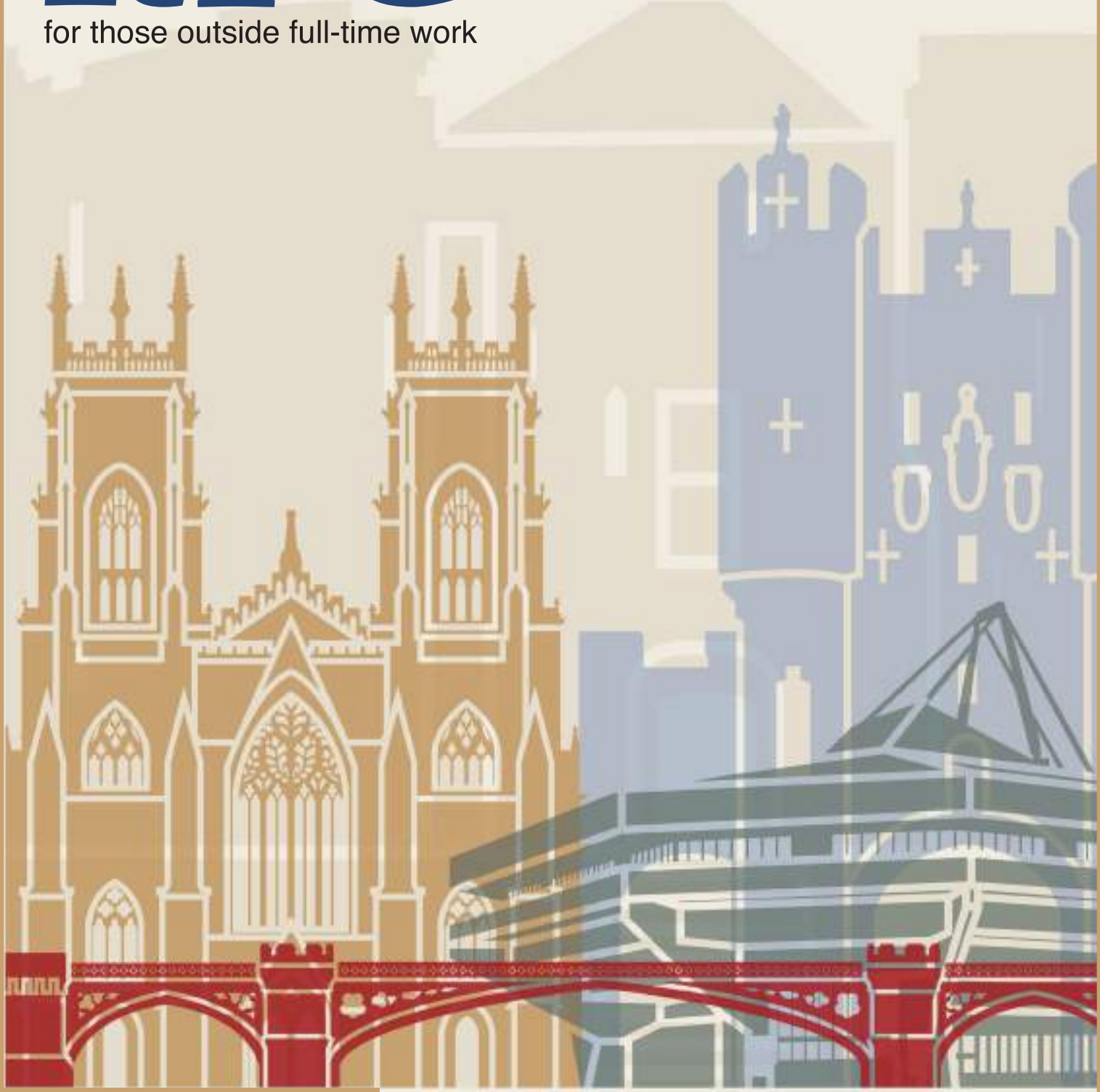
ISSUE 109 • JUNE 2026

CILIP RPG

for those outside full-time work

Storytelling & Innovation

CILIP RPG Unconference 2026



Post-Lib

YORK

Post-Lib Issue 109
June 2026

RPG, For people outside full-time work

RPG Committee 2026
Chair: Ian Orton
ianorton5@gmail.com
Secretary: Vincent McDonald
vjmcd@hotmail.co.uk
Treasurer: Judith Allery
treasurer.rpg@cilip.org.uk
Vice Chair: Sian King
sianking70@gmail.com
Post-Lib Editor: Christiana Ikeogu
christieikeogu@gmail.com
Web Editor: Alan Cooper
alan@buckspoint.org.uk
Marketing and Communications: Vacant
Visits Organiser:
Charmaine Bourton
charmainebourton11@hotmail.co.uk
Other Committee members
David Byrne
Valerie Bearne
Natalia Ward
WardN@pocklingtonschool.com
Colin Sawers colin.sawers@gmail.com

For general enquiries about Retired Professionals Group (RPG) please contact chair.rpg@cilip.org.uk
Now more than ever we want to make sure we stay in touch. If you haven't already, you can sign up to receive email alerts from RPG at:
https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/manageyourmembership
Or, if you would like help, contact David Byrne on 07850 791002.

For changes in membership circumstances contact
membership@cilip.org.uk

Magazine design:
digitalstudioworldwide.com
ogo@digitalstudioworldwide.com

Contents

Chair's Note 04
Ian Orton

Editor's Introduction 06
Christiana Ikeogu

Trending 08

Book Reviews and Poems 11

Making Connections 17

Reports, events, and announcements 23

RIVIERA TRAVEL

Book a holiday with Riviera Travel and 10%* of the cost will go back to CILIP.

Bookings for individuals (CILIP members or family/ friends) as well as groups are accepted.

Riviera Travel was established over 38 years ago and offers a wide range of quality, fully escorted UK European and worldwide tours, city breaks and river cruises. It is a member of ABTA, ATOL, IATA and AGTO.

Call 01283 248 304 (*quoting CILIP)
or visit rivieratravel.co.uk
Email affinity@rivieratravel.co.uk within 24 hours of booking online to request 10% donation

Contact me
•chair.rpg@cilip.org.uk
•ianorton5@gmail.com

Chair's Note Ian Orton

Welcome to the Spring edition of Post-Lib!

As you step out of the main railway station in Lyon this enormous sign on the adjacent high-rise building lets you know where the main public library for Lyon is located! Inside the library is a state of art mechanism to deal with the options of Artificial Intelligence balanced by lots of books, journals and staff. Very like some central libraries from the past. The Children's Library had everything from borrow a picture to a broad range of storytelling activities.

What was so pleasing about a new library in a major city was perhaps the beginnings of people realising public libraries still have a lot to give.

Speaking of a lot to give the Annual Lunch on 28th April attracted the same numbers as pre-Covid and everyone seemed to have a good time. The President of CILIP planned to join us but was taken ill at the last moment – the event which is self-funding is a chance to catch up on the past and review ideas for the future. A date for your diary for next year Tuesday 20th April 2027 Annual RPG Lunch – friends and relatives also very welcome!

RPG with partners held our first weekend away in the Lake District 4 years ago and since then we have met in North Wales, Glasgow and Milton Keynes. This year the RPG UnConference will be held the weekend of 16th October in York in a Hilton branch hotel and a great opportunity to meet old colleagues, make friends and enjoy the sites of York. There is a fine range of speakers on the Saturday night and a presentation of "What the Vikings Did for You"! If you are interested in attending, please get in touch .

Your RPG Committee are working in the new world of CILIP, and if you would like to help with arranging site visits, zoom events, the UnConference etc and have a few hours to spare a month? Please let me know!

RPG are your committee and we really want your views on anything to do with our group, please let me know if we can do anything better! Despite cutbacks to some library journals, RPG plans to continue with three journals a year two to be electronic and one available in hard copy for those members who do not have an email account. If there are other ways in which your committee can liaise with you, please let me know. I can be reached via email **ianorton5@gmail.com or on 07841 577 991**

Ian Orton, Chairman

Annual RPG Lunch

The main public library for Lyon

Contact me
christieikeogu@gmail.com

Editor's Note
Christiana Ikeogu

Welcome to the 109th edition of the Post-Lib. What a start to our spring and summer of 2026. UK's temperature surpassed some tropical regions as it touched on 30 degrees in May. So, we must watch this space as we have not even passed through July and August months.

Coming back to our SIG, I wish to join our able Chair, Ian Orton in praising RPG committee members as they continuously inspire us by keeping the group in a high esteem, even when some areas in our sector are struggling to keep up with today's pressures. I was moved to see Judith at the Annual Lunch plus her dedicated job of keeping our finances in good shape, even with her ill-health. I can vouch for Post-Lib as our communication tool, to continue to play its role in connecting our volunteers with you.

In our present issue, my appreciation goes to Ian and David Byrne for their hard work in making this year's Annual Lunch very special. As always, Charmaine has continued to link us up with impressive resource centres in the country. Those of you who have not been able to do visits have missed a lot. We continue to hear Dr Ahmad's voice through his poems, and in this edition, the special review on Sutton Library Services. I hope some of their staff will have access into what he has covered about the authority and people who have served it over many years. We are always eager to hear from Dr Helen Foster who graces our UnConference with literary workshops, and here with a poetic work that every woman can relate with. Finally, Genny Andrews is never tired or retired from her library experiences. In this issue, she touches on what librarians and libraries have always been about – languages and communications from time immemorial.

Please keep the connectivity going. Have a glorious summer.

Christiana Ikeogu, Editor

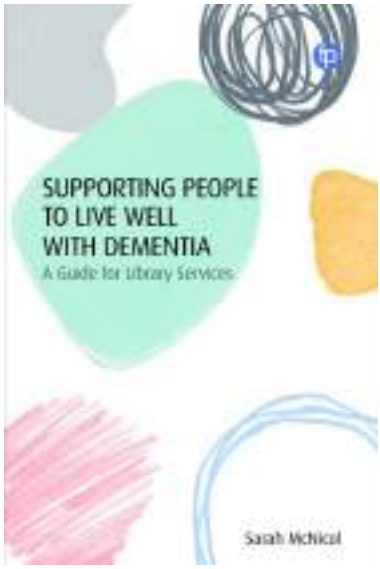
NEXT ISSUE

Please send me your article in MS word by Monday 14th September 2026 to the editor at the following address: Christiana Ikeogu, 130 Elphinstone Road, London E17 5EX. Email: christieikeogu@gmail.com For any questions, please call 07957726215

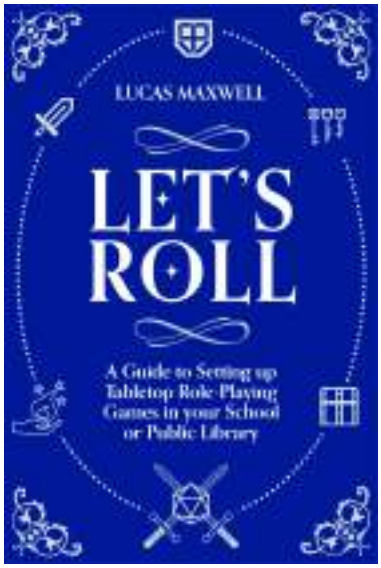
facet publishing

The publisher of choice for the information professions worldwide

Feminist Librarianship: Principles, Practices and Provocations
Kirsten MacQuarrie, Amina Shah



Supporting People to Live Well with Dementia: A Guide for Library Services *Sarah McNicol*



Let's Roll: A Guide to Setting up Tabletop Role-Playing Games in your School or Public Library
Lucas Maxwell

www.facetpublishing.co.uk

CILIP The library and information association

Reading habits: From Grunts to Libraries

By Genny Andrews

Have you ever wondered how the Ancient Britons communicated before the development of formal language? Well, the early inhabitants of Britain (from the Palaeolithic through the Mesolithic and the Neolithic periods), relied on a sophisticated mix of non-verbal cues, vocalizations, and physical actions to communicate. These methods were essential for survival, hunting and building and they included the following approaches, gesture and body language. The primary method involved hand signs, pointing to indicate objects, mimicking actions, and facial expressions. Pointing with the index finger is a fundamental human behaviour that appears before formal language. They used vocal sounds and noises, and early communication could have included sounds from nature.

Visual symbols, signs and language. We have all heard of rock carvings and paintings. While these early inhabitants built complex structures like Stonehenge, they left no recorded written language from before the arrival of the Romans. Common Brittonic was spoken in England before Old English. The characteristics of the Common Brittonic language featured initial consonant mutations, a verb-subject-object (VSO) structure and a distinct vowel system.

Meanwhile, in other parts of the world, information had been exchanged by different means. In Sumeria (in what is now Southern Iraq) for example, information was recorded on cuneiform tablets. Cuneiform was a syllabic writing system that was used to write several languages of the ancient Near East. These tablets were made of clay utilizing wedge-shaped marks. They were primarily used for recording agricultural, bureaucratic and economic data. Examples can be seen in the University of Manchester Library. Now why would this information have been collected if not to be made available? So now we have that key word, LIBRARY. There have been several key periods in Library History.

Briefly, in the Ancient Near East (c. 3000-600 BCE) this was a year numbering system used in history for dates prior to year 1. This was followed by Classical Antiquity (500 BCE-500AD) and the Library of Alexandria (founded c. 3rd century BCE) in Egypt contained hundreds of thousands of papyrus scrolls. I am sure that many of us will remember hearing of these papyrus scrolls. The Romans later created public libraries in cities and public baths, with institutions like the Library of Celsus (c.117 AD) in Ephesus.

The following brief history of libraries in the western world, is something that those of us who studied librarianship (some years ago now), will be familiar with.

Renaissance and Early Modern Period (1400s-1700s): the printing press (c.1440) revolutionized book availability, allowing, private collections to grow. The first substantial volume to come from a printing press in the Western world was, appropriately, the Bible which was in Latin. The name of the printer was Johann Gutenberg of Mainz, (between 1440 and 1450). Meanwhile, in England, William Caxton (1422-1491), a successful merchant, who had learned the art of printing, likely in Cologne, returned to this country from Bruges in 1476, to establish himself at Westminster as the first printer in his native England. The English title of his first dated book was, Sayings of the Philosophers (Nov 18, 1477). In this country, we

Library of Celsus (c.117 AD) in Ephesus.

see the emergence of early municipal libraries, such as those in Norwich (1608) and Bristol (1613).

I would think that every-one of you would have heard of Chetham's Library in Manchester which was founded in 1653. It is the oldest free surviving public Reference library in Britain and the English-speaking world. It holds over 100,000 books, manuscripts and archives.

The Modern Era (19th Century-Present): The 19th-century public library movement, fuelled by legislative actions like the UK's Public Libraries Act 1850, made books available to all citizens. These libraries were closed access (to prevent theft etc). Clerkenwell Library in the London Borough of Islington, introduced open access in May 1894.

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (The Act). This stated that, and we are all familiar with this, that 'There is a statutory duty under this act to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons, for all those who live, work or study in the area (section 7)'. The Act allows for joint working between library authorities and councils, many often offer wider services, for example, loaning devices, running activities or providing access to wifi, i.e. a family of wireless network protocols and computers. I worked for Solihull council and one of our branch libraries was situated a short distance from the Coventry Road. This divided Birmingham from Solihull and people who lived on the Birmingham side but worked in Solihull, would join Hobs Moat library because they told me that our library service was first class. I was the manager of that branch for about 10 years, and my staff were 'second to none'.

Trending

The printing press (c.1440)

The 20th and 21st centuries saw the introduction of digital libraries, automation, and universal access, transforming libraries into community hubs. Key services that are often available, give access to the free use of public computers, high-speed wi-fi, printing, scanning, photocopying, and assistance with getting on-line. I have also heard that it can also be the go-to place to renew a bus pass or consult a representative from the local C.A.B. (Citizen's Advice Bureau).

In this time of austerity, many chartered librarians have lost their jobs. There has been a severe 'de-professionalisation' of qualified staff with many being replaced by volunteers, and book funds and library opening hours have been cut. However, I have read that librarians will not become obsolete but will 'become community architects (some turn of phrase that), designing experiences that help people navigate an increasingly complex world'. So be it!

I have spent most of my working life as a Chartered Librarian in the public sector. However, change came when my late husband was offered a post at Cambridge University and we had to move home. There was only one vacancy that was on offer for me, the subject being NHS Management Information, (about which I knew nothing!), for the Cambridge and Peterborough authority. One could have said that the manager who appointed me was taking a risk, as the other candidates were already working for the NHS. I had no idea what I was taking on going forward. However, at over 50, I was still a quick learner and with some essential networking, I made it right to the top of the tree. My counterpart librarian at the BMA, (British Medical Association) H.Q. in London, always welcomed me to take a pitstop there. Now I spend my time writing articles for various publications and NO, I have not got a book in my head waiting to be written.

Genny Andrews

Book review and Poems

#WeAreRPG #WeAreCILIP

Women's Work: A Poetic Collation

By Dr Helen Foster

I've been looking for poetry in the archives. Women's Work draws on female Professions or Occupations listed in census returns from Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Leicester and Leicestershire from 1851 to 1911.

Women's Work

She was the Wife of a Farmer
of Forty-Six Acres,
Assisted in Toy Shops
and Shoe Shops and Bakers.

A Tailor's Assistant.
The Wife of a Draper.
She Sorted out Rags and
she Sorted out Paper.

Machined Ladies' Undercloths,
Sold Haberdashery,
Overlooked Girls at
the Lace Curtain Factory.

A Fruiterer's Wife,
a Brass Bobbin Winder,
a Weaver, a Chevener1,
a Leather Shoe Binder.

A Maker of Pinafores,
Aprons and Caps,
Straw Bonnets and Mantles
and Blouses and Hats.

She Took In The Laundry,
Kept Offices Clean,
and Knitted-Up Socks on
a Griswold Machine2.

A Pensioner's Widow,
her Husband Made Brooms.
She Lived Off Her Savings
and Let Out Her Rooms.

An (Unpaid) Domestic,
a Maid of All Work,
a Shorthand Typewritist,
a Telegraph Clerk.

A Midwife, a Wet Nurse,
a Lodging-Housekeeper,
Errand Girl, Rope Twister,
Net Warehouse Sweeper.

She Made-Up and Mended
and Scalloped3 and Clipped
and Finished and Folded
and Cut-Out and Stitched.

A Tool Maker's Widow,
A Labourers' Daughter.
The Wife of a Man who
took Horses to Slaughter.

The Wife of a Whip Maker,
Wife of a Warper.
A Sawyer's Wife, Lawyer's Wife,
Annuitant4, Pauper.

Of No Occupation.
She was Nil. She was None.
She simply Attended
till her work was done.

[1] an embroiderer engaged in embroidering patterns on hosiery, usually by embroidery machine.
[2] a domestic circular knitting machine. The name comes from Henry Josiah Griswold (1837–1929) who founded the London and Leicester Hosiery Company in 1891.
[3] in the lace trade this refers to the finishing process of cutting away surplus fabric from a web of lace to reveal a decorative, curved, or shell-like edge.
[4] a person living on an annual income, allowance or pension derived from investments rather than active employment. This frequently included retired individuals, widows or those with private means or a charitable allowance.

Book review and Poems

#WeAreRPG #WeAreCILIP

Library review: Sutton public library: Magnificent past

By Prof. Dr Nazir Ahmad, Ex-cataloguer, Sutton Public Library and Alumni of MMU & University College London

Sutton Public Library, St Nicholas Way. Photo captured on 10 February 2026.

This is my Poetic tribute to the wonderful London Borough of Sutton Libraries: celebrating decades of excellence. The London Borough of Sutton Library was initially located within Manor Park House, opposite the police station, and it moved to the newly built premises at St Nicholas Way in 1975. It has a fabulous art gallery and excellent exhibitions for residents and visitors alike.

Writing these heartfelt poems for my beloved Sutton library fills me with joy and gratitude. It's a wonderful honour to celebrate a place that has truly shaped my professional and academic life. I want to share the story of its glorious past and the incredible journey of Sutton Libraries, which owes much of its success to dedicated and passionate leaders. Their commitment, integrity, and hard work have truly left a lasting impact. Thanks to visionary leadership working hand in hand with the Sutton City Councillors, all the libraries across the Borough have become inviting and cherished community hubs. Over the years, librarians have continued to serve with passion and dedication, spreading literacy and hope. I remember the original multi-story building in Manor Park, a shining symbol of knowledge and optimism. In the 1970s and 1980s, esteemed Borough Librarian Roy Smith dreamed big, playing a vital role in planning and creating the new library at St Nicholas Way. While bricks and shelves are important, it is the caring and committed staff who breathe life into the library, making it a welcoming space for everyone. Sutton can be proud to have such talented and purposeful leaders guiding its libraries with enthusiasm and grace. During my visits to Sutton Central Library in February and April 2026, I was greeted warmly, enjoyed a peaceful atmosphere, and even treated myself to a cosy cup of coffee. Inspired by those moments, I quickly wrote two poems, captured some photos, and reminisced about the inspiring memories. The next day, as I reflected, another poem emerged about this special place—one I hope will inspire and inform other readers,

After retiring, Roy Smith reached out to his friends and colleagues in the library and book trade, inviting them to contribute to a special fund for an annual award instead of the usual farewell gift. The Public Library Entrepreneur of the Year Award, associated with Roy Smith in the late 1980s and early 1990s, represented a meaningful yet often overlooked moment in the history of UK public library management. It originated at a time when there was an increasing focus on improving the efficiency, accountability, and innovation within the public sector. This award highlighted a transition from libraries simply being guardians of books to becoming dynamic, service-focused, and community-centred organisations. Roy Smith's initiative emphasised the concept

Sutton Central Library, Bibliographical Services dept. Photo captured by John, the Chief Cataloguer, in 1974.

Site of the original Sutton Public Library Building at Manor Park Next to the Police Station. Dr Nazir, the Poet, worked here as a Cataloguer in the 1970s under Miss Dorothy Tonks, the Bibliographical Services Officer and Most Honourable Roy Smith, the Borough Librarian. Photo captured on 10 February 2026.

of the "entrepreneurial librarian", a professional capable of combining traditional values of access and preservation with managerial creativity, partnership development, and resource optimisation.

Recent Developments and Achievements: Sutton Public Libraries

In recent years, the service has undergone a significant transformation, demonstrating how libraries can remain relevant while responding to economic pressures and shifting user expectations. One of the most significant developments has been the introduction of self-access library technology across all eight branches (2023–2024). This system allows users to access library buildings, borrow and return materials, and use facilities outside staffed hours. As a result, opening hours have increased by approximately 63 per cent, enabling extended access from early morning to late evening while maintaining operational sustainability. Until recently, the Resilient Futures Exhibition (February – April 2026) seemed to have invited public attention, focusing on children's emotional health and wellbeing.

The library building in Manor Park, Sutton itself, remains vividly etched in my memory: an elegant three-storey Victorian structure situated within a beautifully maintained park, adorned with flowers, mature trees, and carefully cultivated greenery. It was in this intellectually stimulating yet serene environment that many formative professional relationships began

By Prof. Dr Nazir Ahmad

Book review and Poems

#WeAreRPG #WeAreCILIP

Sutton public libraries, greater london

Poems written by Prof. Dr Nazir Ahmad, Ex-Cataloguer at Sutton,

Sutton Library Acts as a Community Club
For Local Residents, an Approachable Hub
Welcoming Environment for all Inhabitants
Hospitable Librarians Invite Critical Comments

Anxious to Improve Services & Facilities
Staff Well Equipped with Diverse Abilities
Book Borrowing, Reservations Accepted Rules
Advisory Services, Reference and Research Tools

Renting Out Sewing Machines and Electric Drills
Offering Sound Systems for Youthful Thrills
Charging Affordable Rent Without Any Frills
Workshops Organised to Instil Employable Skills

First, to Lend Umbrellas, Videos and CDs
Rain Protection, Entertainment and Glees
Ground Floor Café Attracts Lovers of Teas
Weekend Markets for the Shopping Spree

Readers Choose and Borrow Hard & Paperbacks
Sutton Library Helps Develop Talents and Knacks
Digital Magazines, Some Print Copies on Racks
Huge Collections, Rare and Unique Items in Stacks

Secure Any Item or Reservation You Make
Once it Becomes Available, You Come & Take
You Must Return in Time for Other Users' Sake
Undue Social Media Use Keeps You Awake

Prof. Dr Nazir Ahmad

Librarians Pleasantly Warm and Wise
Invite Your Thoughts and Share Your Cries
Eager to Help, to Serve with Grace
With Varied Skills, They Embrace the Space

Provide Children with Weekly Reading Sessions
Well-read Population Exhibit Learning Passions
Shared Hobby Groups Halt Social Isolation
Well-Planned Activities Deserve Admiration

Begins 19 January 2026, Health Information Week
Tazza Coffee Gathering for Socialisation to Peak
Experience, Relax, New Relationships, You seek
Accessible Facilities for the Seniors and the Weak

Specially Curated Unique Book Displays
Clearly Designed for the Public Sways
Improved Users Visitations Each Day
Arrangements in Place for Toddlers' Play

On 24 March 2026, Held Digital Help Lessons
At Carshalton, Practised Rhythmed Compassions
Children Under Five, Enjoyed the Singing
Enumerates Marvellous Kids' Upbringing

Peer-Based Practices on Mental Health
Keeping Fit and Cheerful, an Abundant Wealth
Blood Pressure Checks Foster Consciousness
Cancer Symptoms and Disabilities Awareness

Arrive Intermittently, NHS Vaccination Crews
For Housewives' Convenience, Happy News
With Babies, Conduct Singing and Rhyming
Parental Flexibility and Amenable Timing

Children Learning Sessions, Toddlers Learn
Borough's Robust Standards for Safety Concern
Extraordinary Amenities for the Public Good
Literate Readers' Demands Well Understood

21st February 2025, Barry Lewis Pronounced
Sutton City Councillor Gladly Announced
All Eight Libraries Opening Hours Increased
Users Delighted, and Young Parents Pleased

Increased Book Issues, a Laudable Fete
Reader-Oriented Services, No One Can Beat
Fervently in Place are the Community Domains
Communal Harmony, Their Objective Remains

From 26 February to 12 April 2026, a Great Adventure
Resilient Futures Exhibition, Sutton Library's Venture
In April 2026, Nazir Viewed a Photographic Exhibition
Unconceivable Selections, Commendable Additions

Sutton Scholars are Ardent Library Users
Knowledge Originators Cannot be Losers
Prolific Writers Host a Writing Group at Cheam
Ingenious English Ladies Make a Vital Team

Sutton Diverse Community Blooms and Grows
Readers' Requirements, Library Staff Knows
Librarian-led Ventures Command Approbation
Well-qualified and Trained Staff Veneration

For Local Hearts, Sutton Libraries, a Trusted Friend
Where Knowledge and Compassion Blend
Polite Receptionists Would Never Offend
Visit Sutton Libraries, I Strongly Recommend

Book review and Poems

#WeAreRPG #WeAreCILIP

Roy Smith, ex-director,Sutton library

Written by Prof. Dr Nazir Ahmad, Ex-Cataloguer at Sutton. Alumnus of MMU and UCL

In the 1970's, Roy Smith was the Sutton Library Executive
Miss Dorothy Tunk Offered us a Bibliographical Directive
Nazir Became a Cataloguer/Classifier, Profoundly Active
Allocating Subject Descriptors and Indexing Objective

Dorothy Was Brilliant, Her Command Was Clear
Facilitated Our Path in the Cataloguing Sphere
Often, in Our Department, She Would Swiftly Appear
Rendered Instructions, Inspired Us to Persevere

Nazir, the Cataloguer, Joined This Place
Classifying Books with a Meticulous Grace
Headings, Annotations, Everything Aligned
My Dedication to Order, with a Clear-Cut Mind

On My Finger Tips, The Cataloguing Rules
Well Versed I Was with the DDC Schedules
Subject Indexes and the Abstracting Tools
Learned Technicalities at Academic Schools

Competent Librarians Employed to Serve
Roy Set the Standards for Staff to Observe
Study Spaces Created for Students and Readers
Public Library Impressed Councillors and Leaders

Professor Bob Usherwood's Vision Set the Direction
Enhanced Staff Efficiency, But Showered Affection
Improved Library Use, Book Borrowing Multiplied
Latest Acquisitions, Swiftly Catalogued and Classified

Roy Smith Promoted Libraries at Sutton and Cheam
He Diligently Recruited a Superb Professional Team
Museum at Carshalton, His Longstanding Dream Income-
Generating Policies, Self-Financing Realm

This Poem, Nazir believes, is Thoughtfully Reflective
Professional Librarians are Energetically Subjective
Roy's Far-sighted Vision in Practical Form
Argument and Action: Smith Set the Norm

He Looked for creativity at the Departmental Stores
For 23-Years, Roy Designed and Built Library Floors
Croydon Air Pageant and Amy Johnson's Flight
Smith's Incredible Displays Could Not Be Slight

Dagenham Born East-Ender Remarkable Roy
Married Kind-hearted, Pleasant Lady Joy
With Steady Hands, Roy Smith Carved New Ways
Incubated Future Finance, Brightened the Days

Developed Marketing Strategies for Self-Sufficiency
Professional Staff Development, Enhanced Efficiency
With Enthusiasm and Flair, He Defined the Tone
Vibrant Sutton Libraries, Historically Known

Bathroom Fittings to Gardening Demonstrations
At Sutton, His Policies for Income-Generations
Public Library Proponent Relished Publicity
Concerned With Service but Hated Duplicity

In 1086, the Domesday Book Contains the Sutton Placename
Historically, Conserving Nature & Parks It Earned Fame
Public Library Development was the Primary Aim
First Library to Have a Writer in Residence, Claim

We Must Congratulate Sutton Library Volunteers
They Work Enthusiastically in Welfare Spheres
Former Cataloguer Presents a Meticulous Narrative
To Serve the Library Profession, We Must Be Creative

Making Connections

Visit to POSK

Polish social and cultual association

By Charmaine Bourton

The Polish library was founded in 1942, and it was the library of the Polish government in exile. The motto was "Elementum meum libertas" – "My principle is freedom."

The library went through 3 crises: 1945, when British government ceased to recognise the Polish government in exile and recognised the government in Poland instead. Nevertheless, it thought that a Polish library would be useful for Poles who wanted to stay in Britain after the war because their homeland had been destroyed by the Germans. From 1948 to 1953, it was the Polish University College library in Buckingham Palace Road. In 1953 when British government decided to cease to maintain funding of the library and the Polish University College Association was created in 1954 at Number 5 Princes Street, 1964, British government said it would be impossible to maintain the library and wanted all the collections to go to the University of Birmingham and host it in Russian studies. The government's claim to own the library was successfully challenged, and the Polish Social and Cultural Association accepted full responsibility for the library after the 1968 debate in the House of Lords. In spring 1968 the trustees of POSK decided to purchase the site of a large department store and the new Polish library opened on 3rd May 1977.

On entrance we saw a delightful children's corner and recognised many of our favourite picture book characters. The adult library has 13,000 books. Fiction is separated into genres - crime and science fiction etc. They have 8,000 registered members but only 500 use the library regularly.

Making Connections

The theatre is used to promote Polish drama in both Polish and English

The classification is Dewey, but the Polish staff do not like it! They keep their card catalogue for historical interest!

We saw the Joseph Conrad exhibition with over 1,000 books. Conrad was a very important Polish writer, and a stamp was produced with his picture on it. There is an electronic library for users who live a distance away. There is a collection of books on the history of Poland and a collection of Polish literature in English. They organise about 10 meetings a year about Polish history and lessons for children from Polish schools. On National Reading Day, readings of Polish classical literature were given and a family picnic organised.

Visiting dignitaries include King Charles, the Polish president and Sadiq Khan, who was at the library in February 2025. They have a vast collection of drawings, watercolours and a plaster cast art of the Polish uprising first August 1944. There is also a collection of English bookplates, and the oldest one is 1705.

On the way to the Reading Room, we saw an old English Imperial typewriter which was used by one of the previous directors. In the basement we saw collections of some 2,000 periodicals, 20,000 leaflets and 60,000 photographs. Manuscripts can only be used in the Reading Room and not borrowed. The building also houses a bookshop, a theatre and café. The theatre was opened in 1982 and was the first purpose-built Polish theatre outside Poland and has a seating capacity of 300. The theatre is used to promote Polish drama in both Polish and English. Until a member of CILIP told me about this place I had no idea it existed. It is well worth a visit.

Charmaine Bourton
March 2026

Visit to Polish and Sikorski museum

By Charmaine Bourton

PISM building was purchased in 1945 for £13,000. During the War, the building had been occupied by Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), working on barrage balloons. The idea was to house the archives of and all papers relating to the Polish government in exile.

There was a concern that the Polish government established in 1945 would want the information to be sent back to Poland and this would cause problems for some people. To minimise this, a Trust was formed and the papers were handed to them. People use these papers to find out about their families, or they could go to the Ministry of Defence (M.O.D), if they knew what unit their ancestor was in. There is a collection of over 500,000 photos; there is a moving footage and uniforms, and they are still getting donations.

The Sikorski collection is named after General Sikorski who was the equivalent of General de Gaulle, as he was the Prime Minister of the Polish government in exile, and Commander-in-Chief of Polish armed forces. The collection falls into 3 main categories:

1) His personal belongings, including his ceremonial sword, cap and uniform. Also, the black pennant carried with his funeral cortege.

2) Collection of books, albums, pamphlets and press cuttings. His books were some of the first items that started the museum.

3) His wartime diary

The General's office was in Kensington Palace. He was asked if he would like to be King of Poland after the war but he was killed in a 'plane crash in 1943 at Gibraltar. About 10 people were killed with him and this led to conspiracy theories. His daughter also died in the crash but her body was never found. There was a belief that it was unlucky to find a female body.

There is a vast collection of cutlery which was brought by officers from the training camp in Walsall because when they left Poland they wanted to bring their cutlery with them! The last portraits of the late Queen and Queen Mother are also on display. The Queen's portrait was painted in 2022.

In 1939 the Germans and Soviets agreed to split Poland

Making Connections

between them. This led to many people in the East being sent to Siberia. When Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the Polish captives were released to help the war efforts. They found their way down to Iran and here they came across a shepherd with a bear cub. They adopted the bear cub and called him Wojtek. He drank beer and ate cigarettes and learnt to carry ammunition crates. Despite his love of beer, he never seemed to become Intoxicated! Bears were not allowed in the army, so he was given a ration book and identity card and became Private Wojtek, later promoted to Corporal. After the war he was mustered out of the Polish army and spent the rest of his life in Edinburgh Zoo where he died in 1963. There is a large statue of him at the museum made by David Harding and there is also one in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh.

In the same area, the most successful squadron in the Battle of Britain, the Polish 303 squadron, is commemorated with a damaged Hurricane aeroplane recovered in 2015 from near Beachy Head.There is a room given over to the Polish navy containing many medals. People still come to do research to see if their ancestors were entitled to a medal. One of the events that was graphically described was how a Polish submarine went into Tallinn harbour and the Estonians wanted to intern it. The Estonians removed the navigation equipment, but the Polish crew weren't having this and set sail without the equipment and by "dead reckoning" managed to escape to Rosyth.

We saw the first letter about the holocaust which was transmitted to the Polish government in exile. The Polish government in exile continued to exist until the government of Lech Walesa replaced the communist government and they then dissolved themselves – their work completed!

The Polish people supported Napoleon because he had said that if they helped him, he would create a Polish state. However, with Napoleon beaten in 1815 the Congress of Vienna created a puppet kingdom of Poland but under the Russian emperor. In the cases in this room there are several of the typical Polish 4-cornered hats

There was quite an eclectic mix of items in one room, including the death mask of Chopin; cases of Polish involvement in the Battle of Narvik in May 1940, and information about the Battle of Monte Casino. There was a great deal more in other rooms and well worth a visit, for example, the Warsaw uprising.

Charmaine Bourton
April 2026

RPG visit to the UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Children's Health Library

Peter Pan and GOSH

A report by Christiana Ikeogu

The UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Children's Health Library was established in 1945. The Institute of Child Health, in partnership with Great Ormond Street Hospital is the largest European centre devoted to research into the diseases of children, and postgraduate medical school. The library provides information and skills support for training staff and students of the Institute of Global Health and the staff of GOSH.

The hospital was founded by Charles West in 1852 as the hospital for sick children, and it is the first hospital sick children in the whole English-speaking world. West believed in the need for a specialist paediatric provision for children even when objections were made by other medical professionals. It had only one ward with 10 beds and two physicians – Dr West and Dr William Jenner. It started off as a charity and depended entirely on donations. Charles Dickens published an article, "Drooping buds" in his magazine, Household Words. After reading that article, Queen Victoria made a large donation to the hospital and became its patron. That secured the future of the hospital for children.

Peter Pan and GOSH

J M Barrie, author of Peter Pan gave proprietary rights to GOSH in 1929, and later confirmed in 1937 for GOSH to receive royalties everytime a production of the play is put on as well as sales from Peter Pan books. The library holds biographical and related materials on J M Barrie. The Peter Pan structure at GOSH was produced by Diarmund O'Connor and unveiled by Lord Callaghan in the year 2000. Tinkerbell was added to Peter Pan's uplifted arm in 2005.

Some Clinical Breakthroughs at GOSH

- First heart-lung bypass machines, revolutionising heart operations for children (1962)
- First shunt valves for children with hydrocephalus (1967)
- Led UK clinical trials of German measles vaccine (1967)
- First successful bone marrow transplant (1979)
- First gene therapy for children born without functioning immune systems (2000)
- Easier heart valve replacements for children (2001)
- First trachea transplant (2010)

History of the library

The library dates to the foundation of ICH in 1946. At that time there was no Librarian. The original library was located, with the rest of the Institute, in temporary accommodation in Great Ormond Street Hospital, and an honorary librarian was appointed in 1948.

In January 1996 plans were agreed for the complete refurbishment and extension of the library. Funded by the Welcome Trust and The Friends of the Children of GOSH. The new facility called 'The Friends of the Children of Great

Making Connections

Ormond Street' opened in September 1996. It had a small PC cluster with (originally) just 4 computers. In the last few years before refurbishment, they did a few bids to refurbish some areas of the Library, but all the bids and attempts of refurbishing were unsuccessful.

But in 2017 thanks to a collaborative joint project between the Library and ISD (Information System Division) and Professional Services the whole refurbishment happened.

As their users are split between UCL and NHS, UCL Library Services at the time could not agree to have most desk spaces occupied by UCL computers. But then a solution was found

Pop up computers! They come up - Success and innovation

The new layout illustrates the close working partnership that exists between UCL and the NHS. The newly refurbished UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health library is a joint library service, offered equally to HE users and to the NHS. Subsequently we were able to provide monitors both in the quiet study room and in the main library area for use by NHS and UCL students.

Training and clinical information support

The library supports UCL and Institute of Child Health library users, including affiliated NHS staff, with finding and managing information for study, research, clinical practice, or professional development.

There are regular online sessions on, 'Finding and accessing journal, as well as 1-2-1 sessions with a librarians for support with evidence searching.

There is also a programme of scheduled online and face to face training sessions for support with: Zotero, Mendeley, PubMed, Ovid databases, End Note, Referencing and Strategic Reviews.

Libby App for NHS staff(well-being)

The library offers the Libby app to GOSH library members. It offers a range of electronic books, audio books, magazines and newspapers. Introduced in 2023 the app has 392 users signed up to date.

GOSH archives

The GOSH archives are housed separately in Barclay House, with a part-time archivist. The "museum" collection of hospital artefacts is currently in storage.

UCL Special Collections also holds some paper archives by former paediatricians and researchers at UCL GOS ICH.

Lighting and green impact

They surveyed users and asked what their thoughts were on the three sustainability issues that needed addressing and the lighting came first. Their work with the green impact led to a project that replaced our 24hour, 365 days a year fluorescent strip lighting with motion sensor-controlled LED lights throughout the library.

Well-being Table project

Library users were surveyed to establish which activities they would like to have available in the library.

Puzzles, chess, colouring and other activities help students take a rest break from studying and they have had a lot of positive feedback.

In 2016, the Library introduced a white board and user suggestion box, for feedback. The original idea was to post suggestions received in the box on the white board together with their replies.

The suggestions box has fallen into dis-use but students have taken to writing suggestions on the white board instead and this year's cohort have been particularly enthusiastic.

Feedback from users

"I ICH library. Thank you, Librarians for creating such a nice space".
"I really appreciate the puzzles".
"My favourite study area 28/11/2025 – found for the first time after being at UCL for 3yrs!"
"Studying here is a really great experience".

Grazia is always happy to do another session for those unable to attend on that day, her contact details are **g.manzotti@ucl.ac.uk**

Reports, events and announcements
RPG audit account statement

CILIP RPG Annual Accounts 2025	
Income 2025	**£**
RPG Unconference	£8,377.33
Annual Lunch	£1,183.00
Journal Advertising	£159.80
Capitation from CILIP HQ	£2,000.00
Total	**£11,720.13**
Expenditure 2025	**£**
RPG Unconference	£8,247.03
RPG AGM Travel	£924.35
Zoom & Postage	£529.88
Others	£323.34
Total	**£10,024.60**
SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	**£1,695.53**
Cash balance	**£**
Opening Balance 01.01.2025	£2,346.75
Net cash movement	£1,219.30
Closing Balance 31.12.2025	**£3,566.05**

EVENTS

Visit to Newnham College Library

When: Thursday 2nd July 2026

Venue: Newnham College, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DF, UK

RPG's AGM

When: Tuesday 7th July 2026

Time: 2pm

Where: Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret Street, Birmingham B3 3BS

Visit to University College London Library

When: Friday 11th September 2026

RPG's Unconference

When: Friday 16th – Sunday 18th October 2026

Where: Double Tree by Hilton, York, St Maurice's Road, York YO31 7JA

Further details: Contact Ian Orton (07841577991)

CILIP RPG

for those outside full-time work

If you are a CILIP member interested in our activities, you can join CILIP RPG for free.

We are the voice for those from the UK's library and information sector not working full-time. Our members include those on career breaks, part-timers, retired and semi-retired, portfolio-career people, consultants, the unemployed, volunteers and those on parental leave.