educational institutions across the city and country.

The designation as City of Literature, part of the UNESCO Creative Cities network, provides a unique platform for Dublin's literary community and enables the city to increase its market share as a destination for business and pleasure – and Ireland as a creative, exciting, and vibrant nation. Dublin, *UNESCO City of Literature* has enormous potential for beneficial cultural and economic impacts not alone in the capital city, but in communities across the country. Fáilte Ireland has steadfastly supported the application from inception to achieving the designation, recognising the importance of Dublin and its literary heritage in promoting cultural tourism.

For more information: <http://www.dublincityofliterature.ie/>

PEOPLE

Best wishes to colleagues who have retired recently. They include: **Donal Brady** (Waterford County), **Ian Cornelius** (UCD SILS), **Gay Doyle** (St. Luke's), **Deirdre Ellis-King** (Dublin City), **Tom King** (Carlow), **Joe McElvaney** (Monaghan) and **Etáin Ó Síocháin** (NUIM).

Congratulations to all who have recently taken up new positions. They include: **Aine Carey** (UCD), **Margaret Hayes** (Dublin City Librarian), **David Meehan** (Librarian, Mater Dei Institute) and **Orla Nic Aodh** (Librarian, St. Patrick's College).

Three post-doctoral fellows have also been appointed at SILS, UCD. They are **Norman Makoto Su**, **Maria Souden** and **Andrea Johnson**.

Two Library Association of Ireland nominees were recently appointed to the Board of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna by John Gormley, TD, Minister for the Environment, Local Government & Heritage. They are **Fionnuala Hanrahan** (Wexford) and **Pat McMahan** (Galway). Pat has also been appointed to the Board of the National Library of Ireland by Mary Hanafin, TD, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Professor **Diane Sonnenwald** (UCD, SILS) has been elected President (2012) of the American Society of Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) and will serve as President-Elect (2011).

AWARDS

Public Library Research Programme Medal

Enda Leaney was awarded the Public Library Research Programme Medal for his MLIS thesis, entitled *The Performance Measurement of Electronic Services in Public Libraries in the Republic of Ireland*. The study found that while public libraries measure the performance of their electronic services, there is a gap between current practices in Ireland and best practices reported in the literature. Enda's thesis was funded by Dublin City Public Libraries through the Dublin City Council's Staff Education Scheme. The thesis supervisor was Professor Emeritus Mary Burke. Electronic copies of Enda's thesis are available from Claire Nolan, School Administrator, UCD School of Information and Library Studies. Please send your request to Claire.Nolan@ucd.ie. The medal has been funded by the Public Library Research Programme, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (The Library Council).

UCD Presidential Teaching Award

Dr. Crystal Fulton (UCD, SILS) has been awarded one of only two awards for 2010.

Honorary Doctorate

In June, former IFLA President, Kay Raseroka was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Laws at the University of Alberta, Canada. Delegates at the Joint Conference 2003(Galway) will remember Kay who attended in her capacity as IFLA President-Elect.

Continuing Professional Development - LAI

Sections and Groups within the LAI run CPD courses at various times during the year. For details please consult the Association's website – <http://www.libraryassociation.ie>

Continuing Professional Development - SILS

A new 5-credit postgraduate module, IS40540: Reflective Professional, specifically designed for professionals is being run this year at SILS. The purpose of this course is to offer professionals the opportunity to reflect on their work experiences, and learn from this reflection. This course is only offered to professionals with at least 5 years of work experience as an information and library professional and who are not currently enrolled as students in SILS degree programmes. For details of all CPD courses see <http://www.ucd.ie/sils/graduatestudents/occasionalstudents/>

Bob McKee 1950-2010: an appreciation

I got to know Bob McKee when he took over as Chief Executive of the then Library Association in 1999. Over the next eleven years we met three to four times each year, usually at library conferences. Whenever I arrived at such a conference, Bob was one of those I sought out.

We'd chat over coffee, catching up on the news from our respective library associations; we'd share a convivial meal, discussing politics or music, and we'd have a drink, in company with friends and colleagues, when the conversation would range far and wide, and late.

Bob was the most affable of men: he was easy in company and comfortable talking to all he met, from newly qualified librarians to the chief executives and Mayors of county and city councils.

A true believer in the power of libraries to change lives, Bob campaigned tirelessly for greater recognition of that power. He saw how libraries fit into the bigger picture, and was adept at communicating the message to both national and local government.

Co-operation is the lifeblood of libraries, and Bob was an internationalist when it came to co-operation. He made significant contributions to the profession at a global level through his work with IFLA and travelled far and wide to promote the profession and library services. His seemed both delighted and bemused to appear as an advocate of libraries on New Zealand television earlier this year.

Sensitive to the trials of the conference organiser, Bob was happy to help out, by sitting beside an important guest at dinner, by chairing an important session, or by stepping in at the last minute to deliver a lecture, all of which he did with good humour and deep but lightly-worn learning.

Although the most English of Englishmen, Bob was very proud of his Northern Irish roots and never failed to mention them when he attended the Irish joint conference, as he did in all but one of the last eleven years. He was a great supporter of the conference, and many a session Chair and speaker was relieved at the sight of Bob in the audience, knowing that the dreaded

words 'we have time for some questions' would be answered by a thoughtful and thought-provoking comment or question.

When CILIP was born in 2002 it brought with it the potential for fraternal strife between the professional bodies in the UK and Ireland, owing to the all-Ireland remit of the Institute of Information Scientists. Once apprised of this, Bob set out to smooth the waters, and his role in negotiating an agreement between the two associations was very much appreciated by those of us on the LAI side.

When Bob announced his retirement earlier this year the LAI, in association with CILIP Ireland, decided to mark it with a presentation at our conference in April. The gift was a signed first edition of Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf*, the founding work of English literature in the voice of a master of modern (Northern) Irish literature.

All of us present were moved by Bob's evident pleasure on receiving the book. It was, he said, appropriate for so many reasons, not least the memories it brought back of a very special evening in company with Seamus Heaney at the IFLA conference in Glasgow in 2002.

At conferences, when it came, as it often does, to the time for the singing of songs, Bob would kindly ask me to 'sing' *Raglan Road*: whenever I sing that song in future, I'll have Bob in mind.

We have lost a great friend of Irish libraries and librarians, and we will miss him greatly. To his mother Nancy, and to his children Jessica and Daniel, we send our heartfelt sympathies.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

Brendan Teeling, Assistant Director, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, member of the Executive Board of the Library Association of Ireland (1992 – 2010), and former Honorary Secretary of the Association.





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