

# Lirg News

## The TC Farries/LIRG Student Prizes

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On 17 November 1993 a special LIRG meeting was held at the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen at which the first LIRG Student Prizes, for work completed in the academic year 1991-92, were presented. The prize winners were - in the undergraduate category, Richard Milne of the Robert Gordon University for his work on hypertext and its implications for libraries, and in the postgraduate category, Tony Stevens of Sheffield University for his work on the information needs of prisoners. Each prizewinner spoke about his research, and after tea there were three short presentations on current research at the School of Librarianship and Information Studies at the Robert Gordon University. The meeting was well attended by staff and students of the Robert Gordon University as well as by LIRG members and other library and information professionals from the Aberdeen area. Written reports by the two winners, and by some of the highly commended entrants, will be published in future issues of LIRN.

At the meeting I was delighted to be able to announce that the prizes would be continuing for at least another three years, thanks to the generous sponsorship of TC Farries and Co Ltd, commencing in 1993. LIRG is most grateful to TC Farries and Co Ltd for their interest in, and support for, library and information education and research.

The aim of the student prizes is to develop a greater awareness amongst students of the importance of research, and to facilitate the dissemination of the reports of outstanding projects. Each school or department of library and information science is invited to submit one entry annually in each category for which they have students. Work submitted should be by a new entrant to the profession completing a course leading to a first professional qualification recognized by the Library Association or the Institute of Information Scientists. Closing dates are 31 October for the undergraduate category, and 28 February for the postgraduate category. Work completed at any time during the twelve months preceding the closing date is eligible for entry. Research is interpreted very broadly, but the project must include some original work. The value of each prize is £250, and each prizewinner is asked to write a summary of the research for publication in LIRN and to give a presentation on the work at the LIRG meeting at which the prize is presented. TC Farries and Co Ltd also intend to invite future prizewinners to visit them to learn something of library bookselling. It is hoped to hold the prize award meeting at a school or department of library and information science in a different part of the country each year. The meeting in Aberdeen was certainly successful in bringing together researchers, students, practitioners and teachers for a lively discussion, which, it is hoped, will lead to further LIRG regional meetings in Scotland.

The judging panel for each prize is made up of a small group of LIRG members, including at least one committee officer, which make a recommendation to the whole committee. The judging process is slow but thorough. All panel members read all entries. They work to a set of criteria as follows:

- choice and understanding of topic and the problems associated with it;

- statement of objectives;
- background information/literature search;
- research design;
- choice, understanding and application of methodology;
- clarity of argument;
- consistency of conclusion with findings;
- presentation (clarity, layout, readability) and appropriate use of diagrams, supporting illustrations;
- originality and professional relevance.

The judging panels have been impressed by the high standard of the work they have seen so far. The number of entries has been small - up to five for each prize, so we presume that Schools and Departments are exercising quality control in submitting entries. Topics selected have covered health services, legal information, the media, public libraries, prisons, library automation, and information technology applications. All work has shown awareness of current professional issues in the timelessness and professional relevance of the topics selected for review and investigation. The readability of the reports varies - some were better presented and written than others. Many of the projects involved the use of surveys. Student projects are small-scale research, and survey samples are small. Students need to understand the appropriate way to use small samples, and to present and interpret results accordingly. Some did this more successfully than others. In general background reading has been done, and literature reviews were well presented, but in a few cases the consistency and accuracy of the bibliographies left something to be desired. This is not a problem that should be found in the work of students of library and information science.

Now that the second year's entries for these prizes is being judged, it is clear to those involved that the thinking behind the establishment of the prizes is correct. There is student research being done which is of a high quality and worthy of publication, but which too often is not being made widely accessible.