

LIRG News

LIRG's 1995/6 Postgraduate Student Prize has been awarded to Jane Sheehan, formerly of Leeds Metropolitan University, for her dissertation An evaluation of the role and effectiveness of Gateway Yorkshire. The panel considered the work well written and commented on the good use of the triangulation method. For the prize of £250 and one year's free membership of LIRG, Jane will give a 30 minute presentation at the prize award meeting and writing a summary of the project for LIRN (this will appear in the next issue).

LIRG Committee & Officers 1997/8

There were six nominations for the six places on the LIRG Committee which arose this year and therefore there was no need for an election. The six LIRG members who are elected for two years are:

Ros Cotton
Penny Garrod
Elizabeth Hart
Philip Payne
John Sumsion
Maurice Wakeham

The full committee for 1997/8 is:

Alan Cooper, Library Association (co-opted)
Roz Cooper, University of Northumbria (co-opted)
Ros Cotton, Library and Information Commission (Associate Editor, LIRN)
Eric Davies, Loughborough University
Biddy Fisher, Sheffield Hallam University (Treasurer)
Penny Garrod, Plymouth University
Deborah Goodall, University of Northumbria
Elizabeth Hart, Huddersfield University (Secretary)
Victoria Manglano, City University
Clare Nankivell, University of Central England
Philip Payne, Leeds Metropolitan University (Chair)
John Sumsion, Loughborough University (Editor, LIRN)
Peter Taylor, Taylor Graham (co-opted)
Isobel Thompson, British Library RIC (co-opted)
Maurice Wakeham, Anglia Polytechnic University
Dorothy Williams, Robert Gordon University (Associate Editor, LIRN)

I am very pleased to be able to report that John Sumsion has kindly agreed to become Editor of Library and Information Research News and he will be assisted by Ros Cotton and Dorothy Williams as Associate Editors.

Philip Payne
Chair
Library and Information Research Group

Press release
February 1997

STUDY OF USING MULTIMEDIA SYSTEMS IN THE HOME WINS ELSEVIER/LIRG RESEARCH AWARD

The Library and Information Research Group (LIRG) is pleased to announce that the winners of the 1997 Elsevier/LIRG Award are Dr Mark Gillham and Ms Kathy Buckner of the Communication and Information Studies Department of Queen Margaret College. They will be using the Research Award, worth £1000, to undertake a study of access strategies of home users of interactive multimedia CD-ROM information systems. Increasing use is being made of multimedia CD-ROMs as a source of information in the home. But how effective are users' skills in finding information? The study will use controlled observation techniques to investigate the information seeking techniques used by two groups of users of a multimedia encyclopaedia: people who have no experience of computing or information work compared with those who do have such experience.

The Elsevier/LIRG Research Award was launched in 1990 and is sponsored by Elsevier Science. The objective of the Award is to encourage research and innovation in library and information science. It is made annually on the basis of proposals submitted by practitioners and others in the field. It is intended that encouragement will be given to research directed at improving the accessibility, retrievability and usefulness of information. The closing date for applications for the Award is 31st October each year.

The Library and Information Research Group (LIRG) is an independent professional group, formed in 1977, which aims to raise the profile of information research by influencing its direction, promoting the dissemination of sound research methodologies and results, assisting in the development of emerging LIS researchers, and enabling networking between LIS researchers. The Group does this through events, its newsletter (*Library and Information Research News*), its prizes and awards, and other activities. Personal membership costs £15 per year and is open to anyone with an interest in library and information science research.

Further information from:

Philip Payne
Chair, Library & Information Research Group,
Learning Support Services
Leeds Metropolitan University
Calverley Street
Leeds LS1 3HE
Telephone: 0113 283 5966
Fax: 0113 283 3145
E-mail: p.payne@lmu.ac.uk

Lis-lirg

The Mailbase list lis-lirg is now available to join. In order to subscribe to the list send an e-mail to: mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk with the command: join lis-lirg followed by your first name and your surname. Leave the subject field in your e-mail empty.

News

Public Library Review

The long-awaited Public Library Review - Reading the future - was given a prestigious launch at the new British Library (St Pancras) on 19 February. An audience of over 200 public librarians, representatives of heritage organisations and journalists mingled over coffee, buns and croissants prior to presentations from Virginia Bottomley, Iain Sproat, Matthew Evans (Library and Information Commission) and Michael Messenger (Advisory Council on Libraries). The Review's measures will certainly have an impact on all kinds of libraries and naturally have implications for researchers. This Review highlights the continuing relevance and significance of public libraries, but emphasises that they will need to adapt to new ways of delivering the service and to work together with national bodies to meet the challenge of the next millennium.

Something which some feel should have happened in the first place is the Government's intention to legislate to combine the functions of the Library and Information Commission and of the Advisory Council on Libraries to provide a single source of public library advice in England.

There is a useful summary of key points, some more realistic than others, perhaps the most important being the requirement from 1998 for public libraries to publish annual plans setting out clearly how they have performed compared with their own targets and the achievements of similar authorities; the creation by the Library and Information Commission of a Working Group to report by July on how public libraries in England should respond effectively to the challenge of new information and communication technologies; and encouragement for public libraries to explore use of private sector partnerships, Public Finance Initiative, contracting out, trust status and volunteers as ways of improving services and driving down costs. The Review also stresses that libraries should be open when people want to use them, for example during evenings and weekends, especially Sundays.

It will indeed be interesting to see how positively public librarians and local authorities respond to this document. For further information phone 0171 211 6200 or go to <http://www.coi.gov.uk/coi.depts/GHE/GHE.html>

Latest from the Library and Information Commission

The Library and Information Commission's Research Sub-Committee, under the chairmanship of Professor Mel Collier (De Montfort University) has now met six times (manifesting its UK remit by meeting in Solihull, Belfast and Edinburgh besides London) and has made substantial progress in its key task - to determine the UK research strategy in the library and information area. It is hoped to complete this task by the end of 1997.

The Committee is determined to ensure that its activities and tenders are as transparent and as open as possible, and so far, four pieces of work contributing to the research strategy formulation have been commissioned.

The first of these is a Research Mapping Exercise, the tender for which was advertised in the Library Association Record and Times Higher Education Supplement in October. The intention is to identify all current research relevant to the Commission's vision, including exploration of areas outside LIS, in order to gain a clear picture of what is happening in this area and to avoid wasteful duplication of effort. This tender was awarded to the Vision Research Consortium, a cross-sectoral group consisting of Geoffrey Hare (Society of Chief Librarians), Frances Hendrix and Peter Smith (LASER) and Bernard Naylor (University of Southampton), with Carpenter Davies Associates (Rob Davies) as project managers. Because it is seen as vital to consult a wide variety of organisations concerning the formulation of the strategy, another tender was awarded to Information Management Associates and David Haynes Associates (David Streatfield and David Haynes) to manage the consultation exercise. In addition, the Commission has appointed a Research Coordinator, Maggie Ashcroft, on a short contract, to bring together these various strands of activity into a coherent policy, working closely with a Steering Committee as well as the Mapping and Consultation Exercise consultants.

The Committee is also pursuing several other key topics regarded as crucial to the future role of libraries. One of these is a study on the role of libraries in lifelong learning, awarded to CEDAR (the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research) based at the University of Warwick. There are also Working Groups on Digital Content, National Information Policy and Competitiveness (based on the Government's Competitiveness White Paper 3 and the contribution made by libraries and information services) and it is expected that these areas will be progressed early in 1997.

LIC is interested in many other issues which impact on the future of libraries and information, and is committed to raising the profile of LIS with Government and other key players. For example, the Commission was a leading partner in the Millennium bid for networking public libraries (Information for All) and much lobbying was done to progress the bid and raise awareness of networking and public access issues, resulting in the receipt of many letters of support from representatives in both Houses of Parliament. (Although the bid was not longlisted, the Commission and profession as a whole are determined to progress public library networking). The Commission now also has the task (see above) of convening the Public Library Review Working Group on public libraries and new technology, which must report by July.

Another example was having Commission representation (Mel Collier) on Oftel's Task Force, which held a series of consultative meetings regarding the revision of Oftel's Universal Service obligations. The Commission's intention was to press for better tariffs for libraries from telecoms suppliers, in order to equip libraries to fulfil their potential as citizens' centres for access to information in all its forms, electronic networking, and delivery of lifetime learning.

LIC has published its 2020 Vision statement on the Information Society, which has been widely distributed.

Danger signals for LIS research funding

An issue of concern to the Library and Information Commission, SCONUL, BAILER and other bodies is the attempt by the higher education funding councils to redesignate LIS as humanities rather than a laboratory based science. Such a redesignation could lead to reduced research funding and further difficulties in recruiting students, both of which would be bad news for LIS research in general. A related issue is the decision of the DfEE to hand over the award of postgraduate bursaries to the British Academy. LIS awards are only ringfenced for three years, but when this period expires the number of LIS bursaries could drop, which again would have implications for LIS research.

Millennium matters

At least someone has been lucky with the Millennium Commission, which is supporting its first information technology project. The Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network (SCRAN) with Bruce Royan at the helm, is a joint venture between the Scottish Museums Council, National Museums of Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. The total fund of £15 million (£7.5 million provided by the Commission) will enable museums to make available in digital form the best of their collections, for both educational purposes and public access. The majestic sounding SCRAN Chairman (or would she be Chairwoman?) Lady Balfour of Burleigh, has declared herself delighted that Bruce (who has worked in networked information systems since 1969) "will be helping us to build upon the heritage of Scotland to create this important cultural and educational resource".

SCRAN recently issued a Call for Proposals for the creation of digital multimedia resources from existing art, architecture and artefacts.

As a postscript, more and more email users seem to be appending stylish quotations to their details, and one that could help on a rainy Monday morning, or if one is just feeling thick at any other time of the week, is this offering from the CCTA: "Imagination is more important than knowledge" - Albert Einstein. Perhaps someone will (or have they already?) will begin a collection of these. Incidentally, Learned Information's email signature is "Do not attempt to think or depression may occur", attributed to Jello Biafra, apparently an American beat poet.

Winners of tenders and prizes

A consortium led by Fretwell-Downing Informatics and CERLIM at the University of Central Lancashire earlier this year won the bid to carry out British Library and JISC funded scoping study for the National Agency for Resource Discovery. The study is being managed by UKOLN, for completion by the beginning of April. For further information go to <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/models3.html>

The 1996 winner of the European Annual Information Product Award was the Digital Equipment Corporation for Alta Vista. We now have a European version, which offers the choice of 14 languages. Go travelling at <http://www.altavista.telia.com>

Although this is somewhat old news now it might be worth mentioning Charles Oppenheim's receipt of the Institute for Scientific Information's 1996 Research Grant, which comes in the form of \$3000. This is the first year of the award, which supports research based on citation analysis, and Charles, who is based at the International Institute of Electronic Library Research at De Montfort University,

will be concentrating on the value of various types of citation analyses in research assessment activities. This can surely only be good news for DMU's ratings in the next exercise!

Latest winners from Elib

In addition to several Supporting Studies commissioned by eLib through the MODELS project, the Programme is funding a series of evaluation studies, to be administered through the Tavistock Institute, which aim to evaluate various aspects of the Programme's impact thus far.

After a call for proposals issued in December, five studies are now underway. *Mobilisation effects of eLib activities on cultural change in HE* was awarded to Prof C. Oppenheim, International Institute of Electronic Libraries Research, De Montfort University, and aims to review and assess the validity of the models (and assumptions) about cultural change processes that underpin the Training and Awareness projects in particular and other eLib projects more generally. *An evaluation of the potential impact of multi-media journals and journal environments on changing scholarly practices and needs in various disciplines* was awarded to Prof. K Eason, HUSAT Research Institute, Loughborough University. This study will compare the role of journals in scholarly communication and practice across a wide range of disciplines and bring together leading scholars in these disciplines to explore future needs and opportunities.

A study of the economic implications of different models of publishing scholarly electronic journals for professional societies and other small or specialist owners and publishers was awarded to John Blagden, Cranfield University. The aim of this study is to better understand the economics of traditional and new forms of journal production, particularly as it affects smaller and specialist journal publishers. *Impact of on-demand publishing and electronic resource banks on teaching, students and libraries* was awarded to C. Rowlinson, University of Stirling.

Starting with a review of current provision and costs of reserve and short loan collections, this study will explore the extent to which on-demand publishing and electronic resource banks would improve current arrangements, particularly in terms of library costs, student satisfaction and teaching. Among the aims of the study would be to identify the particular contribution electronic approaches can make to streamlining library services and to effectively providing 'just-in-time' learning resources linked to course lifecycles.

The development of the UK Academic Library Services in the context of Lifelong Learning was awarded to Professor Peter Brophy, CERLIM, University of Central Lancashire. This study will include a review and assessment of the validity of models of lifelong learning, paying special attention to higher education related to lifelong learning (including but by no means restricted to, continuing professional development). Specifically the study aims to evaluate how far eLib projects and other eLib activities have or could facilitate resource support for lifelong learning.

A small number of further studies will be commissioned. Further information about these studies will be available from the eLib web pages in due course. In the meantime, for further information contact:

Kelly Russell
eLib Assistant Co-ordinator
The Library
The University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL
tel: 01203 524 552
fax: 01203 524981
email: k.l.russell@warwick.ac.uk

New faces at the National Preservation Office, LISU, and RLG

Things are changing at the UK focus for preservation, which is no longer funded exclusively by the British Library but now receives contributions from the five other legal deposit libraries, the Public Record Office and the Consortium of University Research Libraries.

Dr Vanessa Marshall, formerly Conservation Service Manager with the Scottish Museums Council, was appointed Director in the Autumn, and is responsible for developing and coordinating the UK's and Ireland's national preservation strategy, providing information and referral services, promoting good practice through education and training, and coordinating and initiating research. Makes you wonder what she will do in her "spare time"!

David Spiller (OBE), formerly of the British Council, has assumed the reins from John Sumsion at the Library and Information Statistics Unit, now well known for its research, information and publications in the area of library statistics. Besides being a member of the LIRG Committee and new editor of LIRN, John will be continuing, in his retirement, with some part-time research, lecturing and consultancy. Meanwhile, RLG, which has announced its new board chair, Martin Runkle (director of the University of Chicago Library) has several new board members, including Reg Carr, recently appointed Bodley's Librarian at the University of Oxford.

Is there life beyond national librarianship?

They obviously think so in some parts of Northern Europe, where Bendik Rugaas, formerly national librarian of Norway, was recently appointed Minister of Long Term Planning in the Labour Government. He will have responsibility for both information policy and information technology, and must be able to bring plenty of expertise from his former post. Could this kind of career move become a trend, one wonders...

An acronym to put on hold

FIGIT (the Follett Implementation Group for IT) has had its last meeting and is not expected to meet again, despite remaining formally in existence until 31 March. Its work is being taken forward by the Committee for Electronic Information, which is also taking over ISSC's work, in effect producing a merger of FIGIT and ISSC, as proposed in the new JISC strategy. The Committee, which is also taking over eLib, features such luminaries as Derek Law, Lynne Brindley, Sheila Corrall and Bruce Royan.

It was gratifying to learn that the visit of some JISC members to Australia in the Autumn resulted in the establishment of the Canberra Chapter, a formal alliance between UK and Australian leaders in information strategic development. The Chapter will see collaboration in some important areas, such as digitisation, intellectual property rights, document delivery, network strategies, resource discovery and preservation.