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## Preface

### Setting the scene for the commemorative workshop

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**Workshop Organiser (see page 38)**

The unexpected and premature death of Brian Perry, former Director of the British Library Research and Development Department (BLR&DD), in January 2006, stimulated discussion on the best way to celebrate the work of Brian in particular, and of the British Library Research and Development Department and the Library and Information Commission in general, on research in this field. There was also recognition of the strongly emerging view that future priorities for library and information research should be debated.

A small group was convened to plan a workshop, independent from, but supported by the British Library. It consisted of LIS professionals with an active record in library and information research: Mel Collier, University of Leuven; Bidy Fisher, Sheffield Hallam University; Stephanie Kenna, British Library; Nigel Macartney, University of Ulster.

The aim of the workshop was to pay tribute to the achievements of Brian Perry and BLR&DD and to use the occasion as a springboard for re-establishing an agenda for LIS research in the UK, particularly the application of research-into-practice and practitioner research itself, which he so successfully promoted. The seminar would thus reflect briefly on the achievements of the past, but move forward to discuss in a wholly positive way an agenda for the future. It was not the intention to encroach into the territory of any of the funding agencies, but to stimulate discussion of research-into-practice.

The organisers wanted outcomes to be developed during the workshop as a result of lively debate, without too much direction from the platform. The papers were therefore

intended to be challenging and provocative and pave the way for specific outcomes. The workshop was organised for 27 November 2006 at the British Library with the following aims:

- To reflect the past successes of LIS research
- To re-establish the importance of LIS research for professional practice in the UK
- To propose priorities for the research agenda
- To seek to engage both established researchers and the next generation of up and coming professionals from across the whole LIS community

Some 58 delegates attended from all over the UK (with some from Europe) on the basis that each could offer expertise or represent the views of key players in the LIS landscape.

The format of the day was carefully planned. Delegates were referred to background reading set up on the web and asked to consider questions for discussion in the break out sessions in advance. After an introduction from the Chief Executive of the British Library, Lynne Brindley, Derek Law evaluated the role of the BL Research and Development Department and its successors in developing a research agenda. Peter Brophy followed with a review of LIS research in the UK after 2000, a year which marked the end of the Library and Information Commission. There followed the first of two breakout sessions, preceded by three brief papers from current researchers in the field. Stimulated by their thoughts, the audience broke into facilitated groups to recommend research topics which they thought would inform the planning of the LIS sector, develop and encourage innovation in professional practice and develop areas of knowledge that were poorly understood.

Bob McKee set the scene for the afternoon session with a paper on his view of the prospects for a future framework. The groups then re-convened and considered the question: "What actions, if any, are needed to create an effective framework for research?" After a lively feedback session, Judith Elkin reviewed the day and summed up. The original working group was invited to plan the way ahead, armed with the notes from the group discussion sessions and the papers from the speakers.