

LIBRARY ASSOCIATION REGIONAL BRANCHES

BERKSHIRE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND OXFORDSHIRE BRANCH

Despite initial difficulties caused by the departure of the newly elected Chair for a post outside the region, the Committee provided a varied meeting and events programme this year. This included a visit to The Imperial War Museum Library; a Marlow riverside walk; and a quiz dinner in Oxford.

AGM speaker, Professor Bob Usherwood, discussed the findings of his Public Libraries Workforce Study. Training needs were addressed by a well-attended conservation/bookbinding course; a workshop on Library Association Fellowship; and a very successful Managing for Performance course. Although no one applied for the Thelma Barrett Bursary this year, the Branch did sponsor Members to attend several events, including UmbrelLA 5 and Members' Day.

The Branch takes professional issues seriously and has worked to improve liaisons with both Librarian Association Groups and other librarian groups in the area. The Colleges of Further and Higher Education Group and Affiliated Members are now represented on the Committee, and Branch representatives are involved in the University, College and Research Group and BBI - Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire Information Education. The Branch responded to the *Learning to Succeed* White Paper. *BBOB News* continues to be a successful publication.

EASTERN BRANCH

The Eastern Branch continued to work on behalf of the region and within the umbrella organization of the East Anglian Librarians Consultative Committee (EALCC). The AGM - New Challenges, New Opportunities - concentrated on how public library services locally had made the political and economic climate work for them. This attracted several high calibre speakers, including three Heads of Service.

Regionalism was much discussed this year, particularly with the development of the East of England regional agency and the proposals for the Eastern Library and Information Service Development Agency (ELISA).

The Branch ran a full programme of courses. *The Easterner* newsletter celebrated 40 years of publication and the *East Anglian Bibliography* continues to run successfully. A Members' needs survey was completed and a recent award of £2500 will help establish a Web site - part of a continuing aim to keep Members informed of professional developments.

EAST MIDLANDS BRANCH

The year began with a well-attended AGM at Nene College, Northampton, held jointly with the East Midlands Division of the Career Development Group. Library Association President, Verna Taylor, addressed the meeting and answered questions, followed by the opportunity to view facilities offered by the college.

The first meeting of solo workplace librarians took place in March as a result of You Are Not Alone, a Branch and Group Development bid. It was well attended by colleagues from a variety of workplaces, with much interest from others unable to attend.

Healthy Branch finances allowed display panels to be commissioned from Portland College, to publicise the work of library and information staff in the East Midlands at various events. Also, a student has been supported to attend the Public Libraries Group conference.

Council met four times during the year. However, there are a number of Council vacancies and new Members are very welcome. Following the resignation of the *NEMCON* Editor, it has not been possible to find a replacement as yet and only two editions have been published.

LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES BRANCH

The Branch Committee encourages, supports and promotes the continuing professional development of library and information staff in the area, and consists of representatives from specialist groups and Sub-Branched to ensure the widest possible representation of Members. The *Branchlines* newsletter remains the main channel of communication with Members.

All the Sub-Branched have active programmes, including lectures, visits, courses, training days and social events. The Branch organised various courses throughout the year. Topics included a Social Exclusion Action planning conference in February, designed to attract Senior and Middle Management in Public Libraries; the effects of the Stephen Lawrence enquiry report, held in June in association with the Association of London Chief Librarians, and the annual one-day school in November on Internet Access Security and Control. Due to the success of previous courses for unemployed Members, a second level course, Many Happy Returns, was run in the autumn.

Internationally, the Branch continues to play an important role working with The Library Association in promoting study visits and exchange programmes for overseas Members. The Branch also actively assisted with The Library Association student Roadshows at several universities in the area.

NORTHERN BRANCH

The Northern Branch began the year with a full Committee, well representing most areas of the profession. Three meetings were held: the AGM at the Northern Poetry Library in Morpeth; Putting the 'L' Back into Libraries - Literature and Reading Development in the North East Region; and ICT in Public Libraries - the Future? looking at RIS North and the New Opportunities Fund.

The Committee spent much of its time on issues related to The Library Association unification proposals. The main concern has been the proposal on regions, which will move Cumbria to the North Western Branch. One immediate consequence was the midterm retirement of two Cumbrian Committee Members to allow new Members to be found for the initial unification date of January 2000. Neither reconsidered when the date was revised.

The Branch newsletter, *Northern Librarian*, will now be produced by an editorial team from the School of Information Studies at the University of Northumbria.

NORTHERN IRELAND BRANCH

1999 was a very busy and fruitful year for the Northern Ireland Branch. The main event was the Annual North/South Conference - Progress Through Partnership: Libraries, Information and the Arts - held in Newry, 20-23 April. Conference topics included the report of the Public Library Policy Review - Branching Out: A New Public Library Service; The Information Society: A Global Perspective; The National Year of Reading; Books Across the Border; Libraries, Literature and Private Sponsorship; The International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award; Putting Imagination Online; Literature, Public Libraries and the Internet; Public Libraries and the Arts; A Place for Children; The Role of Libraries in the Modern World; and What Role for LIS Professionals in Knowledge Management?

1999 also saw the new look Branch newsletter, *LANI News*, and work supporting The Library Association's Workplace Libraries campaign.

Stranmillis University College, Belfast was the venue for two Internet courses. Making the Best Use of the Internet, held on 30 June, was over subscribed. The Internet for Front Line Staff was held on 17 November for Affiliate Members with only 4 of the 25 participants having used the Internet before.

The Branch was delighted to welcome Suzanne Burge to its AGM and a healthy debate took place on the proposed unification of The Library Association and IIS.

NORTH WESTERN BRANCH

Initiatives funded by the Branch in 1999 included a grant of up to £1000 per year for the course duration, to a student at one of the region's Library Schools who is experiencing financial difficulties and may otherwise have to abandon their studies; a £1000 sponsorship to VSO student Melanie Weeks; and funding to Manchester Metropolitan University student, Carole Keeling, to attend UmbrellA 5.

At UmbrellA 5, Jacqueline Whiteside of Lancaster University gave a slide presentation on Making Ruskin Accessible and lunch was provided for Branch Members. An event in February discussed The Library Association/IIS unification, with speakers Peter Brophy (then IIS President) and Library Association National Councillor, Mary Auckland. The Branch organized a stall at the Alternative Careers Fair on 3 November and discussed routes into librarianship with 44 students as a result.

THE SCOTTISH LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The Scottish Parliament acted quickly to address concerns about the lack of co-ordination of ICT networks, by establishing a cross-ministerial grouping, Digital Scotland. The supporting advisory body includes SLA Director, Robert Craig. The SLA responded to the Scottish Executive's draft education bill and proposals to develop a National Cultural Strategy. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) formed a task group to manage the roll-out of the public library network in Scotland. The SLA has also been involved in developing the Scottish University for Industry, the National Grid for Learning and the Government's lifelong learning initiatives.

The COSLA School Library Standards and performance indicators for school libraries, *Taking A Closer Look At The School Library Resource Centre*, were published and are being taken forward by authorities. Schools received the books and support materials for the Scottish Writers Lottery-funded project. Promoting the selected titles, the SLA has developed a Web site with a writer in residence, and an exciting CD-ROM, using game technology.

SLAINTE, the SLA's Web site, has developed and moved onto different software and hardware platforms, using Ameritech Library Service's cataloguing module. Existing resources have been catalogued to MARC standard and the search facilities have been greatly enhanced. SLAINTE is now at www.slainte.org.uk and is part of the CAIRNS project.

SOUTH WESTERN BRANCH

The Branch collaborated with the Arts and Humanities Data Service to run a cross-sector course on digitisation, and also jointly ran a course with the Information Services Group on

Electronic Publishing. Both were well attended and well received. The Branch sponsored two Members to attend professional courses this year.

Analysis of a Membership survey indicated that widening participation in professional activities and enhancing communication between the Committee and Members are key.

The second Harry Galloway Prize was awarded to Viv Cothey as the best student on the MSc in Information and Library Management course at the University of Bristol. Active links were established with the Jersey Association of Professional Librarians who will send a representative to two Committee meetings each year.

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH

1999 has been a significant year for the Branch in providing support and services for Members. The second Thacker Woods Award, for outstanding achievement by a Member at an early stage of professional development, was presented by Association President, Verna Taylor, to Rachel Ayers-Nelson at the Branch Members' Day. This took place in March at Kidderminster Library. At the meeting, Branch Members also gave unanimous endorsement to The Library Association/IIS unification proposals.

The other major highlight has been the award of Branch and Group Development funding for Project Breakthrough, an initiative to increase active participation by Members. Surveys and interviews with Members will be carried out to provide information on their professional development and support needs. This will be complemented by looking at comparable professions and drawing on their successes in activating Members in the work of the Branch.

The Branch newsletter, *Open Access*, increased in frequency from three to four times a year. The Branch also held courses and a careers fair; supported The Library Association student Roadshow; and for the first time for several years, filled all vacancies on the Committee.

Sadly, 1999 also saw the retirement from the Committee of Philip Gill, who contributed so much to both the Branch and the profession.

WELSH LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

On 12 May 1999, the historic first plenary meeting of the National Assembly for Wales took place. It became clear that the Assembly's powers and responsibilities would have a major impact on the development of the library and information community in Wales. The Welsh Library Association, with assistance from The Library Association, developed an advocacy campaign to inform the new Assembly Members of libraries' important contribution to the Assembly's goals. This included an information pack, responding to numerous consultation papers, and meeting the Assembly Secretary with responsibility for libraries.

A new current awareness service was initiated to inform librarians in Wales, with an emphasis on developments in the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and in Ireland. This weekly service has been well received and compliments the WLA's almost monthly newsletter *Newyddion* and the bi-annual publication, *Y Ddolen*.

The WLA Publications Panel made an important contribution with the launch of *Who's Who in Welsh Librarianship* (edited by Glyn Jones) in print, and *A List of Indexes to Welsh Periodicals and Newspapers* (compiled by William Howells) on the WLA's Web site: www.llgc.org.uk/wla/wla0036.htm. A number of seminars and the Welsh Libraries Conference were also organized to assist Members' continuing professional development.

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE BRANCH

The Branch gave financial support to the Career Development Group for their annual conference held in Leeds; partnered SINTO (Sheffield Information Organization) in running a successful day school on libraries and sponsorship; and funded a new edition of the *Poets to Puppeteers* directory published by the local section of the Youth Libraries Group. The Branch also organized meetings on literature development in libraries; social exclusion and public libraries; and an exchange-of-experience seminar entitled Beyond the Hype on the realities of managing Web-based information services in libraries.

Four issues of *Yorkshire Library News* were produced. The Branch Web site (www.la-yh.demon.co.uk) continues to develop as the focal point for access to professional information. Indeed, the Branch has ambitious plans to mount a directory of libraries and information centres in the region - the Librarian's On-line Community.

A children's bookbrowse project, and a photographic-based celebration of 150 years of public libraries in the region both successfully applied to the Branch's Research, Study and Development Fund. It is hoped that the latter will be published in book and Web-based formats.

Bob Duckett (Bradford) retired as Chair, replaced by Sue Cook (Leeds). Long-serving Branch Councillor, Graham Cornish, resigned in readiness for his Library Association Presidency in 2000. His place is taken by Alison Jobey (Sheffield).