

37th CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS OF NATIONAL LIBRARIES, 2010

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ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2010

1. General overview of recent major developments.

Over the past year the British Library has worked to enhance existing services, to address legacy stewardship issues, and to develop new projects across a wide range of activities. We have continued to grow our digital collections, thereby opening up access to researchers globally; this work has developed on a greater scale through working with commercial partners.

The Library has been undertaking a major programme of strategy development – taking account of the dynamic market in which the Library now operates, with technology applications and consumer behaviours changing more rapidly than ever before - to articulate the Library's operating environment in 2020 and to develop a 2020 vision for the British Library with a view to informing today's resource decisions. The 2020 Vision is to be published in September 2010.

The Review of the Scholarship & Collections directorate, which the Library has been taking forward over this past year, is designed to strengthen its capacity and to ensure the Library will be a leading centre of digital scholarship and preservation, internationally recognised for innovation and collaboration in support of research and learning. This has been a fundamental examination of the Directorate's structure in depth, and the first such re-examination in the 35-year history of the British Library.

The Library anticipates significant cuts over the next spending review period in line with the overall UK public sector. The outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review will be known later in year.

2. Note of the reporting library's relationship to government, citation of legislation which sets out the library's mandate, and any other legislation which directly or indirectly affects the library's operations.

The British Library Act 1972 established the British Library as the national library of the United Kingdom. The Library is a Non-Departmental Public Body operating at arms' length from Government. Government sponsorship (i.e. funding, policy, and oversight) responsibility for the British Library resides with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The Library makes an important contribution to DCMS's key objectives: in supporting and sustaining both the research excellence of the UK and its commercial competitiveness the BL also contributes to the policy objectives of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS). Inter-Departmental mechanisms are in place - the Inter-Departmental Panel for the British Library and the Funding Agreement (which sets out the agreed outputs and levels of performance that the Library is expected to deliver) – to reflect the cross-cutting nature of the BL's contribution to UK government policy objectives. Legal Deposit in the UK is currently governed by the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003; this legislation which extended the scope of deposit to certain categories of non-print, including digital publications, pending secondary legislation. Such statutory regulation will only be enacted after assessment of the effectiveness of any voluntary framework of deposit and of the likely economic impact on the affected publishing industry.

3. Key facts and figures (size of major collections, number of staff, total operating budget, etc).

Under legal deposit the Library receives a copy of every publication produced in the UK and Ireland. In 2009/10, 506,712 (printed) items were received under legal deposit. In addition, the Library's expenditure on research level material for the collections acquisitions during 2009/10 was £17.6m. The BL's collections contain well over 150 million items in most known languages, covering manuscripts, maps, newspapers, magazines, prints and drawings, music scores, and patents. There is a dedicated Sound Archive, and a collection of 8 million stamps and other philatelic items. The collection occupies in excess of 650 linear km of shelving.

The Library employs 1,900 staff (full time equivalents), across three main sites in London and Yorkshire. For 2010/11 the Library received £99.5 million of Government funding for operational costs, and £15.3 million of capital. In 2009/10 this was supplemented by c.£32 million of other, self-generated funds, including donations and grants.

Major exhibitions have continued to draw large numbers of visitors to the Library. In the summer of 2009 'Henry VIII: Man and Monarch' marked the 500th anniversary of Henry VIII's accession to the throne and attracted ca 70,000 visitors. Following this, the British Library's first ever major photographic exhibition 'Points of View: Capturing the 19th Century in Photographs', which examined the development and influence of photography, attracted 110,000 visitors.

4. New developments in creating and building collections.

In addition to the continued routine growth in collections, through both legal deposit and purchase, the Library made a number of important heritage acquisitions during the year.

These included: the archive of John Berger – eminent writer, critic and thinker; the archive of the writer and feminist thinker Eva Figes; the archive of the writer and artist Mervyn Peake (comprising most of his literary output); Sir John Narbrough's manuscript Naval Journal, 1666-1671; digital audio recordings from shellac discs (original gramophones) held at the Berliner Lautarchiv at the Humboldt University in Berlin, including the oldest known collection of English dialect sound recordings in existence; and the illustrated prayer roll owned by Henry VIII before his accession in 1509. In addition to the continued growth of our collection through legal deposit, the British Library has made a number of significant acquisitions over the past year.

There was significant public and media interest in the manuscript memoir of Anthony Blunt when it finally became available to Readers, after a 25 year restriction on ended.

5. New developments in managing collections.

The Library's new £26m storage facility at Boston Spa is now operational. The most advanced in the world, it provides 262km of environmentally controlled storage and it will eventually house approximately 7 million items from the national collection. The facility employs automated retrieval technology and the collection material is kept in a low oxygen environment to reduce any fire risk to the collection. The ingest of collection items and associated 180 km of book moves are at the time of writing ahead of schedule for completion by the end of 2010.

In October 2009, the Library received a very welcome commitment of £33m of capital funding from the Government to move the national newspaper collection to a new Newspaper Storage Building; to be constructed on the Boston Spa site and to be fully operational in 2013, which would hold our newspaper collection in the best of archival conditions, while allowing digital and microfilm access to the collection from the Library's building in London. This capital project is now subject to review by Ministers in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review with an announcement as to whether it can proceed expected in the Autumn.

6. New developments in providing access to collections.

The British Library launched the UK Web Archive in February, offering access in perpetuity to thousands of UK websites for generations of researchers (see www.webarchive.org.uk). It will be the official web archive of the 2012 London Olympics.

A milestone was reached in November 2009 when the 500,000th item was added to the Library's Digital Library System (52Tb of data in the store in total). Contents include e-journals, digital sound recordings, born-digital material received through voluntary deposit, more than 65,000 digitised 19th century books and more than three million pages of newsprint.

The Library concluded a public/private arrangement for mass digitisation of newspapers. The ten-year agreement between the BL and brightsolid will deliver the most significant mass digitisation of newspapers the UK has ever seen: up to 40 million historic pages from the national newspaper collection will be digitised, making large parts of this unparalleled resource available online for the first time. The digitisation will be undertaken at no direct costs to the BL: Brightsolid will create a commercial offering and assume the associated financial risks. The contract is non-exclusive. Under the terms of the contract, Brightsolid will select the content and will, as appropriate, secure permission to digitise material that is still in copyright. But access to the online service will be available free to users in the British Library's reading rooms and the BL will receive copies of all the scanned newspapers and a royalty on all out of copyright material accessed. On expiry of the contract, the British Library will be able to make the out of copyright newspaper images available to users on the BL website free of charge.

7. Examples of collaboration between the reporting library and other national collecting institutions (libraries, archives and museums).

The British Library has played a pivotal role in the UK Research Reserve (UKRR) programme (www.ukrr.ac.uk), housing the Research Reserve collection on behalf of 29 universities and institutions in the UK Higher Education sector, and making it accessible to researchers through our Document Supply Centre. Through this, we are protecting the research information infrastructure, and releasing 100km of shelf space in HE libraries allowing them to use the space for other purposes. The programme is made possible through funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

The British Library has continued to play a major role in the World Collections Programme (WCP), a three-year, UK Government-funded initiative, involving six national cultural institutions - the British Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Royal Botanic Gardens (Kew), the Tate galleries, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the British Library. Its aim is to develop links and collaboration with institutions in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Projects the Library has undertaken with WCP funding include: a photographic exhibition in Afghanistan; an audio visual workshop in Kenya; and, working with the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Natural History

Museum, the digitisation of correspondence, drawings, specimens and records relating to the 19th century botanist Nathaniel Wallich, the Superintendent of the Calcutta Botanic Gardens.

The Library's own focus on developing productive strategic partnerships has been strengthened, and we have identified a number of organisations with which we wish to develop a close working relationship. During the year a Memorandum of understanding with the BBC was signed to develop new ways of integrating access to nearly a million hours of BBC TV and radio content and more than 150 million BL collection items. The outcome will significantly increase access to research material across both national institutions for the benefit of researchers and the wider public.