

Learned, professional and independent libraries

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Methodology

In the new millennium, as in the previous one, the hard-pressed staff of learned, professional and independent libraries seem to have had little opportunity to publish in journals. As in the previous two editions of this work^{1,2}, therefore, this chapter draws on responses to a questionnaire. In addition, a number of librarians were kind enough to supply additional information by phone or email. Where no bibliographic reference is given in the notes, information came from one of these sources. Where percentages or proportions are given, they refer to the responses to the questionnaire.

Background

Many learned, professional and independent libraries are among the oldest in the country. In 2001 the Cranston Library at St Mary's Church, Reigate, celebrated its tercentenary as the oldest lending library in England.³ The Leeds Library was celebrated in a work which included essays on its purchases in 1817 and its Foreign Circulating Library in the early nineteenth century,⁴ and another described the collections of the Royal College of Physicians – everything from books to ear trumpets apparently.⁵ Still new ones are created to serve hitherto unregarded subjects and groups.

In the library world at large, the themes were lifelong learning and widening access – the Heritage Lottery Fund assisted a number of projects in these areas and the New Opportunities fund enabled the digitization of a number of important collections of images. The Research Support Libraries Programme (supported by HEFCE and the British Library) gave funding mainly to academic libraries, though a few learned society and independent libraries managed to join the RSLP's subject-based projects.⁶

The issue of electronic publishing opened up a gap between the learned societies, which depend in some cases to a large extent on income from their publications and other libraries which complain bitterly of increases in subscriptions and support open access publishing.

Alice Prochaska has commented that 'the two functions of librarian and curator have been seen traditionally within their own professions as distinct and often incompatible'⁷. Re:source (subsequently rechristened the Museums Libraries and Archives Council and its regional councils sought to bring together all three sectors, something that learned and professional libraries already have experience of (not infrequently in one person).

Electronic media increased in importance. Libraries broadened their thinking from computerized catalogues to the provision of a range of resources from their collections for users from researchers to school students and/or provided electronic journals and other resources for their members on site and elsewhere.

Conservation seems to have loomed less large than it did in the previous decade, but a number of libraries had taken advantage of the National Preservation Office's preservation assessment visits to take stock of the state of their collections.⁸

Activities

Nearly half the libraries surveyed had taken on extra responsibilities in the period 2001-5. Some of these were extensions of library work; the Advocates Library, for example, were employing a rare books cataloguer to catalogue the Abbotsford Library and other pre-1801 imprints. The Médiathèque of the Institut Français added story telling and reading groups to its repertoire.

At the Institution of Electrical Engineers, the Library and Archives were merged, with the loss of two posts, while at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the department grew to cover not just the library but archives, records management and web site. The British Geological Survey Library commented laconically that 'We had an archivist for 8 months who left so Library looking after archives again'.

New legislation has produced yet more opportunities for diversification, with responsibility for data protection and/or freedom of information being added to the work load of some libraries. The Chartered Institute of Information and Library Service undertakes tasks such as copyright checking, data protection, proof reading and sitting on an editorial board. Records management fell to the Institute of Actuaries, the Zoological Society and the Royal Society Libraries. The Library and Information Service of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) was responsible for the Institute's web site. At the Royal College of Nursing, the Library built on its success in developing an institutional information strategy in 1999 to take the lead in the institutional communications strategy.⁹ The National Library for the Blind organised more external events and found themselves training public library staff to provide better services for visually impaired people.

Almost alone among respondents, the Library of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, had shed one of its responsibilities – for IT.

Arrivals, departures, changes and moves

The foundation of libraries by private benefactors has a long and honourable tradition. When Chawton House (once owned by Jane Austen's brother Edward) came onto the market, Sandy Lerner, co-founder of Cisco Systems and a Jane Austen enthusiast, acquired the lease, restored it and made it the home of a Library and Centre for Early English Women's Writing. Opened in 2003 the Library already contains more than 9000 rare books and manuscripts and provides a setting for the study of some 2-3000 women writers 1600-1830. Not all were writers of fiction; the collection covers the performing arts, education, cookery and advice to midwives.¹⁰

Several specialist libraries found homes in academia: the Institute of Actuaries and Faculty of Actuaries transferred part of their Historical Collection to Edinburgh University, the Women's Art Library/MAKE (formerly the Women Artists' Slide Library) moved to Goldsmiths College, after a stay at Central St Martin's School of Art and the Tony Arnold Library (the Library of the Chartered Institute of Taxation and the Association of Taxation Technicians) went to the Law Library of King's College London in 2001. In 2004 management of the last-named was outsourced to LexisNexis Butterworths, with an increase in staffing from eight hours a week to 37.

The Library and Information Services of the Institute of Chartered Accountants had two changes of line management in the five year period.

Finally, after some two decades of indecision, several reports, assorted architects' plans and 'many meetings, epic in length and drama',¹¹ a permanent home was finally found for the Royal Institute of British Architects' magnificent Drawings Collection, which moved with its Manuscripts Collection to a new architecture gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The Royal Asiatic Society vacated its premises in 2005 and relocated to temporarily with the intention of moving to a new permanent home in Stephenson Way, NW1 in early 2006. The National Meteorological Library and Archive also moved, with its parent body, the Met Office, from Bracknell to Exeter in 2004. At the same time, staffing was reduced from 14 to 11 (nine in the Library and two in the Archive) and its budget decreased. The picture was not entirely negative, however. Extra funding was made available for digitization to enable the Library to occupy smaller premises after the move and the cost of some journals was transferred to other sections.

On 22 May 2003 the Dean and Chapter of York Minster announced the closure of the Minster Library 'for financial reasons'.¹² This provoked a flurry of protests and letters to *The Times* from, among others, the Bibliographical Society, the Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries, the Librarians' Christian Fellowship, the Historic Libraries Forum, and the Library History Group, Rare Books Group and Chief Executive of CILIP. CILIP Council members expressed their concern forthrightly 'Our intellectual and cultural heritage is not safe in the hands of the Church' stated Peter Harbord.¹³ A month later on 23 June, bowing to the inevitable, the Dean and Chapter issued another statement. 'The Chapter recognizes that it has made an error of judgement. It got it wrong.'¹⁴ This unfortunate incident not only secured the future of the Minster Library but raised awareness, within CILIP and the Church of England, of the threats to other ecclesiastical libraries and led the Archbishop of Canterbury to commission a report on the central repositories of the Church of England.

Another major library that came under threat in the period was the Science Museum Library, faced with a substantial rent increase from the landlords, Imperial College. Disappointingly, the Chairman of the Museum Trustees sees the library as 'an expense too many, threatening the museum's core work'.¹⁵ At the time of writing, funding had been given for another year, but its future is still uncertain.

Collections

Only a few of the libraries in the survey had made major acquisitions in the past five years. The Tony Arnold Library received material from the Inland Revenue's International Library, closed as part of the merger between the Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise. The British Geological Survey Library acquired a collection of published and unpublished material from a former Director of the Survey, Sir Kingsley Dunham while the Royal Society acquired three new collections of papers of former Fellows, Thomas, Christopher Longuet Higgins and Sir Nicholas Shackleton.

Chetham's Library used finance from the Heritage Lottery Fund to purchase the chained library founded by Humphrey Chetham for the parochial chapel of Gorton.¹⁶ An anonymous donor helped the Lord Coutanches Library of the Société Jersiaise to purchase a large part of the late Ian Monins vast collection of Channel Islands books and ephemera, dispersed after his death.

Funding.

Of those libraries in the survey, half reported that their spending had remained the same over the period 2001-2005, a third that it had gone down and a sixth had had an increase in their budgets. Professional libraries appeared to be the most likely to have above-inflation increases, to take account of ever-increasing journal prices, but a number of learned and professional libraries (e.g. Inner Temple) reported having to cancel subscriptions. At ICAEW and the Inner Temple spending on electronic resources increased, by 100% in the former case, while Lincoln's Inn Library received significant extra funding for electronic services without significant reduction in hard copy spending. The RCOG was another body which funded increases above inflation to safeguard its information provision and the Information Service of the Scottish Accountancy Trust for Education and Research had an increased budget in 2005.

The precarious nature of funding for independent libraries was illustrated by Chetham's Library which suffered a fall in income due to a poor return on its investments; the National Library for the Blind suffered a similar experience and had to cut budgets each year. At the same time, both libraries received project funding from external bodies, Chetham's a grant of £81,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for cataloguing the chained library at Gorton¹⁷ and the NLB £16,520 from the DfEES and DCMS/Wolfson to transcribe 50 non-traditional history books¹⁸. Another hazard was reported by the Goethe-Institut Library, where funding for books was cut in favour of events – perhaps unsurprisingly this was one of the libraries which experienced a fall in use over the period. The Royal Asiatic Society was another to suffer budget cuts and a fall in use. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) undertook a funding review exercise in 2001, as a result of which the library budget was significantly reduced.

At the Royal Society, the Library's funding was reduced during a five-year period of refurbishment, and funding for some activities such as conservation and microfilming was not restored; however it had Heritage Lottery funding for two projects, including £43,000 for its web of science project¹⁹ and a grant from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation for a third. Other beneficiaries of the Heritage Lottery Fund were the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Royal Geographical Society, which received over £4 million for its 'Unlocking the Archives' project²⁰.

The Geological Society Library was one of a number that took part in a HLF bid for the Access to Archives (A2A) project and also benefited from the Society's bicentenary appeal, which paid for a number of projects including retrospective cataloguing of the book collection to complete the online catalogue and for staff to work on a map catalogue project.

At the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the Library received increased funding for electronic resources, which it networks to the whole organisation. Grants from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation paid for digitization of rare books and for contributing digitized illustrations, text and other material to the African Plants Initiative and the Aluka Project, while private sponsors supported the conservation and conversion from bound volumes to fascicules of 218 volumes of 19th and early 20th century correspondence. The Zoological Society of London received support for art cataloguing from the Michael Marks Trust and from the Wolfson Trust for reading room refurbishment.

Donations from the Friends of Lambeth Palace Library continued to provide a catalyst for other grants for purchases from bodies such as the Art Fund²¹. Another library reliant to some extent on private individuals is the Lord Coutanche Library of the Société Jersiaise, whose members are generous with donations and bequests, and an anonymous donor gave £10,000 to purchase items from an important local collection. The London Library appointed a full-time Fundraiser in 2004 to oversee a development appeal and membership promotion, and used its first-ever user survey to assist in its strategic planning.²²

New sources of funding appeared at the beginning of the millennium; the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) offered grants for digitization²³. Lambeth Palace Library received a grant of £75,000 for the digitization of the architectural plans in the papers of the Incorporated Church Building Society²⁴, while the Commonwealth Institute was awarded £250,000 for its Commonwealth Learning Gateway. The Wellcome Trust with the British Library provided funding for the cataloguing of Research Resources in Medical History, from which the Royal College of Surgeons²⁵, the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and the Royal College of Nursing all received grants²⁶. The success of the scheme (which was initially only for two years) led to its being extended for another two years²⁷.

The Wolfson Foundation supported the National Library for the Blind's 'A touch more' campaign to encourage visually impaired people to use local libraries²⁸.

Buildings

In 2003 the new building for the Women's Library – a converted washhouse in Aldgate – was commended by the judges of the annual RIBA architecture Awards; who described it as 'a lovingly crafted work which has been carefully constructed and which is much appreciated by its users'²⁹. In addition to storage and reading rooms it features a seminar room and exhibition area, where an early exhibition was, appropriately enough, on how laundry has changed from a Victorian profession to a modern obsession.³⁰ The building project, which was partially funded by a £4.2m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund³¹, was a flagship project for London Guildhall University and demonstrated the benefits for the collection of its academic setting.

Chatham House Library reported a reduction in space for the Library in 2005, with a further reduction planned for 2006. The London Library acquired another building adjacent to its St James's Square premises with a view to further expansion.

The Royal Society underwent major building works which necessitated moving some stock to a remote store. Remote storage at Wansdyke is now used for records management. The Society's Library also benefited from climate control in its Book Room and a large permanent exhibition area enabling a display of its varied collections. The Royal Society of Medicine also engaged in a major refurbishment to celebrate its 200th birthday. The Library underwent a number of improvements, including, crucially, strengthening its floors to current standards, and the provision of suitable environments both for rare books and readers.³² At the British Dental Association, during a major refurbishment and the multimedia room was turned into a Museum. A new Museum was also created at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, with Heritage Lottery Funding, where library, archive and museum material can be displayed. At the Royal Academy of Arts a new muniment room for the archives was opened in 2002.³³

The Members of the Royal College of Nursing (a trade union as well as a professional body) voted for an increase of 10% in subscriptions to cover a number of extra services; second on the list were improvements to information services. The Library was extended and refurbished.³⁴

At the British Geological Survey, stock continued to grow and mobile shelving was installed in the strong room. The Geological Society Library also installed mobile shelving in a new monograph store in 2002³⁵ and a new periodical store in 2004, when separate rooms for storing maps and modern archives were also created³⁶. As part of the major project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, three new archive strong rooms were created at the Royal Society of Arts. Lincoln's Inn Library also gained new strong rooms for rare books, archives and manuscripts, with mobile shelving, and replacement air conditioning and fire protection systems, as part of a major refurbishment of the building.

At the Inner Temple a comfort cooling system was installed. The Reading Room at the Institution of Electrical Engineers was refurbished in 2000, as was that of the Zoological Society of London, where works were also carried out to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act. At Lambeth Palace Library, an age-old tradition of making readers eat their lunch *al fresco* in the courtyard garden came to an end when a small tea room was created for them.

Staff

The number of staff employed in the libraries responding to the survey varied from one to 75; 14 libraries had two to five staff, and 10 had five to ten. There was no trend in staffing; equal numbers reported that staff numbers had risen, fallen, and remained the same in the period, and of those who employed volunteers, five had increased numbers, four had fewer, and three had remained at the same level. Two libraries that had not previously employed volunteers had started to do so, and another was considering it. One library mentioned a work experience trainee.

At the British Geological Survey, staff became involved in the Survey's overseas projects, and members of staff have been sent to work in Afghanistan and Mozambique. Closer to home, the Librarian of the Alpine Club was one of 11 librarians to win a Churchill Fellowship in 2001 – to visit major mountaineering libraries throughout Europe.³⁷

Access and use

The majority of respondents did not change their rules for access between 2001 and 2005. Those who did made small moves in the direction of wider access. The Chartered Institute of Marketing Information and Library Service, which had formerly charged a fee to non-members, abandoned this charge in 2003, when they considered becoming a charity; from January 2006 however the charges for non-members were to be re-instated. The Zoological Society Library dropped its previous nominal charges for non-members in 2005. At the Tony Arnold Library non-members were always admitted because of the specialist focus of the collection, but after its move to King's College, there was a greater emphasis on access for King's staff and students. Several professional bodies, whose libraries were previously open only to their own members and students widened access to include allied professionals and/or students; the Inner Temple now admits student members of other Inns of Court, while the ICAEW admits members of the Association of Corporate Treasurers by special arrangement and the Library of the RPSGB has a formal arrangement for pharmacy technicians. The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts,

Manufactures and Commerce admits non-Fellows only by appointment. The Médiathèque of the Institut Français widened access in a different way, by instituting a free mobile library (30-40 items at a time from their collections going to other libraries and institutions).

Nearly half the libraries in the survey reported that use had increased over the past five years, with only a sixth saying that it had gone down. Particular patterns of use suggest that in some cases electronic access can be a substitute for personal visits and enquiries, but in other cases making some information available electronically whets the appetite of potential visitors. The Royal Society found that registered users had nearly doubled between 2000/1 and 2004/5 from 948 to 1635 and enquiries had increased over the same period from 3372 to 4538. The Library and Archives of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew had an even higher rate of increase, from approximately 1500 in 2000/1 to 2675 in 2004/5. The RPSGB Library on the other hand found that while more users accessed their services, enquiries were beginning to fall. The Institution of Electrical Engineers also found that the number of loans, enquiries and photocopy requests had fallen but the introduction of electronic content services had brought in new users.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants reported a fall in enquiries, owing to a concerted effort to deliver information over the web, while the Chartered Institute of Marketing saw a fall in visitors, attributed to shorter opening hours. The British Geological Survey also noted that fewer visits by BGS staff were offset by increased use of electronic access, and that external use remained the same. The Geological Society Library had experienced a fall in visitors but an increase in enquiries, and those enquiries tended to be more complex and require more in depth research. It also experienced tension between the needs of individual Fellows and the large, often multinational, firms which had the status of Corporate Affiliates³⁸. Solving this problem was particularly important, given that Fellows saw the Library as one of the major benefits of membership. The National Library for the Blind, SATER and the London Library all reported a fall in use, starting to rise again, in the NLB's case because of the introduction of giant print books.

Catalogues

In the survey libraries were asked whether they had a computerized catalogue and if so, whether it was online. Only three out of thirty answered 'no' to the first part of the question; Westminster Abbey reported that they were hampered by systems difficulties. Many qualified their reply – 'Still retroconversion work to do' said the Advocates Library, a sentiment echoed by others. Some had contributed catalogue records to joint projects, notably the consortium of scientific libraries which contributed to the Access to Archives (A2A) project and comprised the libraries of the Geological Society, the Natural History Museum, the Royal Society, and the Institutions of Civil and of Mechanical Engineers

Cataloguing and classification can be a special problem for learned and professional libraries, which may require greater depth than a conventional academic or public library, or simply have material that is hard to catalogue. The Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies admits that not all its varied resources are catalogued and, perhaps uniquely in the UK, uses the classification system of the Lenin Library.³⁹ The Northern Ireland Political Collection of Belfast's Linen Hall Library has among its 250,000 items 'badges, calendars, Christmas cards and defaced coins, not to mention baby's [sic] bibs, bullets, political lollipops and jam ...'.⁴⁰ Their unique collection of posters was catalogued on a CD-ROM, with a brief commentary on each, in order to produce which staff had to track down and interview

key poster designers from all sides of the political divide. Collections such as these have their own unique problems, such as thesauri ('do you use "murders" with its judgemental and often disputed connotations, or do you use "deaths"?' mused John Gray⁴¹) and the possible reaction of users; much of the Wiener Library's stock – ranging from anti-Semitic children's books to 1200 eyewitness accounts of Holocaust survivors – is distasteful, distressing or shocking.⁴²

2003 saw the publication of the final volume of the Royal Institute of British Architects' catalogue of early imprints⁴³, the end result of 30 years' work by half a dozen curators. Far more than a conventional library catalogue, it contains exhaustive descriptions of each graphic element in every book and a very detailed descriptive bibliography⁴⁴. The 4205 works (described in 3250 pages) include dozens of different editions of major architectural writers such as Vitruvius and Palladio. It seems improbable that works on such a scale will be printed in the future.

At Westminster Abbey Library (surely one of the oldest in the country) the Librarian compiled a bibliography of 3394 books and articles about the Abbey published in the past 425 years.⁴⁵

Services

It is frequently quite difficult to distinguish between learned society and professional libraries, since many organisations combine both functions. However, in the introduction of electronic services a distinction appeared, although it was not entirely clear cut. Most professional institutes offered their members online access to electronic journals and databases by 2005, while learned society libraries tended to concentrate on making their own resources available to a wider public. Independent libraries appeared to be little affected by the online revolution.

The Advocates Library introduced online and other electronic services and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew online journals and abstracts. The latter also planned its digital strategy to make available its superb collections of botanical illustrations.⁴⁶ The Tony Arnold Library installed a pc for users with online databases and CD-ROMs and intends in the longer term to move from print to electronic resources for the benefit of their members outside London. The Geological Society Library offered access to over 100 e-journals, and also provided internet and email access for visitors from 2002, and wifi access in 2005. It was one of a number of libraries which also began to put additional information on its web site, including lists of presidents, medallists and obituaries. The Inner Temple added word processing facilities to email and online database access for its members. The IEE offered access to e-books as well as e-journals. The British Geological Survey introduced online circulation and reservations, access to e-journals and abstracting services, and made their own publications available in electronic format to the Survey staff.

The RPSGB Library offered online access to staff and walk-in users with a view to extending this to members off site. It also systematically automated its procedures and started selling the Society's publications. The Institute of Physics made all its journals available electronically.⁴⁷ The National Library for the Blind piloted Daisy books, CDs containing both text and audio, which are navigable.

The Goethe-Institut introduced new online services for A-Level students and others, the Working Class Movement Library also produced schools packs, including a CD, *The children of the Industrial Revolution*, and the Royal Society Library collaborated on an AS level in the History of Science and with ALM London and others on educational resources for secondary schools.

The Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine catalogued and digitized its vast collection of images covering all aspects of medical history,⁴⁸ and found that its web site⁴⁹ got 2500 hits a day. It also created a portal, MedHist, which forms part of the Biome hub of the Resource Discovery Network.⁵⁰ Following the report on ecclesiastical repositories mentioned above, a portal was created for Lambeth palace Library, the Church of England Record Centre and all the cathedral libraries and archives.⁵¹

The National Maritime Museum took the lead in a programme to provide resource sand events on the history of slavery⁵² and, as the owners of 'the world's most comprehensive maritime collection', created E Library @ the Caird Library.⁵³ This venture, coupled with making the building more welcoming, was a 'key element in [their] strategy to widen access for "lifelong learners", according to the Museum Director. Visitors increased from 400 in April 2002 to 2000 in April 2003.⁵⁴ another innovative web site, the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh's James Lind Library,⁵⁵ was named as one of the top five sites for those seeking information on science and technology by scientificamerican.com.⁵⁶

Not all service were electronic, even in the twenty-first century. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Library offered teaching workshops as well as online services. The Royal Society of Arts Library also started freepost borrowing. Lincoln's Inn started Saturday opening in 2004, in conjunction with the other Inns of Court libraries. The NLB started a giant print service for children and established a small audio collection, as well as providing more electronic services.

The Chartered Institute of Marketing found that changes to the Copyright law had the effect of killing off the desk research service. At Chatham House library, with falling budgets and staff numbers, lists of new acquisitions were no longer produced. ICAEW withdrew its Historic Share price Service in 2003 although like many other professional libraries it offered electronic access to databases and to full text journals.

Collaboration

'These learned and professional libraries are often not very well known and their profile is low', wrote Nigel Lees in 2000, 'If you laid [them] end to end what would you have? The answer, I suspect, is a resource of such richness and magnitude that it would rival the British Library's collection.'⁵⁷ He went on to urge these libraries to collaborate more among themselves to make this distributed resource better known and more easily available. Some progress was made in this direction; medical and allied libraries formed the Consortium of Health Information Libraries in London (CHILL), legal libraries formed the Bar Librarians' Group, while a number of learned society libraries formed their own group.

Others joined existing associations; by 2005, the M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries (originally a grouping of University of London libraries) had broadened its remit to include not only university libraries from as far afield as Canterbury, Brighton and Hatfield, but had also stretched out a welcoming hand to a number of learned libraries, including the Wellcome Trust Library, the Wiener Library, the Royal Society of Chemistry, and the British Library for Development Studies. The Association of Independent Libraries had expanded to include 28 subscription and other libraries. Two long-standing groups are the Cathedral Libraries and Archives Association and/or Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries.

Informal networks were also set up for particular purposes; as a result of the new Copyright Act, the Geological Society Library brought together a working group of learned and professional libraries to negotiate with the Copyright Licensing Agency for a licence designed for membership organisations. The Linnean Society Library is part of the Linnaeus Link project, which is building a web based union catalogue of all the works of Linnaeus, while the Royal Society is part of a 'Culturegrid' bid to the EU for a data mining project and works in close association with the Newton Project and Centre for Early Letters and Literature.

On a practical level, the libraries of Westminster Abbey, Lambeth Palace Library and the Church of England Record Centre established a conservation consortium. In 2005 the Research Information Network was set up as successor to the Research Support Libraries Programme, with part of its remit to make contact with all libraries supporting research from whatever sector. It is to be hoped that this might start to bridge the divide between academic and learned and professional libraries.

Designation

Many learned and professional libraries are outstanding in their field and this fact was formally recognised at the end of 2005, when the MLA announced the first library collections designated as being of 'outstanding national and international importance'. Among the 38 designated collections were those of the Britten-Pears Foundation, Lambeth Palace Library, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the geographical collections of the Royal Geographical Society and British Institute of Geographers, the Wellcome Trust Library, and the collections on Shakespeare's life and times and the performance and study of his works held by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and Royal Shakespeare Company.⁵⁸

Conclusion

The image of the librarian (and particularly those of small, specialized libraries) tends to be one of a retiring creature, at home only with musty tomes. I hope that this brief survey shows that in fact the staff of learned and professional libraries are a lively, multi-talented and innovative group, introducing new services and responding to the needs of their members and the wider community. They are, above all, co-operative and helpful. My thanks to those who have contributed so much information (more than I could possibly use) to this chapter.

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The Independent Libraries Association was founded in 1989 to further the conservation, restoration and public awareness of a too little known but significant section of our cultural heritage. It aims to develop links between its constituent members by means of co-operative agreements, newsletters, social gatherings, seminars, workshops and meetings. History. The founding institutional members of the ILA all began life specifically as independently funded subscription libraries founded between 1768 and 1841 at a time when there were no public libraries and no university libraries outside Cambri Libraries become a different kind of learning destination when schools reimagine them as open, transparent spaces that invite student communication and collaboration.Â Libraries are reinventing themselves as content becomes more accessible online and their role becomes less about housing tomes and more about connecting learners and constructing knowledge. Cushing Academy in Ashburnham, Massachusetts has been in the vanguard of this transition since 2009, when it announced its plans for a "bookless" library.