THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY’S OLD BORROWING SYSTEM

Before the advent of computerised borrowing, which I think was in 1985, the University Library used a manual, paper-based system. I remember that during the summer of 1985 the new computer system was given a trial run alongside the manual system, but after the Annual Inspection that year borrowing was fully automated.

The manual system involved the completion of a borrowing form each time a member of the UL wished to borrow. Borrowing forms for senior members had to be requested at the borrowing desk. Borrowing forms for third year undergraduates, Affiliated Students, and students on the B.Ed course had to be signed by the respective college tutors. The borrowing forms were sent out to colleges at the beginning of each term. All completed borrowing forms were kept at the borrowing desk. There were two large wooden trays, one for senior members and one for undergraduates. The trays were divided into sections, one for each college. Each section contained a spike where the borrowing forms were filed in alphabetical order. However, the college sections were not in alphabetical order, but in order of foundation! Senior members were allowed a maximum of ten volumes on loan at any one time and were allowed to keep them until the next Quarter Day. Visiting Scholars, and graduates of other universities employed in research or administration at Cambridge University were allowed a maximum of five volumes on loan at any one time until the next Quarter Day. Undergraduates were allowed a maximum of five volumes on loan at any one time for fourteen days or until the next Quarter Day if this was sooner. Only 3rd year undergraduates were allowed to borrow.

Quarter Days were 31 December, 31 March, 30 June and the day before the start of the Annual Inspection in September. The December Quarter Day was moved forward into January when New Year’s Day became a public holiday and the UL was closed. All books had to be returned, although members of Regent House could delay the return of their books until the UL re-opened. The UL closed for one or two days after the December,
March and June Quarter Days. Staff were involved in what was then called 'book bashing'. Not ill treatment of the books as the name suggests, but the re-shelving of returned books and aligning the spines with the front edge of the shelves. A tedious task, but it looked good when finished! After the September Quarter Day the Annual Inspection took place. When I first worked at the UL the Annual Inspection ran from 1-15 September but this was changed to a week in the middle of the month, usually 16-23.

All books borrowed had to be recorded by class mark. This involved entering details on cards kept in a large file and was normally carried out by the telephonist, who worked in or close to the Entrance Hall, plus another member of staff. These duties were known as being 'on tickets' and was necessary firstly to have details of books borrowed, and secondly for the recall system. The recall system involved the completion of yet more forms. When books were returned to the UL the class marks on the borrowing forms were crossed through with a blue crayon. When all the books on a particular form had been returned, the form was given to the borrower as a receipt.

Overdue books incurred fines as they do now. Fine notices were sent on pro forma letters by post or UMS. As college tutors were required to sign undergraduate borrowing forms, they were, in theory responsible for the books and for the payment of fines. A phone call to the appropriate tutor usually produced the goods and so it was not always necessary to send a fine notice.

This is, of necessity, a brief outline of the old borrowing system. As the years pass the memories fade. I confess that I had to consult an old edition of Statutes and Ordinances to remind me of how things used to be.

J. Reynolds
Cambridge University Library

THE INTRODUCTION OF RFID IN UCL LIBRARY SERVICES

In 2014 UCL Library Services embarked on a three-year project to install self-service facilities using Radio Frequency Identity (RFID) tagging across its family of 18 libraries.

Three of our libraries had previously implemented self-service to great success but it was a significant undertaking to expand this technology to encompass all other libraries across UCL.

One of the primary drivers in this decision was the move towards 24-hour opening at three of our largest sites plus extended opening hours elsewhere. The introduction of RFID self-service was seen as an essential development which would allow our users to not only access libraries outside traditional 'regular' opening hours but also to borrow and return material whenever the building was open.

The adoption of RFID technology was also considered to be a much faster and more efficient process for our users. It was hoped that its introduction would lead to a reduction in queues at issue desks and would allow staff to move away from routine transactions and instead focus on answering queries and providing the front-line help that our users expect.

At our busiest sites – the Main and Science Libraries - the introduction of automated sortation devices not only represented an eye-catching focal point, but also provided an opportunity to improve shelving operations by partially sorting returned material into various collection bins at the point of return.

The use of RFID technology and the tags linked to the Library’s Management System (Aleph) offered the possibility of intelligent stock control via the use of portable Digital Library Assistants (DLAs). These handheld devices could be used by staff to identify unsecured, ‘lost’ or out of place material by reading tagged material on the open shelves. By using
these devices, it was hoped that librarians would be better placed to more effectively weed their collections for obsolete stock.

Challenges

Phase 1 of RFID installation focussed on the libraries within close proximity of our central Bloomsbury campus and included the Main Library – one of our busiest sites. One of our initial challenges was how we managed the transition of our stock from the barcode-based and EM tattle-secured system already in place across to RFID tags. At first it appeared that our only option would be to employ our supplier 3M to tag every item in each library’s collection and, having switched our existing security gates to the new RFID detection system, to then go back through the entire collection for a second time deactivating all existing EM tattle security.

As the number of items to be tagged at the Main Library alone was over 342,000, employing the 3M tagging team to go through the collections twice would have been both time-consuming and costly. During the planning stage of this process 3M unveiled a prototype ‘hybrid’ RFID security gate that could be fitted onto some of their existing security gate models. This would allow exit gates to be sensitive to both the EM tattles and the new RFID tags and consequently would allow all material to be RFID tagged and to have the EM tattle security deactivated at the same time. Thus all books, whether tagged or awaiting processing, would remain secured throughout the entire collection tagging procedure.

As this hybrid fitting was only compatible with some of our libraries’ original gates, the tagging and the installation process was deliberately staggered across the four libraries for Phase 1. This allowed libraries with compatible gates to complete the RFID installation before other sites had even started. Their security gates could then be moved to another site where they could be temporarily installed to replace existing incompatible gates, thus allowing for the hybrid gate to be fitted and tagging to begin. This was a process that was successfully repeated throughout Phases 2 and 3 thus ensuring that stock at all libraries was secured throughout the tagging process irrespective of the model of gates originally in place.

Another challenge facing libraries during the RFID tagging process was how they would manage to continue to run an efficient service during the installation period. Prior to the start of the project, consideration was given to the number of two-person 3M tagging teams that could be employed at a library given the level of disruption this work might cause and the amount of floor space available. In addition we ensured possible disruption to the service was well publicised in advance. Where possible, the vast majority of tagging work was scheduled for the quieter summer months to try to reduce the impact on the user experience. However, at the larger libraries where the introduction of self-service was a catalyst for the complete redesign of the issue desk area, colleagues needed to establish temporary service desks until building alterations were complete and the self-service units were in place.

Colleagues had to ensure that returned material that had yet to be RFID-tagged remained separate from other returns. Initially it was proposed that untagged items from areas that had yet to be processed could be returned to their home shelves. However, as the tagging teams spread out it became apparent that to avoid returned material being missed, all non-tagged items returned would be stored on separate trolleys and then processed at the conclusion of the tagging process.

Once these measures were in place for Phase 1 (Summer 2014) the planning and procedures that had proved successful were replicated for the subsequent Phases during Summer 2015 and Summer 2016. Our final library to install self-service went live during September 2016.

Impact

The impact of this new system on our users has been very positive. Users often comment on how much they like the ability to issue and return items at any time of the day or night at some of our larger libraries, and the auto-
sorter in the Main Library with its glass wall allowing the workings of the various conveyor belts behind to be seen is a particular hit with new students.

The uptake of self-service has also grown significantly throughout the three-year installation period. Self-service transactions (including web renewals) accounted for 69% of all circulation transactions in 2013/14 but this has now risen to 89% for 2015/16. Although the growing number of RFID libraries during this period would account for part of this rise, the significant upsurge reflects an increasing take up of self-service by our users.

From a library staff perspective, the reduction in material to be issued and returned at a traditional staffed desk has led to a change of role. Although the desk remains a component of the overall service (for the payment of fines, processing of holds and issuing of Store items), employing RFID self-service to deal with the more routine elements of circulation has liberated colleagues to field more complex user queries at the point of need. This has led to an expansion of their remit to assist with the use of Multi-Function Devices (MFDs) as well as providing assistance with routine IT queries.

Unfortunately for our staff the use of DLAs to assist with the stock management of collections remains tantalisingly out of reach. Work is still ongoing to establish how this technology can be best utilised, but the time-consuming requirement to upload fresh Aleph data to each handheld device has restricted its use for now.

To conclude, the introduction of RFID self-service has been an overwhelming success. It has significantly improved the customer service to our users by allowing them full access to our circulation services across our extended opening hours. It has also allowed our staff to move away from routine processes and become upskilled, allowing them to assist our users with more complex queries at their point of need.

Robert Pinckney
Service Operations Manager, UCL Library Services

Peter Dennison
Head of Customer Service, UCL Library Services

WHO HAS: INVESTIGATING PEER-TO-PEER SUBLENDING ACTIVITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

The WhoHas project was the first project to be tested with student users as part of the Futurelib Innovation Programme, which conducts ethnographic research in order to design for and improve the user experience of Cambridge libraries and their services. The Programme is funded by Cambridge University Library. More information about Futurelib can be found here: http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/futurelib

WhoHas explored the potential value of an organised peer-to-peer sub-lending service. The idea was born out of research with undergraduate students, consisting primarily of diary studies and short walk-up interviews. It was seen that sub-lending activity was being conducted within groups of students, usually those at the same college studying the same subject. This activity was primarily organised through Facebook and the project was named after a common phrase used to initiate sub-lending transactions: ‘Who has...?’

The decision was made to pilot the service (which would be managed and administrated by library staff) using Facebook Groups. This was partly due to the fact that students were already using the platform for this purpose, and also because it would allow the concept to be tested and insights to be gained without the time-consuming, costly nature of building a bespoke platform. Three Cambridge libraries implemented the pilot with their users:
the English Faculty Library, the Medical Library and Wolfson College Library.

Diary studies were conducted with the students involved in the testing of the service, to allow for further exploration of the motivations and issues involved in sub-lending behaviour. Exit interviews were also conducted with the participants at the conclusion of the pilot stage.

The results of the pilot were surprising in a number of ways. Most significant was the fact that despite having 174 participants, only 1 successful sub-lending transaction was completed during the study. Additionally only 4 requests for material were made through the service. The concurrent diary studies however showed 22 instances of peer-to-peer sub-lending, an average of 2 transactions per participant. This strongly suggests that the lack of activity through the organised channels created by the service was not due to lack of actual user need or activity.

The low success rate of the pilot service can be attributed to a number of factors. The students themselves argued that Easter Term (exam time for most Cambridge undergraduate students) was not typical of the ordinary situation:

- “I’m not sure it was the right time of year for this study. The last 6 weeks haven’t really been representative as most text book reading is done during previous terms. By Easter I’m mostly consolidating and reading from my own notes, rather than scrambling for text books. During Easter term there’s a big shift from reading books to practicing problems and exam questions.” (Law undergraduate student)
- “The past 6 weeks have not been representative as we’ve only really needed one book. During other terms you need very specific books for short periods of time to write essays, so you go through a lot more books. Michaelmas is also dissertation time so people need all kinds of texts for that and won’t necessarily know who has the ones they need. WhoHas would be much more useful during those times.” (English undergraduate student)

The underlying theme however was that students were comfortable sharing resources inside their own social circles but did not see the value of, or appreciate interventions to this behaviour from external sources. Libraries and library staff were seen as incidental (and possibly prohibitive) to the effective sharing of resources. This highlights an inherent problem in the relationship between Cambridge libraries and their users: the overriding student impression of library services was that of something that was not embedded in or integral to their studying lives.

The pilot highlighted a number of important issues, and some key insights and findings arose from the study:

Convenience, timing and the proximity of resources were seen as more important by students than format. Although borrowable print copies of texts were still preferred, e-books were valued more than reference-only print copies. In fact, some students were found creating their own digital resources in order to use them at a later date away from the library. One student spent a considerable amount of time photographing 60 pages of a reference-only text so that she could use it in her room, while another group of students created a Word document of passages taken from a reference copy so that they could access it when and where they liked.

- “Three of us went online and used Gutenberg, a resource for pre-copyright primary texts online, to find what we needed. This involves copying the start and end of passages from the original text in the library and writing them into Gutenberg where we can retrieve the full passages. We then copy and paste these full passages into a Word document, which we can all access wherever we like.” (English undergraduate student)

Students will renew books they no longer need over long periods of time to avoid having to return them. Many of the students interviewed admitted renewing books over several months to avoid the inconvenience of returning them, rather than because they were still actively using them.
Items were therefore sitting unused on student bookshelves which could have easily been used by others. Additionally, none of the students interviewed mentioned ever having had any of their books recalled.

- “There’s this “renew all” button in my library account. I press it all the time. I don’t think I even know which books I have out. We have so many books in our house that we just wait until the end of the year, then drop them all back to the libraries at the same time in the back of the car.” (Medicine undergraduate student)
- “I took the book out from my college at the beginning of the year and have never had to take it back. It’s a core text, which everyone needs all the time. No one else has ever recalled it, even though there are 10 other medics in my College year group. Everyone else in my year group has ended up buying their own copy, but I haven’t really needed to as I’ve had the College copy the whole time.” (Medicine undergraduate student)

There were strong emotional issues attached to the process of recalling a book for many students. The current recall system in Cambridge appears to be under-used due to the emotional barriers that surround the process. Students are reluctant to recall books from others due to the worry of inconveniencing them. They readily ‘put themselves in the other person’s shoes’, and imagine how they would feel if someone tried to take a resource they needed away from them.

As mentioned above, there is currently reluctance on the part of students to ask for help from librarians. This may be due to a number of factors, including the fear of looking foolish and sometimes due to the fact that they don’t want to ‘bother’ library staff. An English undergraduate student commented in interview:

- “My librarian has already done so much for me this year. I didn’t want to give her any more trouble by asking for another favour.”

Regardless of how well libraries promote their services and their ability to help, some students and other users will always prefer anonymous contact. An online chat channel at the Judge Business School Information Centre is heavily used by students asking anonymously for all kinds of assistance, even though some of the questions come from individuals inside the Centre and close to the staff. A text message service set up at the English Faculty Library to allow students to reserve books also gets used by students asking for help without having to approach the staff desk.

Although the service itself was not successful, the WhoHas project raised a lot of important issues. The findings concerning resource format, availability and preference were extremely interesting, as was the reluctance students had approaching library staff for assistance. These conclusions have informed the Futurelib Programme as a whole, and have provided a strong basis for further exploration of our users’ needs and behaviours. This validates the ethnographic approach the Programme adheres to; without talking to and importantly observing our users in their lives away from the library we would not have the opportunity to learn what is truly important to them.

The full WhoHas findings report can be accessed here:


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BONES OF CONTENTION

This March, simultaneous with the publication of reports that the skull of William Shakespeare had disappeared from his grave, a skull was removed from King's College Library without permission. The Librarian emailed students asking for its safe return, an undergraduate shared the email on Twitter, and within a day the news was in not merely the Tab and the Cambridge News but even the Daily Telegraph. Never was the word 'skulduggery' so notoriously abused. My preferred headline, 'Skull and cross librarians', didn't get a look in.

In fact the missing skull was a synthetic one made by Adam Rouilly, the company beloved of all enthusiasts of 'medical training solutions' (description from website), a basic model worth little more than £100. King's College Library has three such models that are lent to medical students as three-day loans.

Some of the better-endowed college libraries possess a number of skeletons or half-skeletons that they lend to medical students on an annual basis; at King's we have one artificial articulated skeleton, which may be used by students in the library but not taken out. Identified by one medic as 'Bony Tony', the library skeleton belongs (naturally) in a cupboard, but periodically migrates to different parts of the library overnight and has to be rehoused. Tony's cupboard, the rightmost of three identical doors, is often mistaken for the library exit by users who have not visited before; library staff members are alerted to this misconception by a piercing scream. On special occasions Tony roams further afield: at Hallowe'en, for instance, when he sits enigmatically in the window of the library office; or in December, when he inhabits a fireside armchair in the Provost's drawing room while the Provost recites seasonal ghost stories, a tradition from the time of M.R. James recently revived.

The latest skull disappearance, while regrettable, continues another proud tradition. An October 1997 edition of student magazine King's Things, still available online, contains a plea from then Assistant Librarian Wai Kirkpatrick:

[The] library skull has never been found. We have come to the conclusion that it has walked, after all these years. Should any readers of King's Things like to donate one, the library will not ask any questions. Real ones only please. (I can't guarantee that the police won't ask questions, though).

Like its predecessor above, the skull that went missing in March has not been found, but the press coverage elicited the offer from a Telegraph reader of a real human skull, and a Fellow of King's was moved to bring in a skull of unknown provenance that had sat unloved in his room for several years. This skull is in a somewhat dilapidated condition, but will be incorporated into the library stock, albeit not for borrowing.

If you have human remains in your library, as we do at King's, it is wise to consult the Human Tissue Authority to make sure you observe their best practice guidelines. The HTA website states: 'Institutions storing human material removed from the deceased for "education or training relating to human health" require an HTA licence, unless the material was removed from a person who died before 1 September 2006 and more than one hundred years have passed since their death.'

To return to the theme of this issue, has our circulation policy been affected by the loss of this skull? The timeline of the disappearance was as follows:

1. Member of library staff fetched skull for student to use in library
2. Library staff left library
3. Student left library
4. Skull left library

A decision was made not to charge the student for the replacement of the skull, and in order to avoid any murkiness that might surround the issue of responsibility we now insist either that skulls be returned to the issue desk
by closing time or that they be borrowed by the student in question, thereby becoming unambiguously the responsibility of the borrower. If you do not have a similar policy in place for your own hard-to-replace library oddities, you may wish to take note.

Gareth Burgess
Assistant Librarian, King’s College

THE LOAN ARRANGER

Given the richness of the collections held in Cambridge, and the increasing importance of the cultural economy, it is not a great surprise to us that the volume of loan requests received by the Fitzwilliam Museum seems to be growing year by year. While the loan relationships with key European and North American institutions are well-established, it is noticeable that institutions outside the major capitals and in countries further afield are now becoming much more active. Greater online access can prompt requests for physical access, and physical access in one exhibition can generate further requests from elsewhere. So what might we expect, when receiving a loan request?

It is useful to have a level of preparation in place for such requests: for internal use there may exist a written procedure for handling requests and coming to a decision, but it is immensely helpful to be ready to outline for prospective borrowers a clear process and timetable for a decision. For you, what is a comfortable timescale to make a decision and then to make ready an object, with all documentation in place? Between larger-scale public collections in the UK, the minimum notice period from formal request to exhibition opening is accepted to be 6 months: for overseas shows, 9 months. Organisers of large exhibitions with numerous loans will do this a year or more before the opening date. While this is partly to do with the need for lending institutions to balance a number of concurrent loan requests against resources for their own projects, it remains valid: for example, if the board responsible for approving the loan meets once a term, your lead periods would need to reflect this. Deadlines for exhibition catalogues are likely to be considerably earlier than those for the exhibition itself, so you may receive requests for images before the loan is approved formally. When you do receive a formal loan request, alert the relevant parts of your organisation as soon as possible.

In submitting a formal request, the borrower should describe the planned venues, the precise display dates, and exact accession number for the object (with opening, if possible). The academic premise of the exhibition should be explained carefully, and how the object will contribute to this narrative. You should be wary of sending a fragile manuscript halfway across the world for a vaguely-researched ‘best-of’ exhibition. You can request at this stage further information on the project or the venue, such as a completed UK Registrars’ Group or American Association of Museums facilities report (the two basic standards for this type of document). Bear in mind, though, that early on the borrower may not yet have designed the layouts in the exhibition space, a process that is completed when the definitive object list (including loans) is finalised. Should you wish to be associated with the exhibition, determine next whether the object is able to withstand without undue risk the handling and transport involved, and whether you can allocate the resources to achieve it. This may mean some direct costs incurred immediately if a conservator is contracted to examine the object and provide the condition report, or an appraiser appointed for an up-to-date value.

The expectation is that the borrower will cover costs of the loan: these may be incurred directly by the lender and invoiced, such as essential conservation work, security and condition photography, primary packing, and the mount, frame or cradle. Costs billed directly to the borrower by agents appointed to carry out work for them include provision of crates, transport, and courier costs (tickets, accommodation and per diem subsistence). They will be bearing the direct costs at their own venue for the insurance, exhibition build, display cases, labels, audio-visual equipment, staffing and so on. In a major international loan show, by far the biggest portion of the costs will be spent on transport. Under these headings are a
number of possibilities: the borrower may send their own staff to measure and take profiles for fabrication of cradles, for example, or commission their own catalogue photography. Of course, there is still a demand on your time for giving access to the object and supervising visits.

Where you do have direct costs to bill, the earlier you can transmit these the better: you can outline them when you approve the loan: better still, write them into the loan agreement (i.e. put it under contract with the borrower). This is not just good etiquette, it also increases the chances of the invoice being paid and avoids disagreements at uncomfortable points late in the process. A formal agreement is a necessity: borrowers may well send their own template, but you may insist on using your own, which will be familiar to you and allow the loan to be framed in English law. The appearance of agreements varies hugely, but both parties should sign, each party retaining a counter-signed copy. It should detail what is being lent, its value, the loan period and place, basic security and environmental conditions under which the loan should be moved and displayed, and how the loan is to be insured. You can use it to govern, contractually, as many aspects of the loan as you care to control: courier requirements, selection of transporter, mount requirement, the use of an insurer or a state indemnity, reproduction rights, grounds for termination, and so on. Several of the UCM collections have been working with Legal Services to formulate a general University loan agreement incorporating these elements and framing them in a binding contract.

By this stage, the borrower should be working up the final design: here you will conduct discussions on the specification of display cases and mounts, and now is a good time to ask detailed questions about the case specification and materials. Again, you may specify your minimum requirements for case alarms, for example, but the provider of the insurance or indemnity will also have minimum standards to be met. Meanwhile, you may also be working in-house or engaging with external suppliers for conservation work, mounts or photography. Should an object need to leave your care for conservation work, additional costs such as transport and insurance can be billed to the borrower, but may need to be paid by your institution in advance in order to initiate the work. Where possible, move people to the object rather than the other way around.

Agreeing the display needs a lot of communication, and the question of catalogue vs. display dimensions is open to errors. Catalogue conventions vary for works on paper, plate size is different to leaf size is different to framed size, and a frame may be in a different orientation to the painted image. Guiding the borrower quite firmly as to what is permissible in the display of open volumes, stating clearly whether an angled display is possible, the maximum angle, and the extent of opening, for example, determines the maximum display dimensions (i.e. book open on cradle): the borrower can then avoid putting it in a desk case that does not have the internal height to accommodate it. Some borrowers will know all about this, but others are not familiar with the demands of displaying books: your expertise will avert problems and will save time. When the borrower has drawn up an installation schedule, the process will accelerate again. Installation will likely fall within a period of three weeks or so before the opening date, and there is often a period for graphics installation and lighting design, as well as press days between object installation and opening.

Once appointed by the borrower, the transport agent will be in touch to confirm your packing and courier demands: you need to provide the dimensions for packing, and the object’s provenance, materials, and value in order to secure any necessary export licences and CITES permits. The collection date is a negotiation, but the borrower will be looking for opportunities to consolidate the transport of more than one loan together to cut costs, and will design the installation schedule with an eye to this. In any event, the loan should not be released until the loan agreement is signed and returned, and you have received proof of acceptable “nail-to-nail” insurance cover. As a rule, you will discuss the transport exclusively with the agent, and details for the display with the borrower.

Matters after despatch and the demands of courier work would occupy easily another article of this length, though it is the culmination in a few
days of a months-long process. Almost all of the work to achieve a smooth transition to installation takes place before the vehicle arrives to collect your loan. Drawing up a loan task checklist set against a timeline will help, as will engagement with your college or faculty board to determine your policy towards public loans: the more loans you approve, the more helpful it is to have tools prepared such as cost tables and preferred suppliers’ details. Nonetheless, your networks will help, within Cambridge and in the larger community of UK museums and libraries.

David Packer
Registrar, The Fitzwilliam Museum

CHRIS AND THE CRABLETS

The Editors nominate the Education Faculty Library for winner of the ‘most unusual item circulated’ prize:

We have a varied collection of educational resources, which cover a range of curriculum subject materials for use by teachers and trainee teachers in schools. I have included 2 specific examples below:

1) Chris and the Crablets - an educational resource for use in schools containing grab hand puppets, rubber sea creatures, pebbles and more. Chris and the Crablets is a pack of materials with a selection of activities designed to inspire children to develop a range of skills from Literacy to Numeracy and fosters creative development.

2) My First Buddha - an educational toy for use in the Primary Classroom - we wrote a Facebook post about this resource with a link to a blog post about our religious education resources as a whole: http://ow.ly/jLkO303ve0L

Hazel Dean
Assistant Librarian, Faculty of Education

WHAT LIBRARIANS DO IN THEIR SPARE TIME

If you have been to, or at least know of Hay-on-Wye, you will probably be already familiar with the concept of a book town (a town with a high proportion of book shops in relation to other amenities). There are actually scores to be found worldwide, and there is even an International Organisation of Book Towns. Scotland’s national book town is Wigtown, in the county of Galloway, and was founded in 1997. What is unique about Wigtown is that it is also home to the “Open Book” bookshop, the first ever bookshop holiday / residency experience. We (Liam-UL, Rosie-Homerton) were very lucky enough to run the shop for two weeks over Easter 2016 - a real busman’s holiday!

The concept is a simple one really and has been an incredible success since it was first posted on AirBnB in August 2015 (https://www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/7908227). It had some good press straight away (which is how we came across it) and we booked almost immediately for a two-week slot. For £12pp a night, you live in the flat above the shop, and run the shop below! The shop is owned and run by the Wigtown Festival Trust (http://www.wigtownbookfestival.com/) so all money raised by residents and book sales goes back into keeping the shop running and supporting the town.

The shop itself sits at the top of the main square of Wigtown. It is certainly small by both our library’s standards; we estimate that we had around 3000 books at our disposal. This meant that we were able to learn our stock relatively quickly, and, just like at work, it was satisfying to be able to match up a reader to a book. The stock was all second hand, and mostly passed down from The Bookshop (http://www.the-bookshop.com/) in Wigtown, the biggest second hand bookshop in Scotland. Most genres were covered, however briefly.

One of the most enjoyable things was how much freedom we were given throughout our two weeks; we were allowed to really immerse ourselves in the shop, and to an extent, the town. After a brief tour of the shop with
some festival volunteers, we were given the keys and left to our own devices! Over the two weeks we changed window displays, organised events and re-arranged the shop to create a children's literature section. We were given access to the shops social media sites (https://twitter.com/openbookwigtown) and blog (http://theopenbookwigtown.tumblr.com/), and given free rein to be as creative as we could. Past residents had handily left advice and details of what they had done in the shop, so we were able to build on their work. Indeed, the shop had a definite feel of being developed by various hands that even some customers remarked on. The niche and well-curated Catalan literature section stood out somewhat, but made sense when we were told the story of the shop and the previous Catalan residents.

It is not possible to mention the Open Book without also talking about Wigtown itself and the surrounding area. The community feel of the town is special, and the countryside in Galloway is spectacularly beautiful. Each morning we were able to visit a different bookshop in the town, buy a few books and chat to staff about the book town concept. There is also a thriving, friendly public library in the town centre that meets the challenge of providing a library service in an area whose economy is based on books. If you are ever in the vicinity, we would recommend it as a fantastic place to visit!

At the start of our two-week journey into bookselling, we hoped we would be able to take something back to our library day jobs, perhaps initially not thinking beyond the obvious 'book related' similarities. However, by end, it had challenged our initial thoughts and so we decided to frame our reflections using the 'five rules of library science' in our final blog post:

“The five rules of Library Science (applied to the Open Book)

1. Books are for use
   Obviously the case in a bookshop!

2. Every reader his / her book.
   Just like in a library, some readers will come in looking for that one particular book. It is a different skill to suggest, and then sell a different book if the shop doesn’t have the one they originally wanted!

   As above, and proved in our two weeks at the Open Book when two different customers purchased with ACTUAL MONEY a biography of Ant & Dec and a book about Jeremy Clarkson. The audio tape of excerpts from the BBC series ‘Airport’ was yet to sell, but someone out there will be interested.

4. Save the time of the reader.
   Something that libraries take to another level with cataloguing, classification and taxonomies etc, but this still applies to bookshops. This was particularly the case with the staff from the other book shops in town, who seemed to have an impressively intrinsic knowledge of their stock. Customer service often relies on just one person doing everything exceptionally well.

5. The library is a growing organism.
   As a library (in 99% of cases) has to constantly evolve, a bookshop also has the added pressure to respond to its stock constantly being depleted. This was one of the hardest aspects in the shop; a customer comes in asking for a book, which was sold yesterday! Our browsing in so many shops also led to a few “oh yes we have that book” moments, only to realise we had seen it elsewhere, and the shops and books all merging into one :) Actually, encouraging a customer to visit another bookshop, often led to a friendly sale!

In the instance of the Open Book project and its unique identity in Wigtown, it is also constantly growing due to the change of booksellers as each bring their skillset and passion to the project. However, it is also lucky to have an amazing set of volunteers and supporters throughout the town community which is why it is an amazing place to visit and a privilege to be part of, if only for a short while.”

If you have ever wanted to run a bookshop, in Scotland, and particularly one by the sea, the Open Book is for you! At the time of writing it is fully
booked until July 2019 so book sooner rather than later! Or you could add the dates of Wigtown's literary festival into your calendar...  

Liam & Rosie Austin

PEOPLE

There have been a number of changes at the University Library. James Freeman has joined the Manuscripts Department as the new Medieval Manuscripts Specialist. He has a Ph.D. in History from Cambridge and was previously Curator of Printed Heritage collections at the British Library. Madelin Evans is the new Assistant Archivist. She has worked at the British School at Athens, Jesus College and the Churchill Archives Centre. Mary Scott is the Graduate Archives Trainee. Liam Sims is now Rare Book Specialist.

Tuam Pham is the new Head of Software Development at Digital Services. He brings over 25 years of experience, the last 17 years at JP Morgan. Zhipeng Shan joins as Associate Technical Specialist. The Digital Content Unit has welcomed Lee Pretlove, who arrived from the Welding Institute. He is one of three Polonsky Fellows taking part in the Polonsky Digital Preservation Project, a collaboration between the UL and the Bodleian libraries. He will be concentrating on the development of digital preservation expertise, training and outreach within the UL. Domniki Papadimitriou is the new Picture Library Co-ordinator at the Digital Content Unit.

Stephanie Palek left Collections and Academic Liaison to join the Modern and Medieval Languages library as their Research Support Librarian. Brendan King left Materials Processing upon relocation to Munich.

Reader Services welcomes Jack Dixon, Megan Kelly and Piotr Czosnyka. Hannah Bond has proceeded on maternity leave. Reader Services bid farewell to Hannah Haines who has joined Scholarly Communications as the Outreach and Engagement Co-ordinator. Rosie Higman from Reading University has joined Scholarly Communications as their Research Data Advisor.

The Reference Department was sorry to lose Lindsay Jones to Collections and Academic Liaison where she is now E-books Assistant. They were happy to welcome Cinthia Willaman Baltaxe.

Ewa Dedza left Operations due to relocation. Rosie Sharkey has joined the 600th Anniversary Outreach and Events team as Project Assistant (Learning). She was earlier Schools Liaison Officer at Trinity and Magdalene colleges.

Building Services welcomed their new Manager Adrian Powell who brings a wealth of experience, having worked for Centre Parcs and the Suffolk Constabulary. They bid farewell to Charles Thomson. Calvin Kemp and Andrew Nightingale joined as Building Services Technicians.

Conservation and Collection Care bid farewell to Rebecca De’Ath and Mary French.

Kazumi Cunnison decided to call it a day after 22 years in the Japanese Department.

Gotthelf Wiedermann retired as Head of English Collection Development after twenty years of service. He had joined in 1996 as a Research Associate in the Manuscripts Department, where he was working on the Buxton Papers, the family archive of the Buxtons of Norfolk. He followed that up with work on the Arthur Schnitzler Papers. Years in teaching followed before coming back to Cambridge to work in the UL. Gotthelf underlined the career change by enrolling on the Library and Information Science course at UCL, and in 2002 he moved to the Accessions Department as Deputy Head. Later as Head of English Collection Development he was the main driver for streamlining and automating US title ordering. He reckons he has ordered well over 100,000 books since he’s been in this role. His
outside interests – he is a keen choral singer and gardener (with a garden to envy), yachtsman (with his own boat) and gliding enthusiast - suggests he should have no problems in making the most of the opportunities that retirement offers.

Adam Perkins, our Curator of Scientific Manuscripts, retired after more than a quarter of century of service. Adam came to work at the Library in 1990 when the archives of the Royal Greenwich Observatory were transferred here, having previously worked for the Observatory at Herstmonceux Castle in Sussex since 1983. His original responsibility as R.G.O. Archivist was to maintain the historical records of the Observatory and the Astronomers Royal dating back to 1675, and to maintain and administer the modern records of the R.G.O. He was a comparative rarity as an archivist in that he had a scientific background, with a degree in Applied Physics and a broad continuing interest in science and technology. As time went on he assumed responsibility for other scientific manuscript collections in the Library, including the papers of Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, James Clerk Maxwell, George Gabriel Stokes and Lord Kelvin. A highlight of his time here was the accession of the Macclesfield collection of scientific manuscripts in 2000. This extension of his role was recognised by the change of his job title to Curator of Scientific Manuscripts, a post he officially took up after the closure of the R.G.O. when he transferred to the permanent staff of the library.

Beyond his responsibilities relating to scientific manuscripts, Adam was involved with a project cataloguing Cambridge dissertations in the 1990s, and was, in addition, a leading light in the Staff Club, which he served as treasurer. He also served exemplarily as the Library’s Health and Safety Officer. Adam will be widely missed in the Manuscripts Department and beyond, and fondly recalled as a generous, warm-hearted and humorous colleague. We are very glad that he has not disappeared completely: he is still to be seen here one day a week, as a volunteer.

There are several departures to report in the College Libraries.

Becky Blunk has left Churchill College Library to move to America with her family. (Mary Kendall very kindly came out of retirement to serve as Acting Librarian over the busy end of year period.) Annie Gleeson, formerly Deputy Librarian at Magdalene College, has now been appointed Librarian. Also at Churchill, Ana Ruenes Rubiales has joined the team as Project Cataloguer.

Stephanie Skene has left Robinson College Library to return to Northumberland.

Miriam Leonard will be leaving her post as Reader Services Librarian at Queens’ College at the end of September after 20 years’ service. Queens’ College’s old trainee, Lindsey Askin has left to pursue an academic career. Their new trainee is Hayley McLellan.

After 13 years at Caius, Sonia Londero will be vacating the post of Assistant Librarian (Reader Services) to emigrate to Norway with her partner to start a new life. The leavers will be much missed, and we wish them all well in their new ventures.

Tom Sykes has moved from Trinity Hall to become the new Deputy Librarian (College Library) at Magdalene. Sophie Connor will be moving from the Libraries Assistant and Invigilator post at Magdalene to take up Tom’s previous role at Trinity Hall.

Homerton has lots of people news! Robin Surtees has now moved to two days per week as Deputy/Acquisitions Librarian. Rosie Austin is now Deputy Librarian. Alys Butler has been promoted to Acquisitions Librarian, and Megan Kelly has been appointed as Part-Time Library Assistant.

At Jesus College, Chris Barker is now Assistant Keeper of the Old Library as well as remaining Deputy Librarian of the Quincenentary Library, splitting her time between the two posts. Jesus were sad to say farewell to
Lucie Lang Maurel, who had worked as their Library Assistant since June 2012, and have now welcomed Adam Williams as her successor.

The new graduate trainee at Trinity is Rosslyn Johnston. Rosslyn has a degree in Theology from Queen's University, Belfast. She then worked at Hazelwood College, Belfast before joining us.

Rebecca Gower is leaving Corpus in September to take up the new position of Collection Development and Academic Liaison Librarian at the University Library. The Assistant Librarian, Joe Sandham, will be taking over as Taylor Librarian at Corpus.

Rebecca Watts’s debut poetry collection, *The Met Office Advises Caution*, has been published by Carcanet and is a Poetry Book Society Recommendation for Autumn 2016. Rebecca works as part-time Projects Assistant at St John’s College Library and is an alumna of Trinity.

Turning to the Department and Faculty libraries, Angela and the Education Library Team are delighted to welcome Vicki Clarke as a new Library Assistant. Vicki was previously a graduate trainee at Kingston College and has a degree in English.

After the Divinity Library rather carelessly lost two colleagues within two terms in 2015-2016 (both due to retirement), the team there has again a library assistant: Amanda Hawks. Before joining the Divinity Library in May 2016, Amanda was employed by the Churchill Archives Centre. She is working 20 hours per week, in term time only. Amanda has degrees from the University of Birmingham and University of Glasgow.

Alex Saunders retired from the Casimir Lewy Library (Philosophy).

The Classical Faculty Library bids farewell to our last graduate trainee Charlie Barranu, who is starting her Masters at UCL. Taking a break from trainees, we are pleased that Carmen Preston is now a full-time library assistant in the Library having previously been part-time.

And in conclusion, some news from the Cambridge Theological Federation: in May 2016 Dr Carol Reekie resigned from her post as Federation Librarian. Carol worked at the Federation for 17 years, leading its libraries into the 21st century alongside the UL. She was a very active member of the Cambridge College Librarians Forum, the Chair of the Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries (ABTAPL) and the Secretary at the Bibliothèques Européennes de Theologie (BETH). We wish Carol all the very best in her future endeavours. We also warmly welcome the new Federation Librarian, Dr Chris Grogan. Chris was previously a Library Services Manager at the University of London’s Royal Holloway College and, before becoming the CTF Librarian, he worked as a Director of Collections and Heritage at the Britten-Pears Foundation in Aldeburgh.

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE**

What unusual tasks have you found yourself doing as a librarian? Write and tell us - with photos - for inclusion in the next issue of *CULIB*, which will be entitled “Miscellaneous duties”. The deadline for submission is 31st January 2017.

**CONTACT THE EDITORS**

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