The theme this time is strategic planning. Not sure it needs an editorial -- let’s just get right into an overview by Kathryn McKee, Sub-Librarian at St John’s.

STRATEGIC PLANS IN CAMBRIDGE

Back in December I sent a message out to ucam-lib-discuss, asking whether people had strategic plans or not, and what their experience and views of strategic plans were. I had a relatively small response, but even from the few who replied, a very wide variation. Perhaps this is not surprising in the Cambridge situation, where institutions are run independently, each having its own organisational culture and historical way of doing things.

Of the two faculty and departmental librarians who responded, English has a strategic plan, about which Libby has written at length elsewhere in this issue. The other recognised the usefulness of strategic planning, and had the writing of a strategic plan on the library’s long term ‘to do’ list, but confessed that it was a long way down that list. While the Librarian thought it would be “a useful exercise” day to day management of the Library took priority.

The three Colleges who responded showed considerable
variation. One regretted that neither the Library nor the College as a whole had any sort of strategic plan, confessing that were one to be written for the Library, no one would be likely to read it. It would be regarded with puzzlement by College officers. Plans did exist, of course, in the Librarian’s head, and the absence of written policy did to some extent provide a measure of freedom, in that proposals could be made whenever an appropriate opportunity arose, and if the powers that be agreed, could then be implemented: a system described as “anarchic, but effective”.

Another College had set up a working party to look at preparing a College-wide strategic plan (not for the library in particular, though presumably it would be included). The Librarian in this College was not involved in the planning process.

A third did have a strategic plan, specifically for the Library. Initially this was a written plan, but after a time, as it changed little, it gradually became a mental plan. However, in recent years it has been a written plan again, which is revised. The Librarian explained that this change had come about because having a formal plan in writing had become useful again. Departments were becoming more accountable, and in a time of diminishing resources, it gave continuity. The plan was used to compile an annual action plan and when calculating the annual budget. It was also helpful for library personnel as having goals and targets could make working patterns more efficient. The Librarian could see what was being achieved or not, and those in authority could see what the Library was doing. It added credibility to the Library’s operations, showing the direction in which it was going and what it hoped to achieve. Alongside all these positives, there was the proviso that compiling the plan was time-consuming.
While it was great when objectives were achieved, it could be disheartening when they were not. There could be conflict when those in authority viewed the plan as being set in stone, rather than as providing guidelines, or when the Library was told that things could not be done.

Here at St John’s, the Library has had a written strategic plan for some years. Minor revisions are implemented annually, following detailed discussion among library staff at our annual away day, with a larger rewrite every four years. The plan is regarded as an essential tool for setting out objectives, measuring progress, and demonstrating how the Library operates. Besides the advantages for internal management which a strategic plan brings, having clear strategies and policies in place is also beneficial when making funding bids to external bodies. More recently, the College as a whole has adopted its own wider strategic plan, which has had some impact on the Library in the objectives that the College has set for provision of resources for teaching and learning. In general the two plans complement one another, which might be expected given that the Library and the College share common aims.

Libby Tilley, Librarian in the English Faculty Library, lets us look at one of those strategic plans in more detail.

YES, WE DO HAVE A STRATEGIC PLAN...

....and we think it’s useful. Kissinger (1994:98) remarks that it helps prevent us ‘dissipating into a random thrashing about’. I like the image this conjures up, probably because it resembles some of my working days when, to all intents and purposes, I appear to have forgotten that I wrote a strategic plan and fire-
fighting is the norm. I like to think, however, that despite the firefighting, I am working within the guidelines of a plan and that every decision I make is ultimately guided by its key points. That may sound idealistic but it is logical; my professional beliefs and ideals are an integral part of the plan I wrote and it is therefore likely, and hopeful, that my day-to-day decisions inevitably reflect these.

Just a few words about strategic planning in general: it determines what direction an organization is moving in over a period of time and how it’s going to get there. It assumes that we have goals and aspirations about the future of our organization, in this case our library service. It’s a plan about how we can allocate our resources, both budgets and people, to achieve those goals. Strategic planning assumes that we take a proactive look at our services rather than being reactive. A library will find it difficult to move forward without some preparation and planning.

I was asked to write a plan for the English Faculty Library as one of my first tasks when new in post. My first port of call was to check the University’s mission and make sure that its global strategic statements were going to be fully supported in my plan. Secondly, I asked for a copy of the Faculty’s strategic plan; there was no point us being at odds with the Faculty – if their plan includes an expansion of MPhil courses, and the Library’s plan says nothing about how we intend to support this then we would be failing the Faculty. Thirdly, several Library staff meetings were devoted to SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analyses and subsequent discussions followed finally by the drawing up of a plan. The final strategic plan contains an Appendix: ‘Operational Goals’, which covers practical
applications for the broader strategic aims with SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) objectives.

A document of this nature needed to go through the Faculty’s Library Committee and be ratified by the Faculty Board, which in due course it did. This procedure elevated the plan beyond mere whimsy and idealistic librarian-esque strategy, giving it substance, and the backing and support of library staff, administrator and academics. This formal support is essential.

Main reasons for writing a strategic plan:

1. Efficiency

A strategic plan gives a vision, a set of longer-term objectives as its focus. It gives us the broader picture: a road-map at a 1:100,000 scale, within which the tactical day-to-day decisions at 1:5,000 become immediately more obvious. If I know that ultimately we’re heading for integrating MPhil resource provision with undergraduate provision, then day-to-day book ordering is informed by this. There is no need for a crisis every time I get a request for a new book by an MPhil student and so we can be more efficient in the use of our time. With the same birds-eye-view strategic planning considers streamlining processes and procedures in support of institutional missions and goals, and may acknowledge that potential future cuts in staffing or resource allocation are possible. It helps us plan for future efficiency without a reduction in service quality.
2. Engagement

Engaging with stakeholders is exciting, it’s part of how we achieve support, build goodwill and develop Library ‘champions’. Writing a strategic plan is a perfect route into this process. Engaging is liaising and stakeholders include everyone – not just the academics, but students, staff, administrative support staff and so on. Writing a plan is the perfect entrée into our stakeholders’ lives -- engaging them in a two-way communication that will inform our strategic thinking.

3. Enthusiasm

Writing a strategic plan should never be a solitary effort. I believe it is about relationships and communication, encouraging involvement and buy-in by staff, where their contribution is heard and incorporated. Motivation for working can stem from understanding why we operate in certain ways, what the boundaries are and where we’re headed. It arises when there is a clear rationale for why sitting at the issue desk is an important job engaging with our stakeholders all day, every day. Motivation leads to enthusiasm which communicates itself to our users which in and of itself is enormously valuable. Without staff involvement and enthusiastic backing I believe a strategic plan will fail.

4. Extension

As Librarians we may have a tendency to sit in our own silos with occasional forays to see what is going on ‘out there’. It is probably no great surprise that candidates applying for
Chartership with CILIP are specifically required to demonstrate that they are aware of the wider professional body. It is all too easy to get wrapped up in our own small busy worlds and, without the stimulus of seeing where the profession is heading, we might wonder whether writing a strategic plan is of any use. After all, we know what we are doing for the most part, and may think it unnecessary to formalise it. But writing a strategic plan is much more than this. It must look further ahead into the unknown and it therefore gives us a perfect rationale for engaging with our wider profession. If nothing else, it provides an excellent excuse to attend a stimulating conference or course outside the Cambridge environment. Dare I say that there is more to life than Cambridge...

5. Evaluation

In these days of serious funding cuts, professional librarians must prove that the service they offer is a quality one; that it demonstrates impact and a good return for the money invested in it. Support services have already been proven nationally to be an easy target for institutional cuts. Evaluation of our services is more easily achieved if there is a plan in place against which to benchmark and compare.

In summary, how useful a strategic plan is depends on your perspective. In many ways I would argue that its greatest use comes in the act of preparing for it and writing it – you have to consider more than the sum of parts of your own library especially broader implications and changes; understand your stakeholders, plan for future efficiencies, involve staff, help every member of the team understand their role and purpose. Once it is in place, I would argue that it allows you to make day-to-day
decisions easily and is an excellent way of benchmarking and evaluating your service. Ultimately you will find that you know a lot more about your own library at the end of the job and that can never be a bad thing.

References/Bibliography:
Strategic Plan: English Faculty Library 2008-2013

_Huw Jones of the UL describes a strategy for dealing with a particular area of work in Cambridge libraries -- one of many projects nurtured by the Arcadia programme._

**READING LISTS – PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS, & WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

Reading lists are the main mechanism directing use of resources by undergraduates. Libraries are the main providers of resources to undergraduates. So it’s unsurprising that librarians are interested in reading lists. And, given the widespread concern about the way reading lists are handled in Cambridge, it’s equally unsurprising that the task of investigating reading lists was taken up by a librarian.

In April 2009, I embarked on an [Arcadia Fellowship](http://bit.ly/3FKTd9) to take a long hard look at the use of reading lists. The results of the fellowship were a report which can be read at [http://bit.ly/3FKTd9](http://bit.ly/3FKTd9) and a seminar which can be listened to at [http://bit.ly/awWjit](http://bit.ly/awWjit). Rather than rehash the arguments outlined in the report and seminar, I’m going to take a look at where we are with reading lists now (nearly a year later) and where we might like to go.
First, a little background. There is a functioning reading list system in Cambridge. Reading lists are produced by academics to recommend resources, and used by students to find resources, and by libraries to provide resources. There is now an opportunity to handle these processes better than in the past, because of advances in technology. But the mechanisms for embracing these new opportunities have more to do with convincing people to change the way they work, than with overcoming any particular technical hurdles.

There are two stages to constructing an online reading-list system. The first, which I’m going to concentrate on in this article, is delivery of reading lists. A student logs onto the system and sees a list of links to reading lists relevant to their course. Or a librarian logs onto the system and sees a list of reading lists relevant to their library. The system would also have a mechanism for students/librarians to browse or search all reading lists, but the relevant lists would be automatically served up.

What do we need to achieve this? The first requirement is an interface which, when you log in, knows who you are and what course you’re doing (or in the case of librarians, what courses you’re interested in). We have already built an interface which finds a lot of relevant information about you based on a login – the Cambridge Libraries Widget, available at http://bit.ly/9I1pO0. And we have the link up to CAMSiS, the student registry, in place to deliver a student’s course information. So requirement number one is in place.

The second requirement is a place for the interface to live. A place where a student might already be looking for course information and materials, and/or a place where students spend a lot of time.
The Cambridge Libraries Widget is already live in CamTools, the University’s virtual learning environment, and also in Facebook and iGoogle, and students spend a lot of time there. So we have already formed the partnerships and acquired the techniques to put our putative interface where it would be most effective. Requirement number two is in place.

The third is a place to put reading lists so they can be easily found. Many reading lists are already stored in CamTools, where it is easy to upload, download, and manage documents. This would seem to be the ideal repository for reading lists, though DSpace is another option. So we have two potential homes for our lists. Requirement number three is in place.

And finally, we need a way of naming list documents so they can be easily matched to a student’s course. We already have access to the official list of course codes used by the student registry at http://bit.ly/ctZRu2. If we use this to make it clear what course and year a list is for – i.e. along the lines of RL_[course code]_[date].[file extension] (for instance RL_EGT1_2009.pdf for a reading list relating to a Part 1B Engineering reading list for 2009), then we can match a student’s course to the reading lists for that course.

Which means that as far as the delivery of lists goes, we are nearly there. An Arcadia Project for this term is looking at building an interface for the delivery of exam papers to students by looking at their course. As well as being of great value in itself, this will act in some senses as a prototype for a reading list system. All the pieces are in place – we simply need to write the system and get people using it!
And there is the real problem. The activities around reading lists, while important to students and librarians, are directed by academics. They control the creation and to some extent the distribution of lists. If you want to change the way reading lists are handled, you need to engage with and convince academics. And there seem to be few mechanisms for engaging with academics on a wide scale about this kind of issue.

The academics I have approached have been almost universally positive about the prospect of some kind of system for reading lists. However, there is some self-selection going on – the academics you talk to about reading list systems tend to be those who are already engaged with technology in teaching and learning. How does one reach the silent majority for whom reading lists may come some way down their list of priorities, and who are unconvinced of any need to change?

Perhaps there is no need to, at least in the first instance. Given the difficulties of imposing monolithic systems and solutions, particularly in an institution like Cambridge, another approach may prove more fruitful. We are currently discussing the idea of setting up a small sample operation, working in partnership with academics who are already engaged with technology in teaching and learning. The idea being that if the system offers concrete benefits, use will spread by word of mouth and student pressure.

And what’s the second stage of constructing a reading list system? Well, once you have a system in place for delivering and organising reading lists, you can start to look inside the reading list itself and do all sorts of interesting things – particularly around linking up list content (i.e. citations) with library and
other resources. That’s what we’re aiming for, but we’re some way off yet. In the meantime, we’ve already made some big steps forward – so watch this space!


Arcadia is a three-year programme, supported by a generous grant from the Arcadia Fund to Cambridge University Library, to explore the role of academic libraries in a digital age. The Arcadia Programme’s home page is at [http://arcadiaproject.lib.cam.ac.uk/index.php](http://arcadiaproject.lib.cam.ac.uk/index.php)

**PEOPLE**

The big news from the UL is the appointment of a new Deputy Librarian. **Sue Mehrer**, who has been Acting Deputy Librarian for a year, was named in an announcement from Librarian Anne Jarvis on 10 February.

*CULIB* asked Sue for 50 words, in exchange for its congratulations. Here's her reply.

I've been trying to come up with 50 words on what I'm famous for and what my plans are and decided I'm not good at either sound-bites or witty remarks.

What I can say, however, is that I am delighted to have been offered this wonderful opportunity. I feel that it is a great privilege
to work for this institution and I'm looking forward to being part of the future of this library and the University of Cambridge.

As for my plans - too many to talk about in 50 words. But it's an exciting time for our profession and there's lots to do!

Tony Hirst of the Department of Communication and Systems at the Open University, was appointed the Arcadia Fellow for the Michaelmas term. As part of his project he worked on developing and implementing a series of abstract ‘mashup’ patterns (very broadly, web applications that translate information into knowledge!) that are particularly appropriate to the library context.

Annette Brighton joined English Cataloguing as Junior Cataloguer. Steve Stacey moved to Collection Management where he will be liaising with various departments and assisting with the management of movement of stock.

European Cataloguing welcomed back Joanne Koehler after maternity leave. Hana Storova has also joined the department. Jo van der Hulks leaves the UL to take up a post at Anglia Ruskin University – she will be running their Health and Social Care Library as Assistant Librarian (Customer Services). Rebecca Gower who completed her MA in Librarianship from UCL has joined the Tower Project as Senior Cataloguer.

Georgina Part and Lucy Welch have joined the Entrance Hall team while Tim Arnold has moved to the Moore Library. Sophie Connor left to take up a part time position as Superintendent of the Rare Books Room. Congratulations to Lizz Edwards-Waller, the new Acting Deputy Head of Reader Services.
The Incremental Project, an exciting collaborative endeavour between the UL and Glasgow University, has new team members. Catherine Ward is the new Incremental Project Manager and Lesley Freiman is the Incremental Project Officer. The project aim is to inform, improve and increase research data curation within UK HEIs, by providing exemplars and resources for others to use. Sebastiaan Verweij has joined as DSpace Support and Liaison Officer. ESS saw the departure of Beauty Bapiro.

Warm congratulations to Jill Whitelock, the new Head of Special Collections. Rare Books was glad to see the return of Emily Dourish after her maternity leave. Laura Nuvolani, earlier at the British Library, joined as the Incunabula cataloguer creating specialist searchable records for the library’s renowned incunabula collection. Onesimus Ngundu moved to the Bible Society to take up a Research Associate post.

The new Munby fellow is David Adams. He plans to work on the printing and publishing history of the London Leveller Movement.

Rosalind Grooms was appointed a Research Associate and is preparing an on-line catalogue of the archives of Cambridge University Press, housed in the University Archives. She was previously an archivist at King’s College.

Martin Blake is the new part time Superintendent of the Manuscripts Room.

Julia Krivoruchko was appointed as Research Associate at the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit and Ronny Vollandt has
joined as part-time Research Assistant. Dr. Rebecca Jefferson, who had been working as Research Associate for the last 12 years on the Bibliography Project, will be leaving for sunny Florida. She will heading the Price Library of Judaïca at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Aki Bingley was appointed a Japanese Assistant and Won Kim the Korean Assistant in the Japanese Department.

The Royal Commonwealth Society saw the departure of their Research Assistants Sarah Preston, who left for Cambridge University Press, and Fiona Grant who returned to English Cataloguing as Senior Cataloguer.

Rosemary Mathew has retired after two stints at the UL. Her recent spell started with helping out the last Bible Society Librarian. She later assumed responsibility for the collection. She now is a part time volunteer and is preparing an online card index of the Society’s photographs.

Stephen Lees, Senior Under Librarian, retired after serving the UL for 40 years. He came in as a SCONUL trainee and in his long career headed a number of departments - Copyright Accessions, Reading Room, Periodicals, Inter-library Loans and Greek collections. As you might expect, it is not quite retirement for him. This ‘indefatigable researcher into parliamentary biography’ is now going to concentrate on his work for the History of the Parliament Trust. We wish him the very best.

Seamus Scanlon, sometime Library Officer at the Scientific Periodicals Library, was one of ten librarians from across the US and the only winner in New York to be given an I Love My
Librarian award, sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the New York Times (and administered by the American Library Association). The award of $5,000 and a plaque was presented at an event in the New York Times building, December 2009. The award recognises librarians who have had a significant impact on their communities or schools and recognises their outstanding achievements in improving the lives of the people they serve. See page for Seamus’ account of the formative role that his time at the SPL played in his career.

We congratulate Anna Cook, Senior Library Assistant at King’s College Library, who has been awarded Post-Graduate Diploma of Information and Library Studies by Aberystwyth University after three years of distance learning.

Murray Edwards College has appointed Kirstie Preest as temporary Librarian on a six month contract. Kirstie comes to Cambridge from a temporary position as an Academic Liaison Librarian at the University of Westminster. Previously she was Subject Librarian and Database Manager at the University of Chester for four years.

St John’s College is sad to bid farewell to Jonathan Harrison, Special Collections Librarian since 1998. Jonathan leaves to take up the position of Reader Services Librarian at the London Library. On his departure, responsibility for the special collections is transferring to the Sub-Librarian, Kathryn McKee.

Colin Higgins is moving from Christ’s College, where he was Deputy Librarian, to St Catharine’s College where he will be Librarian. Suzan Griffiths, after 19 years in that post, is leaving full time work to explore Croatia and later Greece and Turkey on
a 34 foot Sunbeam yacht. Suzan will endeavour to stay away from pirates, but if anyone wants a temporary cataloguer or short term help she would be happy to assist.

At the Seeley History Library, Jasmina Makljenovic, who transferred to a part time Labeller/Junior Cataloguer position at the UL in January 2010, has two replacements: by day, Adam Crothers, a graduate student in English, and, for evening duties, Andrew Cameron, a Seeley veteran. And Julia Kania has handed over her role as evening invigilator to Ryan Haysom-Brown, a History graduate student at Corpus.

The Politics, Psychology, Sociology and International Studies Library has a new Junior Assistant in Takveen Bashir. This is Takveen's first job within the University. Welcome!

The Haddon Library loses Alex Saunders as she leaves to become a freelance research assistant. Alex has been at the Haddon since the beginning of 2007, and will be hard to replace. We wish her well.

We promised an account of how Seamus Scanlon got his I Love My Librarian award http://bit.ly/4h9f2A. Here it comes.

STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Excellence fosters excellence. This I learned in my first professional library job, in Cambridge University.

Dr Fred Ratcliffe, University Librarian, eschewed formal library qualifications in favour of strong research or specialist backgrounds. For example, he employed X-Ray crystallographers
with PhDs to program in FORTRAN for the UL’s in-house library automation system.

At my interview, for a job in the Scientific Periodicals Library (SPL – now the Central Science Library), Fred quizzed me on my chemistry and mathematics qualifications and research and programming background, despite my best efforts to steer the interview back to cataloguing rules and other library minutiae (which I had studied extensively, in the lead up to the interview, to try to reduce the gap between myself and other qualified candidates). He also asked me detailed questions about the quality of water used in the brewing of Guinness – I didn’t see that one coming! Although I didn’t drink, I was able to provide some cogent answers.

(Fred’s apparent ambivalence towards library qualifications was perhaps exaggerated. He was quick to give me permission when I suggested I earn a library qualification at Thames Valley University.)

After the interview, I was convinced that I had not been successful. The Deputy Librarian, Roy Welbourne, suggested I not lose hope, and we discussed other job possibilities in the UL. I was struck at once about how gracious and encouraging he was – a skill I later tried to implement myself with library users.

As I strolled near Bene’t Street that afternoon, I saw Anne Stow on the other side of the street. I approached her and thanked her for the interview. Roy was having an effect on me already! She said, I think I may have good news for you. And she did!
So, with the impressive title of Library Officer, I entered Cambridge University’s service on the basis of my science and research background. I hoped that my longstanding interest in libraries also shone through.

This interest dated back to my undergraduate days in University College Galway (UCG), when I became interested in the way books were classified and catalogued, when I read Eugene Garfield’s *Citation Classic Commentaries*, and spent hours in the library basement reading journals from the 1800s (UCG was established in 1849 as Queen’s College Galway).

The SPL had ornate wood floors and offices. We catered to the faculty and students of the pure, applied and biological sciences, we shared space on the top floor with the Cambridge Philosophical Society, the basement contained the remnants of columns from a medieval monastery, and complimentary journals still arrived addressed personally to the Nobel physicist Paul Dirac. What self-respecting librarian could not love that environment?

The strategies of Fred (specialism and scholarship) and Roy (empathy and sensitivity) were instinctive – they were not written policy. Of course they should be in the mission statement of any modern academic library service, but their implementation is more fraught.

The strategy of Cambridge University is to use its reputation, its tradition of scholarship, its aura of elegance, and its primacy in producing Nobel Prize winners and first rate comedians (Footlights) to attract funding, elite faculty and able students. This strategy is valid but hard to quantify.
In my current role, I am Librarian and an Assistant Professor at the City College of New York's Center for Worker Education. (soscanlain@ccny.cuny.edu). CUNY is the largest urban university in America. The surroundings are strikingly different from Cambridge. The SPL catered to the brightest faculty and students in Cambridge. CWE caters to a diverse population of non-traditional students comprising, in the main, adults who are full-time workers or homemakers. The Center was established by the Teamsters and other unions to allow their members to attain college degrees in the evening and at weekends. City College incorporated the Center as a full division of City College in the 1980s.

But the strategies for service delivery and excellence that I learned to appreciate and see in action at Cambridge from Fred Ratcliffe, Anne Stow, Roy Welbourne, Stephen Dale, Clive Simmonds, Simon Goose and others influence me still.

The strategy is innovation, adaptation, follow-through and a library-user-centered service. The strategy is that every student deserves the best library service that funding and infrastructure permits. Students here at the Center for Worker Education (CWE) benefit from the generous funding for scholarly resources (for example 55,000 full-text journals); from a clean, bright teaching space; from intensive one-on-one assistance with library and research skills; from close cooperation between faculty and the library, and between IT and the library; and from the ethos of City College, which is access and excellence.
And while we’re in the States, let’s hear what Alan Stevens of Materials Science & Metallurgy has got from there.

AMERICAN CONTRA DANCE

American Contra Dance is brilliant. You make real contact with the person you asked to dance.

And with most other people in the formation with you. This does mean that if you get it wrong, you slightly crash the dance, but nobody really minds, and someone will probably just grab you and put you right.

There’s a session on alternate Fridays with Cambridge Contra, and the Harston and Haslingfield clubs dance quite a few contras on Tuesdays. For details, see http://www.cambridgefolk.org.uk/

The caller, who knows each dance, teaches it to the dancers in a “walk-through”, and then calls instructions as the music plays. The band, either live or recorded, usually plays a series of 32-bar reels or jigs. Those tunes quickly start to tell you when to do stuff. Really. I don’t play music myself, but the tunes tell you when to move, which is just as well, because a caller who thinks the dancers have “got it” may well stop calling, and let the dancers and the band sort things out for themselves.

This might be the place to say that I call as well as dance, and it’s a different kind of fun, sort of like teaching a class, and sort of like, well, rolling a snowball down a hill to see what happens.
The dancers form two lines, stretching away from the band and the caller. From the caller’s point of view, the men are in the right-hand line, and the ladies in the left. If they stay like that to start the dance, then the dance is “proper”. More usually there’s a call of “Hands four from the top...” which means join hands in little groups of four, starting at the caller’s end “...and the ones improper”, which means the two people nearest the band in each group of four, swap sides. That makes the dance “improper” (but still perfectly respectable).

“The dance” is a series of figures which fit the 32 bars of music, and after dancing that series once, the ones find they’ve moved down the lines, and the twos (they started furthest away from the band in those little groups of four) find they’ve moved up. That, Watson, is how you get to dance with more or less everyone. Until you reach the ends, of course. Argh! No-one to dance with! Well, you swap sides, wait out one turn, and re-join the set as the other number, going the other way. What could possibly go wrong?

There are lots of dances. People (and that includes me) are writing them all the time. There are some other starting formations too. There are lots of bands, some playing fiddles and accordions, and some playing bagpipes and saxophones. Some of the dances are legendary, like “Wizard’s Walk”. Some of the callers are more or less legendary too.

Anyone who feels like coming along is assured of a warm welcome. You don’t need to bring a partner with you, since asking different people to dance is part of the fun. And you don’t need previous experience, either.
I’ve included a dance, so you can start immediately. But I’m not going to explain it, because I reckon, oh, 8 or more people could have plenty of fun working it out!

**Zinnderella**, by Alan Stevens

*Improper Contra*

**A1**
- Right hand star
- Left hand star

**A2**
- Men right allemande once
- Neighbours left allemande once

**B1**
- Circle right once around
- Circle left once around

**B2**
- Balance and swing neighbour

*Written for Katharina, Max, Rike and Thomas Zinn.*

*A2 improved by Adam Hughes.*
THE NEXT ISSUE

Issue 67, Michaelmas 2010, will take the theme of professional training and development (how; why; experiences of graduate trainees / those applying for chartership; CILIP’s proposed 'light touch' CPD track). CULIB last looked at this theme ten years ago. How were the noughties for you? Contributions please by 31 August to ucam-culib@lists.cam.ac.uk

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