

The LIBRARY *Campaigner*

Supporting friends and users of libraries



Libraries change lives!

Once the police had to protect this library from kids. Now they are giving them prizes for reading achievement – see pages 13–14

Library + Information Show – preview – see page 15

Handbook for Friends/User groups
– the Campaign's essential new guide – see pages 7–10



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THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

To advance the lifelong education of the public by the promotion, support, assistance and improvement of libraries through the activities of friends and users groups.

Executive Committee Meetings 2006 dates

SATURDAY 20 MAY (AGM)
at Friends Meeting House,
Euston Road, London
SATURDAY 15 JULY
SATURDAY 9 SEPTEMBER
SATURDAY 11 NOVEMBER

The Officers and the Executive Committee meet regularly every two months, 1–4pm on a Saturday, usually in central London. Campaign members are always very welcome to attend. If you want to come to a meeting contact the Secretary to receive an agenda.

We would like to hold more of these meetings in the regions, both to encourage members to come and to help those committee members who have a long journey to London. We have recently met in Lewes and in Birmingham.

If a local group would like to invite us to meet in their area, we would be delighted to come.

Thanks to ...

- **Unison**, for its continued and valued support.
- **CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals)** for permission to adapt certain material for this issue from its journal, **Update**.



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Remember – you saw it here first!

The editor’s reminder that she needed my contribution to this issue was conveyed a few minutes before the Library Campaign’s latest meeting with the MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council). Since the meeting was so useful, it seems right to devote this space to it.

We met MLA in the person of Andrew Stevens, one of the senior Library Policy Officers, and, on this occasion, Val King, who works on Workforce Development. The agenda usually involves both sides giving updates on what they have been doing, or are about to do, and exploring where we can work with each other.

This time the focus was on the next stage of the *Framework for the Future (FAF)* action plan. For new readers, *FAF* is the government vision for public libraries over the ten years (from 2003, when the original report was published). MLA is charged with co-ordinating action. By the time you read this, the next three-year plan should have been agreed by David Lammy, the minister for libraries. At the time of writing I cannot give too much detail, but it is possible to give a flavour.

Last year the plan was to have a major national marketing campaign involving press and broadcast media as well as awards for innovation amongst librarians. This was begun, but it fell foul of MLA restructuring and staff changes.

But some things did happen. *The Little Book of Libraries* was published as an aid to advocacy for libraries. It is a small, colourful booklet with a great many photos that sets out the case for supporting libraries as a means to help with education, community health and safety, quality of life and so on. The Library Campaign has several copies for local groups – so let us know if you would like some. Or you should at least be able to see it care of your local chief librarian. There is also an advocacy toolkit on the MLA website (www.mla.gov.uk).

Now that the MLA situation has stabilised, similar initiatives to those

expected last year should be seen in the summer.

We can also look forward to a major project involving all the public library agencies (MLA, the Society of Chief Librarians etc.) as well as publishers and (again) broadcast media. This, we were told, will not be ‘a library version of *Jamie’s School Dinners*’. But the fact that the analogy was made is interesting...

You will have read about £80 million of lottery money being given to public library projects. Because the lottery cannot pay for the core service, this will not be used for books – the subject of much anguish in the press when the announcement was made. However, it can be used for building improvements and similar projects. Since we know that agreed estimates of the cost of bringing all public libraries up to scratch is in the billions, there is clearly enough for this money to do, maybe freeing up other local authority funds for the basics.

You will also have read about the efficiency savings that can be found in how libraries select and buy stock. After a consultants’ report last year (see *The Campaigner* no 71, Autumn 2005), another firm is developing business cases for the options that had been suggested. By mid-year we can expect to know which way things are going. In the long term this may be invaluable in making best use of book funds.

Finally, but perhaps of most interest to us in the short term, is the review of the Public Library Service Standards. This will happen over the next 12 months and is intended to make them easier for users to understand and relate to their local situation. The Library Campaign expressed interest in being involved in this. It is possible that a joint event (or more than one) with MLA might be a way of involving local user groups in explaining how the existing standards have come about and debating how they might be literally more ‘user friendly’.

For our part, the Library Campaign

Secretary’s Report

Andrew Coburn
National Secretary



updated Andrew and Val on what we have been doing with the new Handbook (starter pack), news of which you will see elsewhere in this issue.

We also noted that we have been invited to speak for the first time at the Public Library Authorities’ conference in the autumn. The PLA is one of the most high-powered conferences of the year, where chief public librarians and councillors get together to discuss what is happening. We are really pleased that we will be able to put over our point of view.

We will be meeting MLA again in May or June, by which time the action plan will be public – and, indeed, some of it will have been implemented.

THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGNER SPRING 2006, No.72

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Library Campaign AGM May 20!
BE THERE! Details overleaf

Troubles in 2006

This seems to be the worst year since 1999 for planned library cuts and closures. Local authorities say they are badly squeezed – and threatened with rate-capping if they try to maintain funding levels via council tax.

In other cases, cuts in library spending are not on the menu – or are sincerely claimed to be just a by-product of changes that are wholly beneficial.

Some closures are planned by entirely well-meaning library managers. They argue that residents will be better served by improving web-based services and the larger branches, and letting little-used small branches fade away.

Quite often, local residents disagree. As we go to press, several final decisions are being delayed by tactics such as invoking the scrutiny procedure, or even High Court injunctions.

The Library Campaign expects a busy year, therefore. We are writing to library authorities that we understand are planning to close libraries. These include (at the time of going to press) Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Conwy, Croydon, Cumbria, Devon, Dumfries & Galloway, Gateshead, Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Leicester, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Surrey.

Library users have been finding their way to us and getting advice. If you know of any other library authorities planning damaging cuts, or library users concerned at future plans – put us in touch! We can't help if we don't know. Expect a full report in the next issue of *The Campaigner*.

Please take a minute to check this! The Library Campaign needs to move all membership subscriptions to our current bank account. Is your subscription rate up to date? Please help us by using the form on page 10 to update your standing order.

Hello, Handbook!

Well on the way is a new edition of the Campaign's Handbook for Friends/User groups. It is designed as a tool for both new and established groups. Samples can be seen on pages 7, 8 and 9.

The final version will include – in loose-leaf form so it can be kept up to date – a glossary/jargon sheet (so that non-library people know what LIS, MLA, Framework for the Future etc mean), something on how to use the political process and how to find information, and information about the Campaign and what it does/ can do. If you have suggestions (including things of which you want an explanation) send them to Andrew Coburn as soon as possible!

WEBSITE: The indefatigable Andrew Coburn has now done some more work on TLC's revamped website: www.librarycampaign.com. If anyone can suggest things to improve it further please let him know. And note that we could still use a webmaster to take on some of the work! If you have the time and inclination to help, the site is specially designed to be uncomplicated. In due course, we hope that groups will be able to get access and do their own updating.

COMMONS DEBATE ...

There was a short debate on public libraries in the House of Commons on February 9. Nothing earth-shattering, but interesting as always. To read the full text, ask your library or go to: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/cm060209/debtext/60209-33.htm#60209-33_head4

The Library Campaign

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 20 May 2006 from 14:00 hrs

At FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, 173 EUSTON ROAD, LONDON NW1 2BJ.

AGENDA

Election of Chair for Campaign AGM

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 14 May 2005

Annual report for the year ended 31 March 2006

Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2006

Election of Executive Committee – Chair, Secretary, Treasurer,

6 Ordinary members of the Executive Committee (of whom 2 shall be representatives of local groups)

Any other business

Nominations for elections and items for other business should be sent to the Secretary by 6 May 2006.

The accounts and annual report will be circulated at the meeting and will be put on the Campaign website (www.librarycampaign.com) Members can also request them from the Secretary if they are not able to attend.

It would be helpful if members and representatives of local groups and affiliated organisations can let the Secretary know in advance if they intend to come, so that we can ensure that the room is big enough.

The AGM will be followed by a meeting of the Executive Committee which all members are invited to attend.

Friends like us...

This Friends group in London was formed to save a branch library from closure. Seven years later, it has done very much more than that. Edith Holtham, Chair of the Friends of Tate South Lambeth Library, reports.

Whatever the differing circumstances in which they operate, Friends of libraries groups have a common problem – raising the money to fund their activities. They can all look to donations, and subscriptions (if they have a paid membership), but even if the Friends group is in area where people are rich and generous, it will be on the alert for other sources of funds.

This is the story of one group – Friends of Tate South Lambeth Library (Friends of TSL) – and the lessons learned from its successes and failures in attracting money to enhance a small library in inner-city London.

First, political fights attract money and participation. Enhancement was not the original aim of Friends of TSL. It was salvation.

In 1999, South Lambeth Library was on a list of five libraries drawn up by Lambeth Council for closure, as part of a new library “development” programme which would dedicate all resources to the five remaining libraries. This proposal sparked outrage in the community. Local people got together as Friends of Tate South Lambeth Library to campaign against closure.

Political campaigning on this focused, local issue did not require large sums of cash. Printing and photocopying flyers and small posters was the main expense, which was met by donations from supporters.

Essentially the campaign relied on contributions of time and know-how to lobby significant interests or individuals and to initiate and run activities to raise the group’s profile. These in turn generated larger donations, allowing us to organise more ambitious activities.

For instance, we installed a large sign outside the library. This replaced a rotting exterior notice-board which was never used by the library service and so was continually fly-posted. The new sign, which also bore our name, identified this as a functioning

library – and not, as some local people assumed from its shabby exterior, an abandoned bank.

We cleaned and repainted a part of the reading room that had been partitioned off for storage (mostly empty cardboard boxes). Library staff removed the partition and cleared out the area. We cleaned the walls, bought the paint and did the painting (using library ladders).

The area could then be opened out for public use, including an art gallery where we ran exhibitions of artwork by local artists and schoolchildren. We still run this gallery (now called the Tate Local!), with a mix of exhibitions by professional artists, the art workshops held in the library, local schools and workshops run by community groups such as Age Concern and Mencap.

We organised a Portuguese week (with live music, food and readings) to highlight the presence of the large Portuguese community in the library’s

catchment area. The Portuguese cafe across the road gave money (which paid for the sign) and donations of wine (for our events).

The Portuguese consulate was approached through their local advice centre in Stockwell. The consulate is keen to keep its citizens (and their children) in touch with Portuguese language and culture, because most of them plan to return home after working here for a few years.

The consulate arranged for two donations of books in Portuguese. Its education department gave us posters. The Portuguese embassy “lent” us the cultural attache to give a talk on Eca de Queiros (the Portuguese Dickens), which was enjoyed by a mixed Portuguese and English audience. And a Portuguese cultural foundation in London gave us a collection of Portuguese novels translated into English, as well as a CD player and speaker.

All these initiatives, then, attracted financial support from sources as varied as local businesses, the Portuguese consular office, the local town centre board and regeneration funds.

This established a pattern of support which we maintained after our original objective was secured – Lambeth Council decided in March 2000 to keep South Lambeth Library open.

Our objective was now redefined as ‘to improve the resources and services [of the library] to serve the needs and aspirations of an ethnically and socially diverse community’. In other words, to get the library to a state where it would not appear on any future hit list for closure.

This entailed continued lobbying of the local Council for increased spending on the library. But given the budget constraints – especially as this library did not feature in the medium-term spending plans – the Friends realised they would also have to look elsewhere for funding.

This was when regeneration money came into play. The Stockwell ward,



Not a derelict bank – Edith at Tate South Lambeth Library, cleaned at last and identifiable as a library. (Photo: Elaine Kramer)

which is served by our library, is the most deprived in the borough, and one of the most deprived in the country. It was therefore benefiting from various (regularly changing) government regeneration funds. They included SRB (Single Regeneration Budget), a European fund called Urban II, and other funds made available through the 'town centre' bodies set up by Lambeth Council. We needed to tap into these.

Because Friends of TSL is a formally constituted local organisation, specifically directed at enhancing community services and community involvement in an area of economic and social deprivation, we are eligible for a range of public grants.

We have had 100% success in securing support for our culture-oriented activities: art workshops for local primary schools, poetry workshops, music and poetry performances, community art exhibitions.

All of these are "extras" – add-ons to the core public library service. No group can obtain money from charities or regeneration bodies to finance the statutory obligations of local and central government – for example, buying books. But within the areas eligible for regeneration money, the only real limit to fund-raising is our own capacity to develop and manage the projects. (See side panel for more details.)

That is not to say that things always work out. We made a big effort, for three years in succession, to secure regeneration funding for the renovation of

the exterior of the library. This badly needed cleaning. Doing so would not only encourage more people to enter the building but would enhance the appearance of the whole area.

We put together a proposal which would use students taking an NVQ building trades course at a local college to carry out the paintwork. Their participation had two big pluses: it enhanced local involvement and employability, and it greatly reduced overall costs.

The project was, however, of a size (around £25,000) where we would have to secure match funding. Having obtained a commitment from the library service, we thought it was all systems go. It was not.

At the first attempt, the processing of our application was too slow to meet the deadline for the start of work (which had to be in March-April, to fit in with the college year).

The funding body that was running the Connecting Stockwell Single Regeneration Budget was notified of our detailed proposal in early January. Timing was indicated as an urgent factor – since the first phase of our project had to be paid for by the end of March (the end of their financial year). Nothing was heard for six weeks. Then, after being reminded by us, the funding body said that processing could not be completed in time for the work to be carried out within their timetable.

The second attempt was with the EU's Urban II programme for Stockwell. It fell

at an earlier hurdle. After we made our initial proposal, we were told that before the application would even be considered, we were required to obtain a permit for the erection of scaffolding. This would cost £300, whether our application succeeded or not – it could not be refunded because of standard rules against retrospective financing.

The board which had to give final approval for the project at local level (it then had to go through processing at higher governmental level) met every six weeks. Getting the scaffolding planning permission (from Transport for London, because the poles would go about two inches into a pavement along a no-parking 'red route') took so long that we missed the next meeting. The following meeting was postponed. And the one after that would take place after the deadline for starting the work.

Fortunately, in our case, there was a resolution. Lambeth Council was refunded a large sum of money from central government. The result was a one-off capital allocation which became the Lambeth Opportunities Fund. Councillors voted to allocate some of it to the library service. They also specified that a proportion of this would be ring-fenced for projects proposed by Friends groups. We proposed the exterior renovation. The library service paid for the scaffolding application. The job was at last done, with the involvement of the students. Everybody is happy. And a lesson has been learned.

SOME TIPS ON SECURING REGENERATION GRANTS

- Make sure you have a formal and transparent structure, with a constitution, membership and accountability (including a bank account with two signatories)
- Read the small print
- Have material ready on what your organisation has achieved
- Build up a portfolio of prepared proposals so that you can respond to funding opportunities at short notice
- Attune your project/programme to the priorities of the funding agency
- Do not commit to what you cannot deliver. Funding agencies will want to see your record. Failures are a big turn-off
- Never give up

THIS IS A LIST OF THE MANY AND VARIED LOCAL FUNDS THE FRIENDS TRACED AND USED TO SUPPORT ACTIVITIES IN THE LIBRARY

- Stockwell Community Grants Fund (a small grant body under the Connecting Stockwell SRB) – £1,190 to develop the community art gallery and a programme of eight exhibitions from April 2001 to March 2002; and £1,000 for running nine art workshops for local primary schools in October 2001-June 2002.
- Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest – £1,774 for running exhibitions from April 2002 to March 2003 and nine art workshops for primary schools from October 2002 to June 2003.
- Stockwell Community Grants (under the Urban II programme) – £800 for four poetry workshops and a poetry performance in May-July 2004.
- Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest – £1,800 for four local archaeology and history workshops/events in July-September 2005.
- Clapham & Stockwell Town Centre (an agency of Lambeth Council) – £486 for running exhibitions from April 2004 to March 2005; £395 for running exhibitions from April 2005 to March 2006; £370 ditto from April 2006 to March 2007.
- £620 from Lambeth Endowed Charities for art exhibitions from April 2003 to June 2004.
- £300 from Sir Walter St John's Educational Charity for a poetry workshop in May 2005.



The Library Campaign

Supporting friends and users of libraries

The Handbook for Library Friends and User Groups

22 Upper Woburn Place, London
LIBRARYCAM@aol.co.uk
www.librarycampaign.com

COMING SOON!

This is a sample
from TLC's essential
Handbook, due out
later this year.

What is The Library Campaign – supporting Friends and Users of Libraries?

We are a registered charity with these objects:

- ◆ To advance the lifelong education of the public
 - by the promotion, support, assistance and improvement of libraries
 - through the activities of Friends and Users Groups
- ◆ We work with all kinds of libraries and their Friends and User Groups.
- ◆ We can help people – and libraries – to:
 - set up Friends and User Groups
 - share ideas and experience
 - advocate and campaign for better services
 - prevent reductions in services
- ◆ We produce a magazine, *The Campaigner*.
- ◆ We keep a database of Friends/User groups and members.
- ◆ We have a website with news and information, lists of local groups and links to their sites and other useful sites.
- ◆ We can supply promotional leaflets, posters and other publicity.
- ◆ We can supply advice, contacts and speakers for local groups.
- ◆ We hold national events and information days for members.
- ◆ As the voice of the library user we talk to the policy makers – including government and the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council – to influence their thinking.
- ◆ We run a stall at national exhibitions and provide speakers at national conferences.
- ◆ We have international contacts with other Friends/User Group organisations.

The Library Campaign

Supporting friends and users of libraries

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Our finances come from subscriptions and support from
commercial organisations, trade unions and charities.

Registered Charity (England & Wales) No: 1102634

Public Libraries – how it all works

LOCAL LEVEL

Public libraries are run by local authorities. They have a statutory duty to provide and promote a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service [under the 1964 Public Libraries & Museums Act]. They have no such legal duty to provide museums, galleries, theatres, sports centres etc.

The funds come from council tax and the general allocation from central government to local authorities. There is no specific funding ring-fenced for libraries – they have to compete with all the other services in the council’s budget.

Libraries are a comparatively small service (compared, say, to education or social services). They will probably be grouped with other services in a bigger department – e.g, archives, arts, community education, culture, customer services, heritage, environment, leisure ...

The boss may therefore be called anything from Chief Librarian to Head of Arts, Culture & Heritage. There will also be a ‘lead’ councillor and a committee that include libraries in their brief – again, the name will vary. All local councillors are also sure to take an interest in the library on their patch. So will the MPs.

NATIONAL LEVEL

DCMS

Central government’s policy on libraries is set by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). But it does not fund libraries.

DCMS covers a wide range of topics – the ones in its name, plus broadcasting, gambling, tourism, the arts, etc. It is headed by the Secretary of State, whose brief covers all these areas. In theory, the 1964 Act gives him/her power to obtain information from councils, and even to intervene if a local authority is not providing a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ service. These powers have been used to some extent, but there has never been a full-blown take-over of a library service.

Below the Secretary of State, one minister is more directly responsible for libraries (among other things). A small number of DCMS civil servants cover libraries.

MLA

MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council) is a government-funded independent body. It does not fund libraries. It advises the government on libraries (etc) and works on policy research and development.

For libraries, it has been given funds by DCMS to implement Framework for the Future. It has devised a detailed action plan, and farms out the work to various agencies.

This, and other development work, covers a vast range of subjects – access for disabled people, advice on working with small children/reading groups/teens, better value in buying books, collection management, design, marketing, staff training – and much more ... Last but not least, MLA masterminds the People’s Network scheme, which put computers/internet access into every library and continues to develop web-based resources.

It has produced a vast quantity of reports and resources, which can be found on its website.

MLA also has ten regional agencies. They do much the same kind of development work, but what they do varies enormously from region to region.

A major reorganisation is on the cards for 2006, so any of the above details might change.

ODPM

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is the government department responsible for local government. Every year, it determines how much each local council will get in funds from central government – which provides the vast majority of their funding. It does not determine how much of that funding is spent on libraries. That is entirely for local councils to decide.

THE BIG 4 INFLUENCES ON PUBLIC LIBRARIES

1

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE STANDARDS

First set out in 2001 by the DCMS, these aim to spell out clearly what a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service should provide. The latest version (revised in 2004) lists 10 measures, e.g buildings open, hours open, visits, PCs, stock. A new addition is a set of 'impact measures', designed to show how a service meets the specific needs of its locality. Every year, every library service is measured against these standards, and the results published by DCMS (on its website). Essential reading.

2

FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

Published in 2003 by the DCMS, this is the first-ever national development plan for public libraries. Basically it tells libraries what kind of service they should provide. It also sets out an ambitious programme of improvement that is meant to cover ten years (until 2013). If your library can't get it for you, find it on the MLA website. Essential reading.

3

THE SHARED PRIORITIES

In 2002, the government and the Local Government Association agreed on seven 'shared priorities' for all departments of local councils. If a library service can argue that something it does (or wants to do) contributes to these priority areas – it's a powerful argument for getting resources. The priorities are also used in other measures of libraries' performance (e.g impact standards). Useful reading at times.

The seven priorities are: (1) raising standards in schools (2) improving quality of life for children, older people, young people, families at risk (3) promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities (4) creating safer and stronger communities (5) transforming the local environment (6) meeting local transport needs more effectively (7) improving the economic vitality of communities.

4

AN INSPECTOR CALLS

The Audit Commission inspects local authorities for the government. For a few years it inspected library services as such. These reports can still be seen.

Now, however, it carries out a CPA (Comprehensive Performance Assessment), which grades a council's overall quality. The Public Library Service Standards are part of the framework it uses to rate the 'culture' work. Also the CPA specifically looks for proof that a council consults its residents – and acts on their opinions. Useful reading at times.

ESSENTIAL WEBSITES

www.audit-commission.gov.uk – the Audit Commission – funded by the government but independent – is the body that inspects local authority services – including libraries – and publishes reports. You can find all the reports on your own council, and others.

www.cipfa.org.uk – the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy collects figures on library performance and on user satisfaction (the Cipfa PLUS surveys). A mass of statistics (plus commentary) to compare your service with others. You have to register to get access, but this is fairly painless.

www.culture.gov.uk – DCMS (Department for Culture, Media & Sport) is the government department that lays down government policy on libraries (but does not provide their funding). It also lays down the Public Library Service Standards. See them here. Click on 'libraries and communities' on the side panel.

www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dils/lisu – the library statistics unit at Loughborough University produces a mass of figures (with a commentary) about libraries' performance, including what they spend on stock and estimates for the future.

www.lga.gov.uk – the Local Government Association lobbies on behalf of local government. Publishes papers that are very supportive of libraries. Enter 'libraries' in the search tool to see the latest. Also plenty of information on the shared priorities.

www.mla.gov.uk – the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council advises the government on library (etc) matters, commissions research, develops resources. It does not fund public libraries directly. Masses of information: click on 'Programmes'.

www.unison.org.uk – Unison is the trade union that represents and organises most library workers in the public sector. The union (and its predecessor Nalgo) have always been supportive of The Library Campaign. Friends/User groups may be able to get help and advice from local Unison branches. Look them up in the phone book or contact the local regional office – addresses and other useful info on the website.

www.librarycampaign.com – The Library Campaign. See overleaf ...

THE ESSENTIAL RESOURCE for LIBRARY FRIENDS and USER GROUPS

The Library Campaign is the umbrella body for all UK Friends/User groups. It provides essential advice on forming a group, information, advice, contacts with other groups, campaign material, news, a magazine, a website, meetings – and a voice for library users with the national press and the policy-makers.

The Library Campaign, 22 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0TB
email: LIBRARYCAM@aol.com
www.librarycampaign.com

MEMBERSHIP FORM

I wish to join The Library Campaign and enclose a Cheque/PO for £for one year's membership.

Name

Address

Post code Tel:..... Email

GIFT AID

I confirm that I am a UK tax payer and pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax to be reclaimed in the tax year. I would like my/ our subscription (plus any donation) to be treated as Gift Aid.

Signed..... Date.....

MEMBERSHIP RATES

Individual £15.00	Concessionary Rate £10.00
Local Organisation £20.00	Trade Union Branches £30.00
Local Authorities £200.00	Company/National Trade Unions £100.00

Others please write for details

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A HUG for Hackney

Hackney's library service fully supports the Homerton User Group – and fully benefits from it, says Anita Kane, the service's Development Manager

HUG (Homerton User Group) started in September 2003 with these three aims:

- to promote the library to the local community;
- to participate in the development of existing services, and have a voice;
- to actively apply for funding to improve and upgrade the library and its facilities.

The library supplied a prominent space for a notice board and ensured that membership forms were visible at the counter. This attracted a lot of attention!

The User Group now has about 40 members. Around 10 are on the committee, which meets monthly. The Homerton Library Manager and I also attend the meetings.

I remember the first meeting well. We conducted a tour of the entire building, and everyone got very excited about all the improvements and renovations that could take place. The then Head of Library Services set up a budget of £1,000 for the Group to plan events with.

This money has been used to fund quite a few social events. To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the opening of Homerton Library, the group staged an Information Day. They invited local organisations to set up shop in the library for the day. The library set up activities for children, with entertainers paid for by Sure Start, and there were computer taster sessions for the over-50s, with a tutor from Silver Surfers. We also had a visit from Councillor Linda Kelly, the Hackney Deputy Speaker, and an evening of poetry and jazz (six poets and a jazz band). The place was packed!

Since then we've held a play reading event – over 60 attended, a Black history quiz night, a Christmas party and a social.

The User Group also produced a newsletter, right, and an exhibition on the history of public libraries in Hackney, and invited the public to come forward with ideas for the Homerton library of the future. Users wanted to have a multi-purpose building, extended on to the street with a café and comfortable seating areas, space for research and a mini art

gallery. Other suggestions included activities (such as reading clubs, film clubs and facilities for evening classes) and extended opening hours.

These ideas and suggestions were passed on to the Head of Service. They formed part of the consultations on the Library Development Strategy, which in turn has put money into the refurbishment of several of Hackney's libraries.

Since it started, HUG has been involved in getting the refurbishments going. The study area and hall have been decorated and a mural for the children's library commissioned. They have also been consulted about their preferences for the 2006 money available for refurbishments.

I think the User Group has acted as a spur for me to do things with the public always in mind. I find that they can enthuse and motivate me.

User Groups are essential in this day and age if we are to effectively reach out to our local community and library users. We need to involve the local community in any decision-making process, in order to deliver a service relevant to their needs. Close consultation provides us with feedback on how our policies affect the service – and we can get fresh ideas and new insights in how the policies we make affect the end user.

Anita Kane: 020 8356 1696
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How are we doing?

Friends groups in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, are highly valued by the library service. It's easy to see why, says Gwen Middup, Secretary of Friends of Maltby Library and Secretary of the Rotherham Network of Support Groups.

The Friends groups in the Rotherham area were, generally, formed in response to a threat to their local library – either closure or the loss of services.

Over the past few years we have, happily, seen a much more positive approach from the Borough Council. The role now is to support the library service. We have a very good working relationship with them, striving to maintain the progress which has been made and to improve our community libraries even further.

The Rotherham Network of Support Groups, consisting of members of the Friends groups, meet with officers of the library service on a regular basis, to discuss further developments.

During the past year, two of our Friends groups have had anniversary celebrations for their libraries.

In December 2005, Maltby Community Library celebrated 40 years in its present building. To commemorate the event the Friends group commissioned a sculpture by Gillian Brent and presented it to the library at a celebration thanking the library staff, past and present, for all their efforts and dedication.

The library has a thriving Friends group, which was formed eight years ago. It was instrumental in creating a Children's Book Festival, which has now become an annual borough-wide event.

The group host a children's event during the festival, such as a Harry Potter Evening, where the local children dress up, watch a magician, play games and join in quizzes. Prizes are donated by the group for the winners.

At present the Friends' endeavours are engaged in applying pressure to gain improvements to a very tired-looking building built in the 1960s. How much more inviting could the library look to a public who need all the

help they can get, to be encouraged to enter a library!!

The Children's Book Festival was also a central part in the first anniversary of 2005, in June, when its centenary, was celebrated by Rawmarsh Carnegie Library.

Noreen Brown, Chair of the Friends of Rawmarsh Carnegie Library and Vice-Chair of the Network, says: 'That the library has survived to become one of a handful of Carnegies still functioning as a library, out of the original 660 donated, is in itself an achievement. That it has done so in an area not renowned for its preservation of old buildings is scarcely short of a miracle.

'The building is both beautiful and functional, and the centenary celebrations highlighted how much the local population care for this library. A month-long catalogue of various events was held, appealing, we hoped, to all sections of the community.

'Concerts, a variety of speakers and displays by local social and sporting groups were all interesting viewing.

'The opening ceremony of the annual Children's Book Festival was held to coincide with the centenary. The smaller children had organised competitions, for which the Friends of the Library donated book prizes.

'For the sixth-formers we organised talks by local "old boys and girls" who had succeeded in their chosen careers. They all stressed how the library had been instrumental in their ambitions.

'Our main aim, apart from celebrating the centenary, was to bring the community into the building and for them to realise that although historic, the building is an "up to the minute" venue for a mass of interesting activities and ideas.'

So – how are we doing? We are proud of our achievements and of our association with the library service. We will strive to press for improvements for all our community libraries.

Celebrating Sandwell

A network of Friends groups also flourishes in Sandwell, West Midlands. Branch libraries put on an impressive array of activities – school visits; after-school and weekend activities for kids; a Library Explorers club to draw in children and then their families; author visits; 'computers for the terrified' sessions; loads of crafts sessions, from hair braiding to making Easter cards; and a story cafe (storytelling for adults!).

Special this year at Sandwell Central Library is the start of the run-up to the celebrations of its centenary in June 2007. Yes, it's another Carnegie library. And yes, its beauty is properly appreciated. A full year of events is planned, including author visits, a comedy night, a murder mystery night, a poetry slam and a literary quiz (to find The Brain of Bromwich).

Involved in the celebrations will be local artist Pat Arnett, now 82, who painted the library's striking murals. Pat is seen here with (left) Fred Barnfield of the Friends Group and (right) Robert Hazell, librarian.



Libraries change lives!

This annual competition seeks out innovative services in public libraries – to show everyone just what is possible.

Working through local partners is a strong common theme in the three pioneering public library services shortlisted for the Libraries Change Lives Award.

It is sponsored by LiS (Library + Information Show)* and organised by the Community Services special interest group of the librarians' association CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals).

There will be a high-profile presentation on 26 April at LiS at the NEC,

Birmingham. The presenter will be the popular performance poet John Hegley.

If you can make it, you can apply for a ticket when you register for the show. If you don't get a ticket, the event will be shown on a giant screen to those relaxing outside!

This is the 14th year of the award. Winners have often had a strong impact on service development. An early winner was Bookstart, delivering books to babies, when it was being piloted by Birmingham Libraries. Now every baby

gets three packs of books by the time it reaches school age – funded by the government.

Another recent winner was a scheme to help men in prison to record stories and choose books to send their children, helping them keep in touch with their families and play a part in their children's lives. This scheme now has scores of successful offshoots in prisons.

This year's winners focus most strongly on young people.

* www.lishow.co.uk

Edinburgh

The youth work at Sighthill Library is a response to increasing anti-social behaviour in the area and often in the library itself – kids would invade it for gang fights, under-age drinking and vandalism.

The staff team tackled the problem head on. They invited the youngsters into the library.

As team members changed, more young staff were appointed. And, crucially, the security guard was swapped for an extra library assistant.

They have changed the layout, using basic retail display techniques to present the stock clearly and attractively, and creating a relaxing teen zone. Increasingly they get the kids to help choose the stock (now there's less fiction and more information titles).

The basic policy is for library staff themselves to intervene if things get rowdy. But they involve the police in library activities, and take advice from them on problems.

Staff sensibly make use of the many ready-made resources now available, including Youth Boox (a teen mag), Reading the Game (a football-based reading promotion), Chatterbooks (kids' reading club) and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

The West Edinburgh Action Group runs CV workshops and careers sessions. The council's housing department funded a project that used art, video and photos by the

kids to involve them in consultation on local regeneration plans.

Activities devised by staff themselves include fantasy gaming for boys, an ICT club and a reading scheme that starts where the national summer reading challenge ends.

There are now 60 per cent fewer anti-social incidents, 75 per cent fewer complaints from other library users – and far less graffiti on the library walls.

The project has won an award from the Scottish Executive. It has had wide local media coverage – including being shortlisted for a radio station's 'Best Place to Work in Edinburgh' award.



Above: Prize-winning art at Sighthill.

Left: Summer reading award day at Sighthill.

Blackburn with Darwen

Books on the Edge involves vulnerable young people in reader-centred activities and promotes reading as a pleasurable and rewarding thing to do.

Library staff – themselves mostly young and/or from ethnic minorities – work with three local agencies: Thomas (drug rehabilitation for ‘Those On the Margins of a Society’), Nightsafe (for homeless young people) and the local authority Foyer (accommodation and training).

All three services had realised that poor literacy was holding back their clients.

A literacy development officer runs the project (funded for two years) and acts as a personal guide to the library for teens like the Thomas client who felt visiting it would be ‘as bad as going to the dentist’.

Barriers such as fines or the need for a library card have been dismantled. There are regular literature-related arts events and visits. Much time is also spent talking one-to-one.

The aim is to build lasting relationships, make sure reading activities are at an appropriate level and get the young people using the library independently, building confidence and a sense of ownership.

The young people choose the stock for satellite collections at six venues run by Thomas, Nightsafe or Foyer.



Confident use of the library at Blackburn with Darwen.

Lincolnshire

The Multicultural Development Service (MDS) is a ‘strategy, structure and culture’ developed for the county’s large population of guest workers from countries such as Ghana, Poland, Portugal and France.

They were welcomed at first, but growth in numbers (they are now one in 10 of the population) has created tension.

MDS staff are recruited from guest worker communities – so they speak the languages, understand the issues and are trusted.

Services include specially chosen stock, Esol and ICT training in libraries and an after-school club in a library, requested by parents working long shifts.

MDS also stages popular free diversity days in schools, where children can try unfamiliar food and learn about other children’s lives and cultures.

Much work is done in partnership with both council and external agencies, including Sure Start, schools, employers and communities.

For example, MDS staff give training and advice to the police and visit a prison and a large employer’s hostel. They provide help, interpreters and a base in Boston Library for the education department’s overworked ethnic minority support unit.

Annual national conferences began last year for professionals to swap ideas (the next is in June).



Portuguese day in a Lincolnshire primary school.

Library + Information Show



If you're interested in libraries, Birmingham NEC is the place to be on April 26-27! The Library + Information Show is a once-a-year opportunity to find out what's going on in libraries. And it's completely free.

As always, The Library Campaign will have a stand, staffed by (pictured, left) Eric Hirons-Smith and (right) Peter Richardson – among others. This year we are really getting into gear, with smart new exhibition stands and posters, attractive give-aways and a keen ear to find out what members want to see in the new Handbook, the new website and in general!



But that's by no means the only good reason to get to Birmingham NEC.

There are seminars by well-known experts and talks from leading authors – all free (see box). You can see the latest book releases from 40 independent publishers – not the usual books you read about all the time. The event is also co-located with MUREX, the equivalent event for museums, so you can explore a different (but complementary) area for inspiration.

And over 160 exhibitors will be showcasing their latest services (they tend to save up their product launches for this event). By picking the right stands you can find out what good library design looks like, what the latest shelving or signage could do. You can seek solutions for specific problems your library has. You can't expect the library staff to know it all!

On show will be: audio-visual equipment; book protection/binding; books and periodicals; eJournals and eBooks; electronic information; equipment, shelving, furniture, signage and display ideas; income generation ideas; automation and management systems; library booksellers; security and self-service systems; special needs services and more. Plus stands run by the big guns in the library world – such as CILIP, DCMS and MLA.

AUTHORS already confirmed are Jacqueline Wilson (most-borrowed author two years running, and voted English children's favourite author), comic poet John Hegley (who will read his latest work and present the Libraries Change Lives Award), children's author/illustrator Colin Hawkins and fantasy novelist/screenwriter William Nicholson (talking about his new book *Seeker*).

SEMINARS

The programme is huge – so choose carefully and come early. Some sessions are packed out well before they are due to start. Recommended:

THEATRE L1 – WEDNESDAY APRIL 26

- 21st Century Reading Service (11am). Miranda McKearney, Director of The Reading Agency, is an inspiring speaker who always knows the latest news!
- Freedom of Information: a Library Perspective (12pm). Panel discussion on Big Brother (1984 style).
- Designing the Next Generation Library (2pm). Rachel Van Riel, Director of Opening the Book, is another cutting-edge thinker.
- Libraries Change Lives (3pm). See pages 13-14.

THEATRE L1 – THURSDAY APRIL 27

- The Reading & Libraries Challenge Fund (11am). Susan Blishen from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, on inspiring pioneer work with people who don't usually go into libraries.
- The Family Reading Campaign: A Partnership with Libraries (12pm). Julia Strong, Director, on the National Reading Campaign's family work.

THEATRE L2 – WEDNESDAY APRIL 26

- The People's Network: New Online Services (10:30am). David Potts from MLA on the many – but little-known – resources you can now get on those library computers.
- Reading Through the Issues: the Influence of Policy on Public Libraries (11:30am). Adrian Johnson, independent researcher – one for the policy wonks.
- Making National Partnerships a Reality: Public Libraries and BBC Learning (4.15pm). Erin Barnes, BBC Learning, and Genevieve Clark, The Reading Agency, on the current RaW campaign, linking libraries and broadcasting power as never before.

THEATRE L2 – THURSDAY APRIL 27

- The Man Booker Prize and Public Libraries (11.30am). Speakers from the glam book event of the year join Peter Wallace from Liverpool Libraries to explain how they work together.
- Checking Out Google at the Library (2.30pm). JL Needham on what the ubiquitous Google really has to offer.

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AND AVOID THE QUEUES!!**

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- **Features include** the 'Knowledge Management Network', the 'Independent Publishers Village' and the 'Careers Clinic'
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