



ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT LIBRARIES

ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2014-2015



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OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

Officers

The following officers served during the last year:

Dr Robert Anderson, President
Emma Marigliano, Chairwoman (Portico Library)
Hugh Pierce, Treasurer (Ipswich Institute)
Kay Easson, Secretary (Newcastle Lit & Phil)

Committee Members

The following served on the Committee 2014-2015:

Peter Ford (Bath Royal Literary & Scientific Institution)
Louisa Yates (Gladstone's Library)
Martyn Everett (Saffron Walden Town Library Society)
Margaret Mackay (Highgate Literary & Scientific Institution)
Carol Barstow (Bromley House, Nottingham)
Geoffrey Forster (Individual Member)

Co-opted

Christiane Kroebel (Individual Member)
Bob Draper (Bath Royal Literary & Scientific Institution)

Committee Meetings 2014-2015

Three committee meetings were held in the 2014-2015 period: at Bromley House Nottingham, The Bishopsgate Institute London, and at the Whitby Lit & Phil. Thanks to the host institutions.

NEW CHAIRWOMAN

After more than 25 dedicated years as Chairman of the AIL Geoffrey Forster stepped down to pursue more leisurely commitments and the Committee unanimously elected Emma Marigliano, Librarian of The Portico Library, to the Chair. Emma has served as a committee member for 15 years approximately and was happy to take the pressure from Geoffrey, who had expressed his hope that someone would offer to relieve him of his duties. He is a tough act to follow but Emma is confident that she can bring new ideas that will ensure that the AIL keeps up with the ever progressive 21st century whilst retaining what matters most about our institutions, collections and ambitions. She looks forward to working with the committee and she and the secretary, Kay Easson, plan a Johnson and Boswell type trek around our member institutions from Lands End to John O'Groats and across the Irish Sea.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Association remains stable currently standing at 32 institutions and 9 individuals. The English library in Tangier has joined as an Associate and the committee is determined to encourage many more institutions as well as individuals to join the Association.

MEMBERS' NEWS

In future years we would like to include short reports from as many member institutions as possible. This year we can highlight the following:

The Devon and Exeter Institution

The Institution has gone through a busy year and of paramount importance has been the commencement of the major work on restoring the roof of the Libraries. A temporary scaffold has been erected over the building and work is now commencing in stripping the roof so that our Architect can assess how we will repair the roof timbers which are broken. Fund raising continues although we have major funding from English Heritage we have also applied to Heritage Lottery fund and been awarded a phase 2 application for an HLF grant to not only repair the roof but also to look after our collections. The round of this litany of work we have received the news that Exeter University who have supported us for forty years are now modifying their support by removing the Librarian and administrative support as from February next year. As you will all know this quite a whole to fill financially and if anyone has had to meet similar problems and has any ideas we would be glad to hear them. This is brief and concise due to restrictions in space but further information is available on our web page.

John Manley-Tucker, Chairman

Ipswich Institute

The past year has sadly seen a significant fall in book-borrowing, really beginning to catch up with the general decline in public library loans that has been evident for a number of years. At the same time, and for the first year since 2008, we had a net gain of members through 2014. There is evidence here that members are joining more for the courses and the programme of talks and trips we offer than for our library facility.

We are part way through our fourth biennial literary competition (the £2,000 New Angle Prize for East Anglian influenced literature), attracting a record field of entries. Our Shortlist Showcase, which all six shortlisted authors will attend, is in the Institute's Reading Room on 1st July and we are delighted to bring together Mark Cocker, Esther Freud, Ronald Blythe, Kate Worsley, Alex Monroe and Jason Hewitt to what should be a fascinating evening.

Like so many towns and cities, Ipswich has a town centre in need of intensive care or even resuscitation. The fact that, despite its central location, the Institute has a membership which is holding up (and even growing slightly) says something about its attractiveness. I am convinced that the Institute should and will be part of an evolution towards a 'mixed-economy' town centre - with more emphasis on leisure and learning and less on retail.

Hugh Pierce, General Manager

Literary & Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne

The Lit & Phil continues to attract some three hundred new members year on year, but like many similar institutions, it still faces the challenges of retention.

The events programme is thriving with lectures, readings, exhibitions, theatrical performances, concerts, and book launches taking place throughout the year. In November we recruited a new Music Librarian, and we continue to develop opportunities for volunteers to assist with the life of the Society.

Thanks to funding from the Northern Rock Foundation, we will be enhancing our audience development work during 2015. This will include a crime writing festival, a programme of children's events as part of Books on Tyne, Newcastle's Book Festival, and a series of prestigious lectures. Social media, particularly Facebook, is being successfully used not only to publicise events but also to highlight gems of the collections on a weekly basis.

In terms of building work our priority is to deal with the issue of physical access and we await the outcome of grant applications.

Kay Easson, Librarian

The London Library

A good start to the new year from April 2014 with the 23rd London Library Annual Lecture delivered by Professor Sarah Churchwell at the Hay Festival with a great many more of our members participating in various talks, discussions etc.

In May the Library won a 2014 RIBA London Regional Award in recognition of the architectural excellence of the first stage of our capital project, from the major changes seen (and heard!) by all using the Library concluding with the refurbishment of the Reading Room. We were also one of four projects shortlisted for the RIBA London English Heritage Award for Preserving the Historical Environment.

Since then we have been focussing inwards on getting to grips with RDA and also introducing Ex Libris' Primo discovery tool that we have called Catalyst. The latter has been very warmly received by our members as they find more and more resources to mine as well as access to

the content of many more journals through simple keyword searching. We are offering weekly (and sometimes daily) induction sessions to our members who are less certain of navigating such new resources.

RDA is being introduced in order to remain compatible with other libraries exchanging records. It has been quite a change in thinking for our Bibliographic Services team but they are all forging ahead with the new system although earlier records will not be tinkered with again.

We are now focussing on our 175th anniversary due in 2016. It is a major milestone for us and will underpin much of the fundraising still going on to help bring the rest of the building phases to fruition.

And finally, you may have seen in various reviews of Haruki Murakami's new novel The strange library that many of the illustrations of endpapers and other pages showing signs of wear and damage were selected from Library book stock! Not the first time we've made an appearance in a novel, but certainly an unusual one.

Gill Turner

Plymouth Athenaeum Library

Considerable progress has been made in tackling our agreed work programme. Shelves have been re-arranged to make better use of the space available. Details of the book stock have been entered into a computer. A limited amount for book binding has been financed. Two presentations have been given to members on the content and availability of the library and other interested persons have been introduced to our library; the publicity has stimulated more donations to the library stock. Meanwhile more progress has been made with the organisation and cataloguing of archives.

Extra funds have been raised by the sale of surplus items and also by a 'Book Bring and Buy' scheme for visitors to our building. The Athenaeum is participating in the Plymouth History Festival in May 2015. The library is actively involved and hopes to benefit from increased publicity.

Sue Byrne

Tavistock Subscription Library

This year has seen several events in the town which have included the library and contributed to raising our membership to the magic 100. The trips to Exeter Cathedral Library and the Exeter Institute were most successful and further trips for 2015 are being planned. The writing competition helped raise our profile in 2014 and is being held again this year.

2014 was a successful “trading year” for the library. Income has held up well with increases in subscriptions and donations and being able to keep a tight control on expenditure.

Simon Dell

The Working Class Movement Library

*The Working Class Movement Library has had its busiest ever year. Totals for users of the Reading Room, drop-in visitors, people having tours, telephone enquiries, email enquiries and attendees at events were all higher in 2014 than the previous year. We have a full complement of volunteers and continue to have a waiting list of people seeking work experience. In November 2014 our fundraising event ‘Radical Readings and Salford Stories’, hosted by the University of Salford, sold out an 800-seater hall in a matter of days - very many people encountered the Library for the first time as a result of their eagerness to see our actor-supporters Sheila Hancock, Mike Joyce and Maxine Peake. The Library’s Peterloo kerchief has featured twice on television – in the documentary *The Real Mill* on Channel 4 and in Amanda Vickery’s *Suffragettes Forever* on BBC2. In October the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded five-year funding of £95,000 towards new acquisitions (and accompanying audience engagement work) to the Library in partnership with the People’s History Museum/Labour History Archive. This aims to build on the complementary strengths of both collections to acquire material related to movements and campaigns for the franchise, from the build-up to the Peterloo protest in 1819 to the lowering of the voting age in 1969. HLF has also awarded the Library just under £10,000 for a WW1 project with a focus on conscientious objectors, the anti-war movement and women’s peace efforts, including an exhibition, online learning resources and a ‘Living Histories’ performance about James Hudson, a Salford conscientious objector, which will tour local schools and also be staged in the Library.*

Lynette Cawthra

COMMUNICATION

The Committee is determined to improve communication amongst members as well as with the outside world via newsletters, the website and social media. The AIL directory is in the process of being updated.

RESEARCH

Kirsten Loach from the Portico Library is undertaking an AHRC funded PhD research placement around sustainability and the relevance of Independent Libraries, and will be in touch with member libraries in due course.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Association is working towards collaboration and partnerships with relevant organisations and institutions. The Association of Literary Homes and Museums, for example, has requested that the AIL be represented at its 2015 Conference.

Martyn Everett is the Association's representative on the Historic Libraries Forum. The Forum will be holding its annual conference on Thursday 12 November at Ravensbourne in Greenwich. The subject will focus on various aspects of digitisation. Speakers and other details are still in the process of being finalised.

In November 2014, the New Library Professionals Network held an event at the Portico Library showcasing independent libraries. The event was sponsored by the CILIP North West Member Network and the Association of Independent Libraries.

The aim for the day was to put a spotlight on the varied work of information professionals in the special/independent library sector, as well as the hidden gems that exist within archives and special collections. The speakers brought their work to life and provided a fascinating insight to a sector that is often overlooked on library courses. The network welcomed a mixed audience from the sector and beyond, at different stages of their library careers who hopefully all learned something new

The speakers were Kirsten Loach, who gave an introduction to both the AIL and the history of the Portico Library; Kathy Whalen Moss from Chetham's Library who shared the delights of the Belle Vue archive; Louisa Yates from Gladstone's Library, and Rebekah Taylor, archivist at the University of the Creative Arts

Both Kirsten and Louisa explained how independent libraries need to be dynamic in order to fulfil their original aims of contributing to education whilst meeting the needs of funding. This is carried out by becoming more outward looking e.g. inviting the public in to view the collections, offering a residential service and hosting events such as book launches. In addition to these endeavours both see the importance of making the collection more accessible whether it be through digitisation, transcribing collections or through social media platforms.

Kathy brought Belle Vue gardens to life with her vivid descriptions and lively retelling of its history interspersed with a number of pictures. She explained that working with volunteers was a key part of why Chetham's received funding, whether that be students wanting experience or work placements. In addition to this external involvement, Kathy and her team approached Manchester Art School to collaborate on an exhibition and Chetham's Library also use social media platforms to promote this and other collections. This project has not only created new partnerships but has also strengthened their links in the community.

Rebekah explained how archives are intrinsic in her institution and not just for History students. She asserted that collaboration between librarians and archivists is key as academic literacy in teaching blurs with archives and librarianship. Furthermore, as work

with the archives is not embedded within courses it is vital to collaborate with librarians in order to find a way to show students how to find collections.

ANNUAL MEETING 2014

2014: Gladstone's Library, Hawarden, Wales

The 25th Annual Meeting was held at Gladstone's Library, the UK's only Prime Ministerial Library. AIL members gathered in Wales from 20th to 22nd June 2014 for a series of talks and discussions on the theme of 'Securing the Future'. As a residential library that has no secured income, costs close to a million pounds a year to run and sees more people in the café than the collections, Gladstone's Library is more attuned than most to the close relationship between intellectual pursuits and commercial activity. The weekend was intended to discuss the often-thorny issue of the latter supporting the former.

After a welcome by Louisa Yates, the Library's Director of Collections and Research, President of the AIL, Robert Anderson, gave his annual address. Robert's talk returned to the decline of local authority libraries, a topic begun at the Linen Hall the previous year. More and more public libraries are staffing their libraries with volunteers, in an effort to preserve service in an age of scarce financial support, and these libraries often struggle; Robert suggested that perhaps the AIL could offer professional advice as a gesture of support. Moving onto Gladstone (inevitable given the surroundings) and the Grand Old Man's committed belief that libraries should remain closed on Sundays, Robert noted that this belief that seems to have stuck. Museums are packed on Sundays while libraries are often closed. Might libraries engage more fully with the public with extended opening hours?

Robert's address closed by turning to the AIL's outgoing Chairman, Geoffrey Forster. As Robert noted, Geoffrey has worked tirelessly on behalf of the AIL for twenty-five years. On behalf of all members of the AIL, the warmest thanks are due to Geoffrey.

The weekend continued with talks on both the collections at Gladstone's Library and the challenge of digitising those collections, by Gary Butler and Louisa Yates. After lunch, there was a roundtable on the topic of 'Keeping an Independent Library Open – and Independent'. Staff from every section of Gladstone's Library – Development, Operations, Finance and Marketing – joined delegates for a roundtable discussion on the practical elements of running an independent library. Fundraising, coffee shops, tours and donations may seem far removed from the primary function of libraries and archives but increasingly they are the sources of the funds that keep an independent library open. The roundtable discussed various ways of embedding fundraising activities into the library setting, and even using the coffee shop as a way to initially attract people who can then be inducted into the collections.

On Saturday afternoon the delegates were privileged to be granted access to W. E. Gladstone's study, known as the Temple of Peace. Preserved as it was when he was alive and containing many of his most treasured books, the Temple is normally closed to the public and the AIL is very grateful to the Gladstone family for giving us the opportunity.

Warden of Gladstone's Library Peter Francis closed the weekend by speaking on the centrality of commercial activity when trying to secure literate, thoughtful, public spaces for future generations. His talk, 'Gladstone's Living Heritage and the Future of an Independent Library', sought to address many of the fears around the 'intrusion' of commerce into libraries. Elaborating on the themes of the roundtable, Peter suggested that by facing the need for funding head-on, libraries and archives could retain control, ensuring that the money raised stays in the hands of independent libraries and their supporters rather than external consortia.

Gladstone's Library was delighted to host the event, and thanks once again those of you who made the journey.

Louisa Yates

Presidential Address 2014

AIL Presidential Address, Gladstone's Library, Hawarden. 21 June 2014 Robert G W Anderson

Today is a first for the Association of Independent Libraries because this is the first time we have ventured into Wales, even if we're not on the Celtic side of Offa's Dyke. It would have been difficult to have done this before Gladstone's Library joined, because it is the only Welsh library to have become a member. That leads to the question as to how many independent libraries are there in Wales? How many have there been? North Wales does not always have a good press when the question of literacy in the past is examined. The Rev John Davis of Nantglyn, writing about his childhood, thundered (and I won't attempt the accent), "from the years 1780 to 1790, the people were sitting in pagan darkness and ignorance, and all, great and small, lying in wickedness... There were very few in the parish who could read at all; and those who could, were rather high people who had received some English schooling."

A book I find extremely useful in providing institutional statistics about nineteenth century independent teaching institutions is John Hudson's *The History of Adult Education* of 1851. In it, he writes, "The number of adult evening schools in nine counties [of Wales]... is one

hundred and six, affording education to one thousand two hundred and twenty-eight pupils above fifteen years of age." That doesn't sound too many to me, the population of Wales at the time being 1.15 million. Or, only just over one in a thousand was taking advantage of institutes and subscription libraries. In fact, there were not many of them. Wales possessed just twelve in 1851, and the largest library, at Wrexham, held only 2,700 volumes. Let's compare books available to the public in the capital cities of the United Kingdom. According to Hudson, London had 145,575 volumes, Edinburgh 43,300, Dublin 24,100, and Cardiff a mere 1080. I give you these figures not to denigrate efforts in Victorian Wales to provide educational facilities for the masses, but to indicate the context for the remarkable gift William Ewart Gladstone made in 1889 which led to 32,000 of his books creating the basis of this Library.

A question I am sure you are all desperately asking is, what is the potential for the AIL to gain further members in Wales? I have found this very difficult to ascertain and I am sure that there are people here who could provide a significantly better answer than I can. Nearly all of the twelve bodies listed by Hudson have ceased to exist. The only one that certainly does is the Swansea Philosophical and Literary Society, founded in 1835, and now called the Royal Institution of South Wales. But as far as I can tell, its library and museum collections are inextricably tied in with those of the publically-funded Swansea Museum and I am unclear about their ownership. When I give my annual report, I usually give hints as to what the AIL might undertake in the future. So here I offer a challenge: can we discover, systematically, what independent libraries currently exist in Wales?

Well, we are in one of them and in the short time we have been here we have discovered that Gladstone's Library is a very substantial institution which has remarkable collections, is housed in a wonderful building, and, moreover, serves breakfast. Significantly, it is a library which is able to provide research facilities for visiting scholars working in its areas of strength. I expect many of us have been asking the question, Why this is our first visit? This is an especially pertinent question as I have been told that Gladstone's Library is the only residential library in the United Kingdom. That I would have to dispute. If being residential means that you can eat and sleep in it, practically every library I have experienced has offered me those facilities, though perhaps on a less formal basis than here. At this point, and having **officially** slept and dined extremely well, I would like to take this opportunity to

thank most warmly the Warden of Gladstone's Library, Peter Francis, who will be addressing us tomorrow, and especially Louisa Yates, Director of Collections and Research who, with her staff, has organised this weekend for us.

Last year I talked about the decline of local authority libraries, and I don't wish to drop the subject just because I spoke about it at the Linen Hall Library in Belfast twelve months ago. Many local authorities have been accepting offers from unpaid volunteers to run their libraries. Google 'libraries' and 'volunteers' and you will find that there are 11,900,000 results. Perhaps as many as four hundred and twenty five local libraries in England and Wales are now being run by volunteers rather than by local authority staff. We might think that when local authorities hand over their libraries to volunteers, they are de-nationalizing, or at least, de-local-authoritizing them. But as far as I can judge, very few have been handed over in their entirety. In most cases, buildings and book-stock remain in the hands of town and county councils. In fact I could only find one, Steeple Claydon Library, in Buckinghamshire, which was passed over lock, stock and barrel to its volunteers, and that was in 2007. Perhaps some of you know of others. It is clear that many of the volunteer-run libraries are struggling to survive, and some have had to close, even though they have few, if any, salaries to pay. This is a desperate situation, and thinking about it, it struck me that perhaps the AIL could be in a position to offer professional advice to these volunteer-run public libraries which are finding things difficult. This should not be considered as assisting rival bodies. As I have said before, I believe that maintaining the health of the library system as a whole is in the interest of all. Perhaps Steeple Claydon Library and its like might even be considered as potential members of the Association of Independent Libraries.

I am now going to do something very dangerous in this building. I am going to talk about William Ewart Gladstone, about public libraries at the end of the nineteenth century, and about freedom of access to them. Gladstone was a great intellectual of his age. I have to say, in parentheses, that this country has not been in the habit of electing Prime Ministers who have intellectual leanings. Perhaps the most recent one was Harold Wilson, who had two periods as Prime Minister, from 1964 to 1970, and from 1974 to 1976. On one of the Gladstone Library websites the point is made that this is the only British prime-ministerial library in existence. Our sensible attitude should be "thank goodness for that!". It is worrying to think what might, or might not, be found on the shelves of some of our post-

WWII prime ministers. I daresay that Lord Home's ancestors took the *Gentleman's Magazine*, I suppose that Edward Heath's collection might be strong on yachting and John Major's on cricket. But none of these would compare with Gladstone's.

Gladstone's own library was large and serious and it the basis of where we are now. He was not simply a collector of books – he devoured them voraciously. As his private secretary Edward Hamilton wrote of his master in 1881, "I doubt whether any public man ever read one tenth part of the amount he does." Gladstone moved in the library world with confidence and expertise, it has been said. He had much to say about the shelving, housing and storage of books, and even of mobile shelving, library planning and administration, the necessity of careful classification, and the need to provide adequate catalogues, on the purchase of books, and on budgeting and binding. [Jagger, p.xviii] Gladstone was a member of the first committee of the London Library, one of our members and founded in 1841.

As well as his passion for books, Gladstone had a passion for religion. His views could be fierce. In 1838 he wrote *The State in its Relations with the Church*, arguing that England had neglected its duty to the Anglican Church. He said that since the Church possessed a monopoly of religious truth, Nonconformists and Roman Catholics should be excluded from all government jobs. His views did modify with age, however, and he moved from a High Church authoritarian view to one with a more evangelical outlook, in which he became guided by the inspiration he gleaned from the Bible.

This did not ameliorate some of Gladstone's attitudes which certainly to us appear extreme. The reason I am considering Gladstone in relation to libraries and religion is because it led to his insistence that libraries should remain closed on Sundays. He consistently voted in Parliament against a change in the law, alongside bishops and Sabbatarians who, convinced that God had ordained the Sabbath to be a day of rest and that nothing should occur on that day except churchgoing and the reading of religious texts. This law was the Sunday Observance Act of 1781 which declared that any place of entertainment or debate on the Sabbath for which admission was charged could be declared a disorderly house. Though not obviously referring to libraries, the Act acted to encourage the Lord's Day Observance Society to have all recreational facilities closed down on the Sabbath. It even managed to stop brass bands playing on Sundays. Sadly, Gladstone allied himself to Charles Hill, a bigot who was secretary of the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association. Hill's argument was

that if museums and libraries opened on Sundays, even though this was the only day of the week the working class could use them, this would force other people into work. Gladstone wrote a letter to Hill which Hill published as a Preface to his *Sunday: Its Influence on Health and National Prosperity* in which he said, "Believing in the authority of the Lord's Day as a religious institution, I must, as a matter of course, desire the recognition of that authority by others." Gladstone himself wrote a piece on the sanctity of the Sabbath, which was published as 'The Lord's Day' in *The Church Monthly* of 1895.

The law was eventually changed in 1896 but the debate continued to rage. The Lord's Day Observance Society was very good at manipulating statistics, and its Secretary, Frederic Peake, in a pamphlet of 1903 titled *Has Sunday Opening of Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries Been a Success?* argued that as few people went to libraries which opened on Sundays, and as most of those were children anyway, all of them should immediately be closed. You can see, therefore, how there was a conflict between two of Gladstone's enthusiasms, religion and libraries. It was no good that some opposing Societies argued that the wealthy, such as Gladstone - and the bishops - had their own private libraries and art galleries which they could utilise on Sundays, let alone having servants to cook them their Sunday dinner. The Victorian Age was riven with hypocrisy such as this.

Museums did, mostly, start to open on Sunday even if they closed on Mondays for reasons of cost and maintenance. Libraries, by and large, have never opened on Sundays. That is something I have found difficult to understand, especially at the present time when religious observance is followed by only a small minority. This is partly a matter of economy, I suspect, but also, perhaps contentious in this gathering, is that nearly all local libraries are closed on Sundays for staffing reasons. Worst of all, our national libraries and many university ones, are totally inaccessible on a day when many would want to use them (museums are packed with visitors on Sundays). The British Library has the audacity to close at 5 o'clock on Fridays and Saturdays, and the library I use most often, Cambridge University Library, does the same thing. Many other countries of the world order things differently.

I must draw my remarks to a close but before I do so I must move on to another subject, both a happy and a sad one, I want to say a few words about our retiring Chairman, Geoffrey Forster. Geoffrey has been dropping hints for some time that he might wish to hand over the post to someone else. Why, when he has served a mere 25 years, I cannot

imagine. In fact, Geoffrey has been chairman of the Association from nearly its inception and he has been an excellent head, working tirelessly to promote our interests and turning the AIL into what it is today. While he is standing down as chairman he has expressed his wish to remain a member of Council. Geoffrey has strong research instincts and I hope he will be able to get down to working – and publishing – on figures who fascinate him, for example William Bullock, whose early 19th century museum-of-everything was displayed at the remarkable Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, now sadly demolished -- and turned into a Starbuck's. He has also found fascinating material to deal with the *Self-Help* man, Samuel Smiles, which is also worthy of further publication, and we remember his Bath paper with pleasure. Geoffrey, thank you most warmly for all you have done.

