



Retired Professionals Group

CILIP SPECIAL
INTEREST
GROUP

Issue 100 • June 2023

A large, three-dimensional gold number '100' is the central focus of the cover. The numbers have a metallic sheen with highlights and shadows, giving them a 3D appearance. They are set against a white background with a shower of small, semi-transparent gold dots of varying sizes scattered across the upper and side areas, creating a celebratory effect.

Post - Lib's
100th edition

Post-Lib Issue 100

JUNE 2023

RPG Retired Professionals Group

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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://tinyurl.com/CILIPemails>

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Chair's Note

Ian Orton

Welcome to a the 100th edition of Post-Lib!

So much has happened since we started out and we are still moving with the times including an agreement for our new name which is CILIP RPG. We gave members a choice of four names or none of the names offered and the largest number of votes were for CILIP RPG with an emphasis on library and information colleagues who are outside full-time work. That way people who worked part-time and volunteers etc could join, and CILIP RPG would be not just about retired library and information staff.

I mentioned our first residential weekend held in the Lake District last October and how people had enjoyed the mixture of talks and visits in very nice surroundings. Well, members enjoyed the weekend so much we have another one planned for Friday 6th to Monday 9th October 2023 at Gladstone's Library at Hawarden, Flintshire which is 10 miles from Chester. There will be music, workshops, talks, and visits plus great food and a very pleasant setting. Full details are available elsewhere in Post-Lib and I hope to see you there.

With CILIP leaving Ridgmount Street,

like several other Special Interest Groups we are at a loss as to where to hold our Annual General Meeting given the cost of room hire in central London. But we have been lucky enough to be meeting in the Royal Philatelic Society, Abchurch Lane, EC4 – virtually next to the Bank of England. The AGM will be held at 2pm on Tuesday 20th June. There will be light refreshments and a guided tour of a very impressive mid-19th century building. Normally, AGMs can be a little dry but this one is worth a visit.

Money tends to remain a challenge and CILIP has helped RPG to send a hard copy of this Post-Lib to members but without that help this would not have been possible. Our Annual Lunch is slowly getting back to pre-COVID figures, and the introduction of a raffle has made the event even more desirable. Please note Tuesday 16th April 2024 for the next lunch.

CILIP RPG have lots of visits increasingly all over the country (not just in London) and we hope you can join some of them but if there are galleries, museums, or libraries that you would like to share with RPG members please let

me know and we will promote them on the CILIP RPG website or via Post-Lib.

Post-Lib continues to be the jewel in our organisation and the careful use of advertising is helping hold down costs and as more members are sharing their email addresses with us postal costs are coming down. Christie, the Editor of Post-Lib does an amazing job, but we always need articles and photographs linked to libraries and information science so please let me have any items for publication.

Your committee members work to help promote events for librarians and information professionals not in full-time work and you might like to become more involved with RPG. We still need a Marketing and Communications colleague. If you are interested, please let me know. Also please let me know if CILIP RPG can do anything better!

I can be reached via
chair.rpg@cilip.org.uk or
ianorton5@gmail.com

The 100th Edition of Post-Lib is very special and here's to the 200th Edition!

Ian Orton
Chair RPG



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Editor's Note

Christiana Ikeogu

100th edition! What a milestone.

The atmosphere is buzzing with numerous activities as we gather articles for this edition of the Post-Lib. Nationally, we have just enjoyed the Coronation of King Charles III, and London was packed with visitors from all over the world. Closer to our profession, the news of the upcoming CILIP and IFLA yearly conferences fills the air.

As you work through these pages, I hope you will appreciate what your committee has done in organising many visits to some impressive treasures in library, information, and archives. There is no dull moment at the SIG as individuals continuously strive to make our relevance in the library sector known.

#WeAreCILIP #WeAreRPG

Christiana Ikeogu

NEXT ISSUE

Please send articles in MS Word for the next issue before 25th September 2023 to the editor at the following address: Christiana Ikeogu, 130 Elphinstone Road, London E17 5EX
E: christieikeogu@gmail.com You can also speak to her over the phone on 07957726215

News & Views

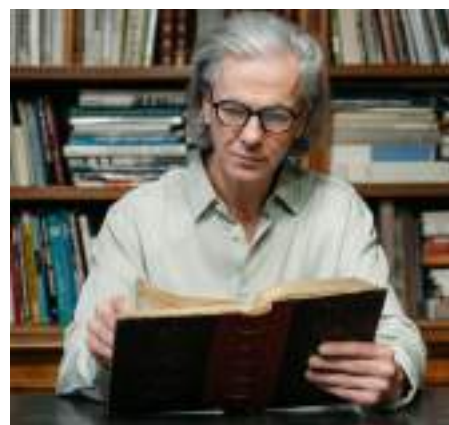
#WeAreRPG
#WeAreCILIP



JOIN US

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. Email ianorton5@gmail.com



HELPING HANDS

CILIP RPG has agreed to make two grants available, worth up to £250.00, towards travel costs for a CILIP RPG member to attend one of two conferences taking place this summer.

CILIP Conference 2023

12-13 July 2023

Birmingham, UK

World Library and Information Congress

21-25 August 2023

Rotterdam, The Netherlands

If you would like to apply for one of these travel grants, please email the CILIP RPG Committee via Ian Orton, the Chair, setting out which of the grants you are applying for and explaining how you will benefit from attendance at the conference. Ian can be reached via email at ianorton5@gmail.com

Book Review

British Librarianship and Information Work 2016-2020 Edited by J H Bowman

Review By Ian Orton

THE year's work in librarianship was first published in 1928 and has continued in one form or another up to the current edition British Librarianship and Information Work 2016 -2020. J H Bowman has assembled 18 authors to comment on all aspects of librarianship and information science during the lead up to COVID-19, and how the two areas have coped during the new communication framework of Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

The book is almost a magical insight into how different libraries have addressed the issues of changing demands against a background of affluence and austerity. Rare books and art

libraries have faced different challenges while local studies are still reaching new users through both genealogy and a more mobile society wanting to know more about where they now live. Libraries are still being built, and cataloguing is more important in the changing world of social media. Library services to children and young people build on the words of Barrack Obama that we have to get books into our children's hands early and often.

There are so many gems in this book for all librarians and information scientists working or retired and at £20 in today's world a bargain!



**Available from
J H Bowman, 17
Park Road, London
W7 1EN.**

Trending



WORDS OF MY YEARS

By **Bob Usherwood**

In my final editorial for Post-Lib, I used the fact that ‘fake news’ was the Collins’ Word of the Year to suggest that librarians should help users develop the kind of literacy required for the 21st century. Last year, the Collins Dictionary chose “permacrisis” as its word of the year stating that it reflected the “ongoing crises the UK and the world have faced and continue to face.” Then, as in 2017, the word can be applied to public libraries.

I could not find a ‘word for the year’ for 1962, the year I joined the library profession, but mine would have been ‘optimistic’. It was certainly a good time for public libraries. It was the year of the ‘Bourdillon Report’ which led to the Public Libraries and Museums Act of

1964. In addition, the early sixties were a time when many new library buildings took shape. These included one in Paignton, Devon where I stamped my first book.

The library historian Alistair Black (2011) argues that these buildings “reflected an age of optimism and intended modernization, when faith in the post-war welfare state was at its height.” It was certainly a good time to start a career. Professional education was improved, and librarianship was recognised as a profession. Expenditure on libraries doubled in 1961-7. In addition, an active and growing Library Association saw its membership increase from 13,033 at the end of 1960 to 21,002 in 1972.

I am reflecting my own political

preferences when I ask if this good time had anything to do with the fact that we had Labour governments from 1964-1970 and again from 1974 to 1979? However, I am supported by the literature. Lawson (2020) suggests that “Public libraries have always had to be responsive to the political context of the time. For example, in England under New Labour (circa 1997–2010), social inclusion became an explicit part of library policy, whereas the later 2010–2015, Conservative Liberal coalition government cut local government spending to such an extent that many councils closed libraries. “Adele Walton (2021) concurs, arguing that: “in an austerity climate, libraries have been targeted as a disposable resource. ...

Trending (Continued)

"Public libraries have always had to be responsive to the political context of the time"

The Conservatives' assault on public libraries is a deep injustice to all".

There are those, of course, who argue that technology has made libraries a thing of the past (Lane 2003) but in fact the opposite is true. The rise of social media, a biased British press and TV news stations that model themselves on Fox News, mean that people need to be made aware of the misrepresentation and misinformation that threaten personal and public decision-making, and could destroy our democracy. More than ever, communities require access to trustworthy and reliable information that a professional library service can provide. This requires libraries staffed by professionally qualified librarians who now also must navigate the moral and ethical questions raised by A.I.

Since 2010 governments' love of austerity has seen the closure of around 800 public libraries and the loss of 6,000 to 8,000 professional librarians. Libraries that have remained open have been largely staffed by volunteers. This is not the way to save our public library service. As Dawn Finch (2015) the writer and librarian explains in "The harsh truth about volunteers: It is a carcinogenic scheme that will ultimately kill it."

In addition to volunteers, the

government is also keen for public libraries to generate income. I was reminded of this when I discovered that Devon, where I started my career, was turning some of its branch libraries into market places. The business development manager from Libraries Unlimited, the Company that now runs the service, said they were: "offering retailers ... a cost-effective physical presence ... at the heart of their communities." As one who believes that public libraries are one of the few places you are allowed to exist without the expectation of spending money, I was dismayed that libraries I had worked in are now mini marketplaces throughout the year. (See: <https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/libraries-transformedmarket-places-heart-75020480>)

Discussing "permacrisis" a professor of organisational behaviour, (Spicer (2022), argued that "during moments of significant crisis, the best leaders are able to create some sense of certainty and a shared fate amid the seas of change." Predicting the future is a dangerous thing but it is certain that next year we will have a General Election. So, my word of the year for public libraries this December will be "hope".

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Making Connections

VISIT TO

MILLS ARCHIVE, READING 7.3.23



By Charmaine Bourton

The Mills Archive was originally set up by Mildred Cookson and her husband in 2000. Mildred had been for many years the only female miller in the UK and had accumulated a vast collection of books, photographs and other information on mills and they realised it needed a home and to be a resource. They set it up as a unique archive of records and documents. Two months after they started a mill enthusiast died and left them 1,500 books. Then another member of the milling fraternity died and left money. So, they were able to fund a catalogue, but it used Microsoft Access! Not ideal! A Librarian, Elizabeth Trout, worked on the classification until Covid.

Basically, there is a collection of books about windmills and watermills

in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, counties in England then France, Benelux, and Western Europe; also, material covering industrial archaeology. The library is full of dead people's books! There are also minute books from the National Assoc. of British and Irish Millers. There are 80 types of mills recognised by English Heritage and they received 7 boxes of books from the UK Milling Association.

The generation of electricity from wind was first proved in 1880 in the USA by an

Englishman! They have a PhD student who is working on digitisation of all the NorthWestern Miller bound copies of periodicals from 1897 – 1909 and then there is a gap until 1924 – 1973 when it ceased publication. However, they think they have the most complete collection of these.

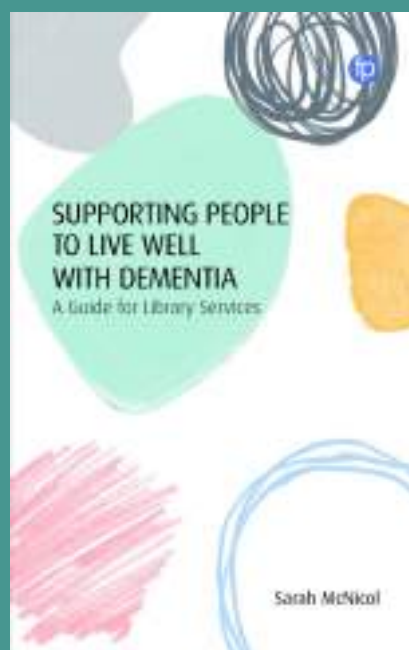
It is an educational charity and was accredited in 2016 and to get that accreditation, they needed a qualified archivist. So, a volunteer worked to gain this qualification and is now a paid staff member. There are also items on display one of which were two large books with drawings of all the mills extant in the UK during the 30s. Another was a Threshing Sledge from Spain which was brought back by car! The flints in the bottom of the sledge took the grains from straw as mules pulled it along. There is also a Beehive Quern. The upper stone is used to grind corn by hand and is made of Hertfordshire Pudding Stone. The grain is fed into the hole at the top and there is a slot in the side for a handle to turn it.

It is not dated but believed to be Iron Age. It was a fascinating visit.

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Making Connections

VIRTUAL TOUR

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

By Laura Bagnall

On the 19th of April I had the pleasure of virtually introducing some of you to the Library and Archives at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (RBG Kew), along with highlights from our collection. Here is a condensed version of that tour.

Introduction to the Library and Archives

The library at Kew Gardens originated in 1852, when botanist William Bromfield left 600 books, focusing on taxonomy, to Kew. An illustrations collection was also started in 1852 with a donation of 2000 pictures of plants at Kew and 1000 illustrations by Indian artists. The collections continued to grow and there are now approximately 500,000 items in the library, 200,000 prints and drawings

in the illustrations collection, and over 7 million sheets of paper in 4,600 archival collections.

Our main library is based in the herbarium building. A herbarium is a collection of dried plant specimens collected and held for scientific purposes. The library, archives and illustrations collections are housed in this building because they are used alongside the herbarium collection to inform the scientific work completed at Kew. We also have various branch libraries located around Kew Gardens, as well as at our other site in Wakehurst.

A highlight from the library

The library is full of specialised books relevant to the work of Kew as a botanical research institute. Topics include, but are

not limited to, botany, floras, botanists, history of botanical gardens, gardening, and climate change.

The oldest printed book in Kew's collection was printed in Germany in 1485. It is called 'Ortus Sanitatis' which is Latin for 'Garden of health.' It is categorised as herbal. Herbals are the first books to describe useful plants and where they grow. This herbal describes species, and their medicinal uses, but does not just focus on herbs. It also looks at animals and minerals, branching out further to mythical animals. A favourite for many is the mandrake. It is described in this herbal as an actual creature, which we now know is not correct, but it is interesting to see what the scientific knowledge was at the time.

Making Connections (Continued)



Main library stacks

"The oldest printed book in Kew's collection was printed in Germany in 1485. It is called 'Ortus Sanitatis' which is Latin for 'Garden of health.'"



Marianne North painting - Buphane toxicaria and other flowers of Grahamstown - © Board of Trustees, RBG Kew

A highlight from the archives

The RBG Kew archives are home to all the official records of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, as well as the personal papers of many botanists, gardeners, and other individuals with a link to RBG Kew.

Visitors are often interested to see items relating to Joseph Dalton Hooker. He was a botanist who was close friends with Charles Darwin, and who later became director of RBG Kew, succeeding his father, William Hooker. His passion for plants took him on many adventures, and we can follow this through his correspondence.

At the age of 22, Hooker joined the HMS Erebus on a 4-year exploration of Antarctica. He arrived back from this expedition in 1843 with specimens of over 1500 species of plants. When he

set off again in 1847, he headed to India and the 'Himalayas.' Correspondence from this time can be viewed online at jdhooker.kew.org, due to a recent digitisation project called the 'Joseph Hooker correspondence project.'

A highlight from the illustrations collection

Botanical illustrations are an important part of the scientific collections at Kew. Botanical artists can smooth out the differences between specimens and offer a standardised and simplified illustration that emphasises important details that are true about the plant in general.

One of the most notable botanical artists in the collection is Marianne North. She was a Victorian artist who travelled the world solo between



Mandrake from 'Ortus Sanitatis'

1871 and 1882 recording the tropical plants that captivated her. The Marianne North Gallery houses many of her paintings and is well worth a visit. The paintings are exhibited in geographical order, so you can follow in her footsteps. If you are unable to visit in person, many of her paintings have been digitised on the artuk.org website.

How to visit

Most of our spaces can only be accessed by staff members, however visitors are welcome to visit the RBG, Kew reading room. **The reading room is open Tuesday – Thursday between 10am and 4pm. To make an appointment all you need to do is email library@kew.org, archives@kew.org or illus@kew.org at least a week before you would like to visit. We look forward to welcoming you.**

Feedback on the virtual visit to Royal Botanic Garden, Kew from Anne O'Callaghan.

"I was totally impressed by Laura Bagnall, so articulate and she demonstrated the depth of her knowledge. I have been researching herbarium and botanists for several years now for my work, so the talk was super informative. I am participating in an artist's residency in Caen, Normandy with the Hatchery Artists group. It is my intention to visit Jardin des Plantes in Paris on my way Caen, and the talk by Laura has helped me clarify the questions and areas that I will research there. I have placed Kew Gardens on my search list, to check out other talks."

Anne O'Callaghan

is a member of Hatchery Artists based in Toronto, Canada who is interested in the intersection of art and politics. You can hear more about the work of Anne and the other Hatchery Artists by joining the CILIP RPG virtual visit to the Hatchery Artists during their residency and exhibition in Caen Wednesday, 28th June 2023

1.00 to 2.00 pm. Register to join via Zoom at: www.cilip.org.uk/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1725940

Making Connections

VISIT TO

MUSICAL MUSEUM AND LIBRARY BRENTFORD 28.4.23

By Charmaine Bourton



The collection was started in the 1950s by Frank Holland an electronic engineer, who was also interested in music and a good pianist. He saw that self-playing pianos and other similar instruments were beginning to disappear and he wanted a museum of things that worked. The museum was founded in 1963 in a church as the British Piano Museum and was moved to this current building in

2003, and was renamed the Musical Museum. By this time the church roof had begun leaking and threatening to damage the collections and so the owners sold it off for redevelopment as flats. The museum has a collection of 20,000 piano rolls – more than the British Museum. When a piano roll is donated to the British Library it is sent to the Musical Museum. Some of the rolls were recorded by pianists, but it was difficult

to edit the rolls if they made a mistake. The museum's PhD volunteer Dr Joyce Tang showed us a display of a number of items, including a roll created by Igor Stravinsky with his annotations on the roll explaining how it should be played. Different manufacturers had their own ways of making piano rolls, so they were not compatible with all pianos.

A gentleman was tasked with condensing his usual 90-minute



tour of the instruments into half an hour for us. He started off by showing us a cabinet of music boxes invented by Louis Favre in 1789.

We saw several self-playing pianos and could see the piano rolls moving. Some of them had the words printed alongside the notes so that the player could accompany themselves. To change volume, some pianos had levers which the player moved to follow a line on the music thus altering the sound strength as requested by the composer. Most require a player to operate the piano by pedals pumping air into them with their feet which is a particularly unique skill.

Playing boxes were developed which used discs rather than rolls which were easier to duplicate, as the process of creating rolls was very time consuming.

West London was especially known for factories for creating rolls for these pieces.

By the 1890s, self-playing pianos were being developed that could play music that would require three people playing simultaneously. This is a feat not humanly possible.

The Orchestrium c1910 was a combination of a piano, glockenspiel, xylophone, drums, cymbals, and a triangle. It lit up (rather like a disco machine!) It was intended for use in cafés and other public places. They had to have money inserted in them to play and were powered by electricity. It would have been quite a drawback at a time when electric light was a novelty.

We went up to the purpose-built library in two small groups where we

saw the two floors of piano rolls, all catalogued and shelved according to their maker's numbering. This has been the job of the voluntary librarian! Her aim is to have a workshop where she can repair and scan rolls. Rolls are lent out for digitisation purposes but not otherwise unless they have a duplicate of a roll. The hope is to get all rolls digitised, but they will still keep the originals. Some duplicate piano rolls are sold in the shop priced about £3.00 or £4.00: if you are looking for an unusual present!

They also have a collection of 78s, from early His Master's Voice to Gracie Fields. I have been trying to obtain a 78 of Cliff Richard singing "Living Doll" but they don't have one of him! There is also a sheet music collection which the librarian hasn't been able to make a start on yet!

For further information please have a look at Dr Joyce Tang's youtube channel: Finding Pieces.

People



Kim, Joseph, Tom, and Vincent in Port Townsend. The single storey wooden house they lived in is visible between Kim and Joseph. The large brick building between Joseph and Tom was originally the customs house, now the town post office.

PORT OF WELCOME

By Vincent McDonald

We came out of the library and started walking downhill on Harrison towards my house. With my colleague Carole Baker we looked out to Port Townsend Bay, Marrowstone and Whidbey Islands, pine clad hills, and the waterways to the San Juan Islands,

Canada, and the Pacific. 'That is where I am drawn' she said, 'to the water'. I turned around to the right. 'That is where I am drawn' I said, nodding towards the Olympic Mountains, still with snow on their 8,000 ft peaks. It was the first time I had articulated even to myself the love of hills and mountains that had become important in my life and would become more so in the coming months and years.

We were in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, a region of coasts, rivers, rainforests, and spectacular mountains, to stay in the little 'city' of Port Townsend. It would be home for my wife Kim, my sons Joseph and Tom, and me, for four months from late April 1992. I had read in the Library Association Record that the library school in Aberystwyth shared a register with schools in Australia, the USA, and elsewhere, of librarians looking for a job swap. I discussed it with Kim. 'Well, put your name forward and see what comes'. Just a few weeks later a letter arrived, asking would we be interested in a swap with someone in Washington State, USA. We had to get the atlas, as neither of us knew where

that was.

And so began one of those formative experiences that change your life for ever. We could scarcely have found a more perfect place for a young family, if we had drawn up a list of our hopes from around the world. Port Townsend was a little Victorian city of about 7,500 people, on the coast.

A car swap was part of the deal, and there was a leaky tent in the garage for our weekend camping trips. We were getting a wooden single storey house with two bedrooms, a good-sized living room, a nice garden front and back, an easy walk to the library and the downtown shops, and even a log-burning stove. It was in the preserved

Victorian uptown district. The houses were wooden, painted in different colours, each in its own plot, surrounded by grass lawns, with almost no fences, so it all had a very open and comforting feel.

My job was to be one of three qualified librarians in the city library. At home I was area librarian for West Suffolk, a more senior managerial post, so I had to go rather nervously to my boss, Cliff, to see if he would agree; we in Suffolk might seem to be getting the worse of the bargain. But he and his boss, Amanda, the head of Arts and Libraries in Suffolk, found a way that would bring some benefit to Suffolk as well as Port Townsend. One of my team of librarians in Bury St Edmunds was paid via the training budget to act up in my place, giving him good experience; and I was given the task of bringing back twenty-five good ideas for possible adoption in Suffolk. We could go.

We arrived in Seattle at three pm local time, after the nine-hour flight. We were met by Beth De Jarnette, one of the Port Townsend librarians, who drove us 40 miles via Bainbridge Island ferry to our temporary home. We got to the house about 7.15 in the evening. This was 3.15 am back at home, so the exhausted boys went straight to bed. Kim and I knew we should wait up a bit closer to normal bedtime, to help set our bodyclocks. An excuse to light the wood-burning stove. I bought a couple of beers from a bar, we supped them by the fire, and went to bed at 9.30.

Port Townsend had a slightly hippy feel to it. The Victorian homes were built in the 1880s when the town was a contender for hosting the main railroad terminus for the Pacific Northwest. While Seattle was eventually chosen, Port Townsend was left with dozens of beautiful houses that survive to this

day. Across the road was one of them, Heritage House, a much larger wooden house than ours. The owner on some afternoons liked to ride his penny farthing bicycle up and down the road.

Port Townsend Library was (and is) an independent authority, with the 1913 Carnegie building managed by a board of trustees, funded by the city council. Open 48 hours a week, it had a stock of 25,000 volumes and 98,900 issues, using a version of Browne. There was a card catalogue, but for requests for books not in stock, the system was superior to the UK's more laborious and slow inter-library loans arrangements of the time. We had access to regional collections through Western Library Network's LaserCat CD-Rom system, so when looking for items to satisfy a request, I might call them in from Spokane, Washington, Eugene, Oregon, or Boise, Idaho.

I said in a letter to Bury Library staff that the practices in Port Townsend were a mix of the ancient and the modern; a good bibliographic access to other libraries' collections, and a poor access to their own. This criticism was later quoted in a paper to the Port Townsend authority making the case for computerising the catalogue. Port Townsend went over to an online circulation system two years later.

The staff in the library were friendly and supportive. We were frequently invited to their homes. On our first weekend there was a formal lunch gathering of the trustees and senior staff, where the Chair gave a speech of welcome. A couple of weeks later I was invited to 'Breakfast with the Mayor'. Breakfast turned out to be coffee and some rather delicious doughnuts.

Sometimes I worked spells on the public desk, and chatted with my

colleagues who stamped out the books and took the returns. There were a couple of paid assistants, but most were volunteers, thirty of them, while the backroom staff who did enquiry work, stock selection, and other vaguely 'professional' tasks were salaried librarians. One day I was chatting to the staff, when a man sitting at one of the public tables, with his back to me, spoke: 'That is a North London accent'. I was a bit picky in reply: 'Well, Northwest London'. Then, my manners reasserted, I complimented him on his discernment. He turned out to have an extraordinary gift that could place accents all over the English-speaking world. My accent certainly aroused curiosity. Most people liked it. Once I answered the phone; 'Hello, Port Townsend Library, can I help you?' There was a pause at the other end, then a woman's voice: 'Oh... just keep talking!'

When we first landed in the States, we had to go through a visa check at the airport. The official said just one thing to me. 'You know your boys will not be able to go to school here?' 'That is fine', I said. A few days after we arrived Kim rang the local schools. 'Yes, bring them along'. Because of the age difference, Joseph twelve, Tom a month short of nine, they went to different schools. Depending on date of birth, children in the US begin school up to a year older than in England. So English children have a head start. When Tom came home from his first day, Kim asked him how he had found it. 'Pimps' he said. After a few days, the head of Joseph's school called him to his office and suggested that he go into the year above. Joseph was reluctant at first, because he had made a few friends, and he liked the teacher. But he could see he was wasting his time, and he went up.

People (Continued)



Feel the Sea Breeze in Port Townsend, Washington

The boys went on two different buses to school. Just a short walk from us, a long yellow bus would pull up and the little queue of children would board. It was touching to see these buses, so well-known from comics and TV. It was like being in our own little movie, a rather delightful dream of sunny suburbia, to see our sons climb aboard.

In the afternoon of their first day, Tom arrived home via the bus. We were just starting to worry about what had held Joseph up at school when the phone rang. It was a teacher, ringing from a village outside of town. Joseph had got on the wrong bus. Fortunately, the teacher had to come back into school that evening, by car, so she dropped him at home. He didn't seem as perturbed by this as we were.

Carol meanwhile was enjoying life in

Bury St Edmunds. She wrote: 'This area is very beautiful...it is wonderful to see the abbey ruins, medieval churches, centuries old timbered houses, coming as I do from a town where the oldest buildings date from the end of Queen Victoria's reign. I appreciate the lack of strip development and suburban sprawl...the gardens are the loveliest I've ever seen'. Carol took some ideas back with her, besides the conviction to push for a better cc and issue systems for Port Townsend. She redesigned the Inter Library Loans and Referred Enquiry forms using the Suffolk models.

In November 2016 the Guardian ran a double page article by travel writer Kevin Rushby. He had been on a 'Quest to find the funkiest little town in America'. After a year of research, he decided the likeliest possibilities were on the West Coast. He

headed north from California, through Idaho, Oregon, and up to Washington State, visiting 14 shortlisted towns. Then, 'Time was running out, I caught the ferry west to the Olympic peninsula and pulled in at Port Townsend. I got off the boat and walked round and knew I had found it. There were cafés, bars, bookshops, and great architecture. There was the ocean and the mountains. It had it all'. And Kim, Joseph, Tom, and I were lucky enough to have lived there.

Vincent McDonald

Vincent is the author of 'Honey from Dorabjees' (2013), about two post-retirement years working as a volunteer in India.

People

RABBIT HUTCH AND DANCE FLOOR

By Genny Andrews

It is 35 years since my first short article about working on a mobile library as a library assistant. However, some memories never fade. In 1960 we moved house to live in the village of Sambourne, near Alcester in Warwickshire. When our son was of school age, I made an appointment with Derek Thompson the librarian of the Alcester Region of Warwickshire County Library, to say that I was available to work part time. When I told him that I had passed the Entrance exam of the then Library Association, he did not hesitate and took me on board. The staff totalled no more than six including Fred the driver of the mobile library.

Work to me was always pleasurable, none more so than when I was told that I would be working on the mobile library, route A. There were ten routes, five a week and route A was the least busy. It covered the areas around Alcester and the low-lying market gardening area around Evesham. It was known for fruit, yellow plums, also vegetables and asparagus. This meant that there was seasonal work for local people.

The mobile library or 'van' as we called it, would be parked outside the

branch library every morning and Fred and the assistant for the day would be back and forth getting it ready. Those were the days when book issue was by ticket system and the trays of tickets were carefully taken on board. The bookshelves were tidied, and new stock added. Then there was the important pile of requested books. We always had to take our food and drink of course. I remember that a small pork pie, an apple and a Mars bar were my basic fare. I had to take our young son D'Arcy a few times when my husband could not take time off to look after him during the school holidays. There were also times that Dragon, our long-haired standard sized dachshund had to come too along with his water and biscuits. The librarian, Derek also had to take his dachshund when his wife was out for the day. With everything ready, Fred shut the door and we were waved off.

Work for the day was predictable unless a tree had been blown across the road or torrential rain had caused flooding. But Fred coped with any problems and news of any diversion had to be made by a reader (yes, we called the users 'readers' in those days) who

would 'phone ahead to spread the news of the diversion. We were often invited in to have a cup of tea or coffee. This was fine, but later in the morning caused us the problem of 'wanting to go' and not a toilet in sight! So, this was when Fred had to park close to a grassy verge by a five-bar gate or a gap in the hedge and out we got. This was before the days when we might strike because conditions were 'totally unacceptable!'.

One of our first stops was right outside the cottage of a retired schoolteacher. We sat opposite her either side of a very large fireplace with logs piled high nearby. Miss 'X' sat in her cosy chair, legs apart showing baggy knickers that covered her knees. Further along the village street there was a very well-kept house the front door of which opened onto the pavement. One day our reader from there, invited us in to see her large front room the walls of which had just been redecorated, was it magnolia? Our next stop could be at a cottage where I would open the door, take the trug of books off the table and change them. Sometimes there would be a note for a specific topic. This could be dodgy as for example, I would check a cookery book

People (Continued)

for marmalade making only to find that someone from the 'help yourself club' had nicked the page. I had to get used to collecting books from unusual places and Fred pointed to a disused rabbit hutch where the books were hidden behind the weatherproof end.

Our lunchtime stop on route A was at a caravan where we would catch up with news from that neck of the woods. Their toilet was in a little shed with no running water and four of us in this small caravan was a bit of a squash, but we were all happy. Fred had to turn the van round which took some skill, and we were off again. One afternoon stop was at the smallholding of a mother and her middle-aged son. Family smallholdings were not unusual and were about 5-24 acres. Sometimes we did not meet the mother whom the son explained was 'gilding the lily'. That meant bleaching her grey hair blond. Mrs W. lived in a cottage with a river at the bottom of her garden, she looked forward to our visits. We always thought that it must be a solitary sort of life there in the darker winter days. Of course, we all look forward to our holidays, but who would drive the van when Fred was on holiday? Step up Pam a staff member who was used to driving horse boxes and David, my husband who worked in agricultural research. I set off with him one day and at a certain stop, the van needed to be turned round in a very tight spot. The readers were gathered ready and saw that the van was not being turned round in the usual way. When David opened the door, they were eager to ask me about the new



driver. "What was he like and did I get on with him?" I was asked. David found that he was treated with great respect in this unfamiliar job and realised that the readers really appreciated this service.

As Derek and Fred rated me first class for this work, I used to work on other routes when needed. A few of these were very different to being in the work-a-day of area route A in which I had started. These houses in an affluent tree-lined area were impressive with well-kept gardens and cars parked on the drives. Fred explained that we were soon to have a toilet stop. This was at a rather imposing house where the reader was waiting for us. We had to go upstairs and open the door that faced us. Well, this bathroom was the largest that I had ever seen. These days, I am sure that it would be an ensuite bedroom.

I had a big surprise one day when we stopped by a large house where we never saw a soul. Fred pointed to a brick building some way down the garden. It was a very impressive spacious outdoor toilet. On opening the door, I spied a large basket. On taking it back to the van I found not only several books, but

2 small bottles of fruit drink and a packet of top-notch biscuits. There were often requested books for this reader.

All our readers were pleased to see us and at Christmas we were showered with seasonal presents. At one house, there were two envelopes by the pile of books. Fred pulled over before the next stop and he gave me mine and we opened them. I gasped to find a £10 note, but this was no surprise to Fred. I cannot finish this section, without including a Christmas surprise. At one busy stop, I volunteered to go to collect a missing book. The charming elderly father opened the door of a splendiferous cottage and invited me in. I had not seen the large bunch of mistletoe under which I was held in a tight embrace and kissed. I was then given the missing book and returned to the van hoping that my face was not red.

Of course, there were times when I was not on duty and on my return, the readers asked if I had been unwell. On one occasion, my answer was that it had been our wedding anniversary. This sparked off some questions, "did I have a white wedding?" I said that I had worn a dress in ivory brocade and so on. Wouldn't it be nice to see a photo suggested someone. Well, I am sure that you can guess the rest. I was very touched by their interest but then, life for some people, especially the elderly living alone, welcomed something out of the ordinary. However, they seemed to be happy even if life was sometimes a bit of a struggle.

There was a time when the van had to

'stand in' for the branch library when, on going downstairs to open the door after lunch one day, I noticed a large crack down the wall to the adjoining property and a fault in the floor. This was caused by demolition of the adjoining building. A senior county architect soon arrived and declared the building unsafe, and Derek put a large notice on the door. A local paper was soon on to the news and the fact that I had been the member of staff who discovered the damage was recorded. Our bow windowed library was a very old building with no foundations. It was closed for three and a half months. There were plans to build a new Alcester Regional Library. In the meantime, the van was to be parked on a nearby site and used as a branch from 5.30-7pm each evening and 9.30am-12.30 on Saturdays. Staff had access to part of the branch library by the side door to keep the service going.

When the new Alcester Regional Library opened, it had a special section for junior readers, a new reference and study section, tables, and chairs. Photos of this long time awaited new library appeared in the press. One picture featured me sitting at a table, posing like a model with my hand resting on a large, opened book on the table. I remember that the dress that I had made was blue patterned and my sandals were navy. The eye-catching floor was made of wood, just right for dancing on thought a reader one evening. Just as I was about to take a book from a shelf, he came up to me, put his arms round me and whilst loudly lah-lah-ing, the 'Blue Danube' waltz tune

started to dance around. Well, while I was trying to free myself, Derek, who had witnessed the incident from his desk, came over and asked the guy to let me go. He continued to chat to him and explained to me after that he was a bit eccentric and quite harmless. He had told Derek that I had 'nifty legs!' a somewhat disparaging remark but who cared. Of course, there were times when the van was out and about, that things didn't go just right and so it was that on one extremely hot afternoon the van had a flat tyre and Fred pulled onto the forecourt of a small country garage. I was told that the van would have to be jacked up and that I could get out if I liked. I decided to stay and sat on the floor near the door and eat my Mars bar. However, it was beginning to melt and sitting at an angle, I felt rather sort of seasick. All in a day's work as one might say! This was in 1968 and I had to say good-bye to my work as a library assistant as I was due to start studying at Birmingham Library School. As a new student, I had to report to a tutor in room 6 on floor 3. I became a chartered librarian and started at Solihull Central Library as deputy lending librarian in the summer of 1970.

Later, my husband took a post at Cambridge University and had to commute. I wanted a slice of the action so asked him to find me a job in the local paper. But the only job that he could find was temporary for six weeks and I had to commute until we moved house to the Cambridge area. It was NHS Information Management Librarian for Cambridge Health Authority. I knew nothing about

the subject, only that it was an essential service. There was no sleeping on this job which demanded continuity. Being over 50 I found myself on an extremely steep learning curve but when the post was advertised in the professional press, I beat the other applicants and so became NHS Information Management Librarian for the county of Cambridgeshire. I could not believe it as some applicants already worked for the NHS. Owing to dodgy health, I decided to retire in 1993 while I was still at the top of my game. However, very soon after, I was offered a post as consultant by the librarian of Nurse Education based at Hinchinbrook Hospital. This was an opportunity just too good to pass. What a package he offered, all with no detriment to my pension, a free car parking space at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge where I would be based, a pass to the staff restaurant and hours to suit myself because of my health. So, another steep learning curve especially as I had to cope with different classification schemes for the various libraries. There was only one maternity hospital and that was The Rosie in Cambridge. But hey! I seemed to be thriving on challenges. What a working life, I would not have missed it for the world!

I now live in a Care Home as I need 24hour care but in one corner of my suite, I have my work-station which my son set up for me. My brain is still wired for action, and if I need to find an answer, or understand something, I search and search knowing that the information must be out there somewhere!

RPG Tours and Events



CILIP RPG Annual General Meeting 2023

Date: Tuesday, 20th June 2023 at 2.00 pm

Venue: Royal Philatelic Society London, 15 Abchurch Lane, London EC4N 7BW

Description: This will be a “blended” event combining attendees in the room at the Royal London Philatelic Society with others on Zoom. For those attending in-person the AGM will be followed by a tour of the Royal Philatelic Society 1863 building with refreshments.

14.00 – 15.00 AGM

15.00 – 16.00 See the RPSL building

The Society is located in the heart of the old City of London. Abchurch Lane, first recorded as Abbechurche Lane in 1291, is a narrow street linking Cannon Street and King William Street.

How to get there: The nearest underground station is Bank, about 200 metres away. If you have any questions please get in touch with Ian Orton, the CILIP RPG Chair. Ian can be reached via Email ianorton5@gmail.com

[Register for the CILIP RPG AGM, in-person or via Zoom](#)



CILIP Residential Weekend 2023

Date: Friday 6th to Monday 9th October 2023

Venue: Gladstone's Library, Church Lane, Hawarden, Flintshire CH5 3DF

Description: This year's CILIP Residential Weekend organised by CILIP RPG with support from CILIP Cymru Wales is being held in Gladstone's Library in Hawarden, North Wales (9 miles from Chester) from 6th to 9th October 2023.

The weekend will open from 2.00pm on the Friday. Dinner will be followed by an evening of live music with a quiz to allow participants to socialise and get to know one another. We plan to have local artists, librarians, information professionals, academics and authors as guides, workshop leaders and guest speakers. The weekend finishes after breakfast on the Monday morning.

[CILIP Residential Weekend 2023 booking form](#)



Library @ the Lightbox

Date: Friday, 16th June 2023 from 2.00 to 4.00 pm

Venue: 1 The Glass Works, Barnsley S70 1GW

Description: Y&H library visits are back! All are welcome to join a tour around the amazing facilities of Library @ The Lightbox in Barnsley. We will hear about the work of Barnsley Public Libraries, who have recently become an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. We'll also have some cake, coffee and a chat, and report on the activities and finances of the CILIP Yorkshire & Humberside regional member network at our AGM.



Virtual visit to the Traversée Residency and Exhibition

Date: Wednesday, 28th June 2023 from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Venue: Original: Martin', CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Description: The Traversée Residency and Exhibition has been organised by Hatchery Artists. Artists from UK, France and Canada will explore the themes of home, place, transience and notions of 'Outside'. You are invited to visit the exhibition and residency online in Caen, France in June 2023.

For more information: This online visit has been organised by David Byrne of Hatchery Artists working with u3a, CILIP East Midlands and CILIP RPG. There is no charge but you need to register to reserve your place.

Contact: For further information, please contact: David Byrne 07850 791002

This year's CILIP Residential Weekend organised by CILIP RPG with support from CILIP Cymru Wales is being held in Gladstone's Library in Hawarden, North Wales (9 miles from Chester) from 6th to 9th October 2023. The weekend will open with registration from 4.00pm on the Friday. Dinner will be followed by an evening of live music with a quiz to allow participants to socialise and get to know one another. We plan to have local artists, librarians, information professionals, academics and authors as guides, workshop leaders and guest speakers. The weekend finishes after breakfast on the Monday morning. Members of CILIP Cymru are eligible to apply for financial support from the Kathleen Cooks Fund. Please note that spaces are strictly limited, and we expect them to fill up quickly. For more information and to book your place please fill in the booking form. You will be sent information on how to pay the £50 per person non-refundable deposit. Full payment must be made by 30 June 2023



Retired Professionals Group

#WeAreCILIP

#WeAreRPG