Arts in public libraries

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by

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ABSTRACT

Rooted in the philanthropic concerns of the early Public Libraries the Arts-and-Libraries partnership has developed through various stages and experienced many set backs. Much has been written on the subject yet it remains the most vulnerable aspect of library services.

It is argued that Arts in Public Libraries is worthwhile for all involved and can benefit the Public Library image and diversify its' role. Recommendations for running an ideal event are suggested. Then recent events are examined in the light of these recommendations. It is concluded that there is room for improvement in the Arts and Public Libraries field and ways to improve this are suggested.

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INTRODUCTION

From the outset, the Public Library provided opportunities to users to experience Art and Culture by reading books and attending lectures and talks. Such free provision was part of the philanthropic ethos of the Public Library, which hoped to educate and improve the working classes and thus advance society and the economy.

As the Public Library developed and changed, so did access to the Arts. The libraries originally provided singular outlets for Art to the lower classes, but as mass media grew in availability and popularity the audiences for public libraries' lectures, readings and classes dwindled. Further blows were rendered to access to the Arts in libraries by two World Wars and the economic crises and difficulties of the 1930s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. During such times libraries tended to fall back to providing soley basic book lending and reference services which many librarians, and the Library Association, thought, in any case, to be the only proper roles of the Public Library. Even so, significant advances have been made in the Arts and Libraries partnership.

Despite the economic hardship of the 1960s there was great optimism among librarians. The philosophy and practice of extension activities developed, moving away from the philanthropic attitude of previous eras and towards a socially conscious attitude as well as to self-publicity and propaganda for libraries. Furtherance of the Arts began to be seen as a way of diversifying the libraries' role and creating resource centres for the community. However, despite some significant advances made in

the post-Second World War era, the 1973 oil-crisis-induced slump meant that cutbacks had to be made. The first items to be sliced from libraries' budgets were the extension activities, setting a pattern of reductions that was to be followed into the 1990s.

When the Conservatives took power in 1979 a new era for libraries was ushered in. This was an era of 'effectiveness measures' and requirements to justify expenditure on libraries. Attempts were made to diversify the libraries role to make it seem more valuable. Arts activities became part of this diversification and a way of attracting funds for increasing usage of libraries, thus enhancing their so-called effectiveness.

The Arts-and- Libraries partnership did have some success during the 1980s and has managed to become more businesslike. For example, an increasing number of libraries have secured some sponsorship from business, out of necessity, which has been useful both to the businesses and libraries. However Public Libraries have suffered from the uncertainty affecting public services stemming from the funding difficulties created by the Community Charge (Poll Tax) and the reorganizations, and restrictions, of local government.

The 1990s have been dubbed the 'caring '90s', with a sign of this new attitude purported to be election of John Major, with his soft, benign, image. The creation of the Ministry of Heritage, and a Cabinet seat for the Heritage Minister, could be good news for the Arts and Libraries, or not : uncertainty remains.

It is clear that the Arts-and-Libraries partnership can benefit all taking part-audience, performers, exhibitors and libraries. Much has been written about how and why libraries should be providing arts activities. However, librarians seldom receive training in the Arts and, often, responsibility for an event is handed out on an ad- hoc basis, with librarians learning as they go along. The ad-hoc nature of some of the organization and the restricted budgets lead to only sporadic provision of arts material, with little uniformity of effort throughout the country.

Despite all the hurdles encountered, a deal of Art activity does go on in Public Libraries, for differing reasons and with a variety of outcomes, and much can be learned by close scrutiny of these initiatives.

CHAPTER ONE

ORIGINS

The earliest libraries in Britain were those held in monasteries and by royalty. Gradually private collections grew among the wealthy, and libraries were established in the universities of Cambridge and Oxford. Libraries remained in the hands of the literate wealthy because they could afford books which were very costly to produce. These libraries performed a valuable function in that "since 1500 the university libraries of Europe have borne more than their share of the task of preserving and extending the cultural heritage of the western world."(1). However, literacy in Britain did grow steadily across the population, a factor which was to contribute to the Industrial Revolution.

Kelly identifies the Guildhall Library of fifteenth century London as the genesis of the idea of the public library although it catered "for a public consisting almost exclusively of clergy and students."(2). The sixteenth century saw setbacks in the development of libraries due to the dissolution of the monasteries and the so - called 'censorship' of the university libraries at both Oxford and Cambridge. This 'censorship' involved the burning or confiscating of material which did not suit the King's purposes. Many great collections were destroyed or broken up, some never to be reassembled. Some of these books found their way to Europe and would eventually return to Britain.

In the seventeenth century the university libraries were revived and the libraries of some cathedrals also grew. During this period some

municipally owned libraries were founded which were usually made up of books left by local notables to the town, e.g. Norwich (1608) and Leicester (1632). Parish churches also made small gift collections of books for public use and circulation. The subject matter of the municipal and church library collections was mainly classical and theological and therefore little used. Despite this discouraging start the municipal libraries experienced some growth into the eighteenth century. However, they were to be eclipsed by the rise of subscription and commercial circulation libraries, the earliest probably being in Edinburgh in 1725. These new libraries provided what might be called 'popular' reading matter, i.e. fiction. Such subscription libraries prospered throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and were common by 1900; the most well known is the London Library, which, founded in 1841, prospers still.

For those who could not afford the monthly or yearly subscriptions, Mechanics Institutes were established by benevolent or philanthropic individuals. Examples of these are the Birmingham Artisans' Library (1795) and the Glasgow Mechanics Institute (1823). These institutions numbered 700 by 1850.

Despite libraries' long and varied history in Britain, their contribution to society as a whole was limited by the lack of material available due to primitive printing methods and initial low levels of literacy. Furthermore, the purpose of early libraries was very different from that of the modern public library. The private libraries were for the households they were kept in and their visitors. The university and cathedral libraries were for students, clergy and scholars. The first

users of libraries would have been members of the wealthy or privileged classes of society, those able to afford and to read books. However, with changes in society and improvements in printing enabling increasing mass production, the advent of the public library was made possible and would come to " represent, in aggregate, one of the great cultural resources in modern Europe." (3). The basis of this cultural resource was initially, and for some time, book and print-based.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries officially began in 1850, but as has already been shown they had their origins in the fifteenth century, and then in municipal, parish and commercial libraries which survived into the twentieth century.

The Public Library Act of 1850 was part of a reform movement which included landmark legislation such as the 1832 Reform Act, the Factory Acts, and the Abolition of Slavery legislation of 1834. The reforming zeal was brought about by a shift in population from rural areas to towns and cities caused by the Industrial Revolution.

Urbanisation had a great effect on society, its class system, family structures and work ethos. As a consequence of the densely populated industrial areas there was a rise in crime and alcoholism. This shocked the emerging bourgeoisie who concerned themselves with the morals of the working classes, not just through Victorian philanthropic concern, but also fear of riot and the spread of disease.

The traditional social institutions of control were ineffective in the new society. The church, formally central to town and village life, lost its control amid the ever increasing population of the industrial urban landscape. Equally, the aristocracy and landowners were without direct influence in the new society. The factory owners were seldom philanthropic, being concerned with how much work could be extracted from their employees.

The conditions in which the majority of the urban population lived and worked gave the impetus for legislation and the formation of movements and institutions aimed at improving the workers' lot and their productivity; examples of these are be the Mechanics Institutes and the Temperance Movement. The pervading thought at the time was that through education and provision of suitable recreation the working classes would work harder, improve themselves and be more content. The result of this would, it was hoped, be less disorder and greater prosperity and profits. Those who attempted to bring public libraries into being were part of this movement.

The first enquiry in parliament was begun by Benjamin Hawes, M.P. for Lambeth, who called for a report on libraries and museums abroad. Following circulation of the report in October 1834, James Silk Buckingham, M.P. for Sheffield, established and chaired a select committee enquiring into the effects of intoxication on the labouring classes. It recommended that as well as the Government, Local Authority and residents should provide "public walks and gardens, or open spaces for athletics and healthy exercises in the open air ... and of district

parish libraries, museums and reading rooms, accessible at the lowest rate of charge."(4). Thus from the beginning public libraries were considered, by the legislators at least, a force against disorder and a civilising influence. Although creation of such libraries was mainly for the benefit of the higher classes rather than the working classes, it shows a faith in the printed word which may seem naive today. Buckingham proposed three bills following the report all of which failed, yet the germ of later legislation was sown.

The Museums Act of 1845 was a further step toward providing public libraries. It "empowered councils of boroughs with a population of at least 10,000 to levy ...., a ½d. rate for the establishment of public 'museums of art and science', and to make an admission charge of not more than 1 d."(5). This effectively laid the foundation for the Public Libraries Act of 1850. Indeed, Canterbury, Warrington and Salford used the 1845 Act to establish libraries as well as, or as part of, museums.

A Select Committee was established in 1849 to look into the public libraries issue - whether they would be used by the working classes and have a consequent benefit for society. Samuel Smiles, author of 'Self Help', said of libraries in the report, "give a man an interesting book to take home with him to his family, and it is possible that the man will stay at home and read his book in preference to going out and spending his time in dissipation ..."(6). It was very much the vogue in what we now know as Victorian thinking that a man, invariably a man, could 'improve' himself by reading or going for a walk. Despite the very deterministic way these people thought, the root of the problem does not seem to have been tackled, poverty being the fault of moral

degeneracy and not vice versa.

1850 PUBLIC LIBRARIES ACT

Following the 1849 Select Committee's report, a bill was presented to Parliament with the aim of creating public libraries. The champion of the bill, William Ewart, thought its provisions would improve the economic welfare of the working classes. Brotherton, his ally, saw in the bill a means for the prevention of crime; this view perpetuated the ideas of reform and philanthropy already mentioned. It was hoped that not only would reform improve the working classes and thus society but would also improve the economy, and consequently middle-class wealth. The bill did have its opponents in those that thought libraries should be left to private-enterprise thinking that finds echoes in recent debates about the future of public libraries. The opponents saw libraries as a luxury or a frippery. As the M.P. for Lincoln said in debate "...however excellent food for the mind might be, food for the body was what was now most wanted for the people."(7).

The bill went through several amendments before eventually being passed. It empowered municipal authorities with a population of 10,000 or more to spend a ½d. rate on the provision of accommodation and maintenance of a library and/or museum. The Act made no allowance for purchase of books. Furthermore, ratepayers had to be polled on the matter, a 2/3 majority being required for the measure to be adopted.

A number of measures extending the Act to Scotland and providing the

power to buy books, newspapers and other materials were passed. This process culminated in the 1866 Amending Act which abolished the population limit which allowed the establishment of libraries in rural areas and smaller towns. A majority, not a 2/3 majority, was required to adopt the Act; the 1d. levy remained. 125 libraries were established between 1847 and 1886, 98 of which were established between 1868 and 1886.

There remained opposition to the establishment of libraries by many ratepayers who objected to paying for working-class reading which was becoming predominantly fiction. The same worries about the borrowing of romances and 'pulp' fiction were raised then as are today.

By the late 1860s, however, fears of Britain's falling behind industrially to Europe, particularly to Germany, and the enfranchising of a large part of the male working-class population by the 1867 Reform Act, led to a change in emphasis in library provision. The ethos of libraries changed from the philanthropic to the educational, the main concern being to improve industry and Britain's place in the world. This change was reinforced by the 1870 Education Act, which contained the principle of compulsory universal elementary education. Thus "the public libraries were now, in the modern phrase, on the educational bandwagon."(8). Yet the role of libraries in education was called into question because of the extent of fiction loaned, as this was not equated with improvement or education despite the comment of S. Smiles to the Commission of 1849. The concern about the fiction reading can be summed up by the remark of J. Taylor Kay, Librarian of Owen College, Manchester in 1878: " Novel reading has become a disease, a dissipation;

and this dissipation, most librarians of circulating libraries will all know from their experience, is as enchanting and quite as hard to get rid of as other dissipation, and quite weakening mentally." (9).

So no sooner had the reforming zealots and concerned bourgeoisie given libraries to the working classes they began to complain that the working classes were reading books from those libraries. There was a sense that the libraries did not belong to the workers, but were more dispensaries for correct literatures. However, libraries did lend books other than pulp fiction and, many loaned sheet music. Furthermore, at this time the type of fiction was not recorded by libraries. They were also hindered by the lack of funds due to the system of levying funds from the rates.

Anomalies were cleared up in 1892 and the problems of the levy rate solved in 1919. However, prior to 1919, although income did rise as the numbers of ratepayers rose, shortage of books was a particularly pressing problem as it was the public libraries' primary function. The 1919 Act amended previous legislation and removed the rate limitation. Library powers were extended to county authorities thus creating the county libraries. The library services could expand to meet rising demand and extend services in rural areas. However, development was often slow due to the post - First World War depression, as it was during World War Two.

During the Second World War the McColvin report of 1942 made a blueprint for post-war libraries the implication of which was initially restricted by post war austerity. By the 1950s society had yet again

begun to change rapidly. As they did at the genesis of public libraries, living standards rose greatly. Another important factor was the Education Act of 1944 which created a boom, not just in schools but also in higher education. There was consequent demand for library services, and particularly for reference libraries. With the lifting of building restrictions in 1958 a library- building boom was begun. During the post-war period "public libraries moved into the modern era. The last vestiges of the old working-class image now rapidly faded ...the library became ...the possession of the community."(10). The public library became more active and brought "increasing emphasis on the function of the public library as purveyor of serious literature."(11).

Kelly describes the 1945-64 period in library history in a quite biblical manner: libraries overflowing with students, teachers and researchers from the newly created learning institutions. The value of the public library seems to have been recognized by industry and those working in local government. Kelly also asserts that television stimulated interest in libraries by raising interest in cultural matters; this would not be said of television today. A general household survey conducted in 1987 showed that of people over 16 years old their home leisure time was passed by 99% watching television and 60% reading a book. Recent research shows that many people watch television and read a book simultaneously: the mechanics of this were not explained.

The 1964 Libraries and Museums Act brought change and trouble to libraries which were exacerbated by the flagging economy of the time. Librarians were still 'thinking big', expansionist ideas of creating the library as a "resource centre for the whole community."(12). This

resulted in the increased relevance of reference material to the community and an increase in lending records, tapes, microfilm, pictures and other modern media. The money was not always available and the expansion was therefore not universal. It seems a shame that at a time when libraries were focusing on great improvements they were unable to achieve because of the economic climate. This is not to ignore relevant advances that were made in the 1960s and early 1970s. However, the 1973 oil crisis and consequent economic trouble and increasing inflation took toll, and staff cutbacks meant that many libraries ran only a basic service. The libraries' role had changed and now tried to offer a wide range of services. New materials, e.g. audio-visual, came into libraries, and libraries were becoming more popular - perhaps also an outcome of recession. Also, as King points out, though "originally conceived as a largely working-class provision, public libraries had become, by the nineteen seventies, institutions which mainly catered for the middle class."(13). It has to be said that there was a larger and broader middle class than when the public libraries were originally provided. The nature of the libraries' clientele has changed and this, obviously, has affected the audience for arts activities that are provided in libraries. This is a matter that will be discussed later.

Further disasters hit the library service in May, 1979 when the great Thatcher was elected by a drugged society. The new government was "committed to a policy of self reliance, the government absorbed the cuts in public expenditure into a political philosophy which expounded the necessity of reducing state intervention in all its forms ...The prospect for public libraries in the 'eighties certainly looked bleak."(14).

The Thatcher government brought about further changes in society which were to have great affect on library provision – even beyond the funding crisis which was to be heightened by changes in local-government funding. First, rate-capping and then the disastrous poll tax restricted and reduced the amount of money that a local government could raise. The new ethos of competitiveness and the stress on effectiveness and performance stirred up debates about the effectiveness of public libraries and whether they should be privatized or generate more income from their services. A hunt for suitable performance and effectiveness measures began. These were built around figures of the number of books borrowed, number of borrowers and number of people making enquiries. Consequently, it became very important to attract people to libraries to boost attendance figures and thus performance and effectiveness.

Could Arts bring people into libraries? Could Arts make people use libraries? And should they contribute to the funding of libraries? These questions have been asked and are being asked still.

In 1983 the Office of Arts and Libraries commissioned the Local Authorities Management Services and Computer Committee to look into income generation in public libraries. It found that an average of 25% of income was derived from product, meaning audio-visual services, pictures, sale of old-book stock and local-history publications. 17% came from use of library resources, which included the letting of rooms.

The new thinking led to questions being asked about the free service at a time when a free service was important, a time of high unemployment.

The sacred cow of free lending was under threat.

The replacement of Mrs Thatcher by Mr Major and then Major's victory in the 1992 General Election may bring changes. The election of Major, with his softer approach, has been said to be a function of the so-called 'caring '90s' attitude. How much care the new government gives to libraries and arts remains to be seen. The creation of the Ministry of Heritage under David Mellor, the self-styled minister for fun, which has responsibility for heritage, sport, tourism and the arts may or may not be a good thing. It does give the Arts a voice in the Cabinet, but what kind of voice? The use of the word 'heritage' seems worrying to some, seeming to legitimize the rose-tinted spectacles vision of England. This is not so helpful to libraries and arts aiming to put new work before an eager public. The implication of traditional values does not bode well for innovation.

The Thatcher years saw a rise in sponsorship for the arts by business and, indeed, some libraries received sponsorship too. The tendency now is for that money to go to sure-fire winners, e.g. 'traditional' plays. And it remains to be seen whether the new National Lottery will provide a further excuse for reduction of government funding of arts and libraries. Will the caring '90s be kind to the arts-and-libraries partnership?

FOOTNOTES.

1. Harris, M.H. History of Libraries in the Western World, 1984, p.201.

2. Kelly, T. A History of Public Libraries in Great Britain, 1845-1975, 1977, p.3.

3. Harris, ref. 1, p. 202.

4. Kelly, ref. 2, p. 7.

5. Kelly, ref. 2, p. 10.

6. King, P. Privatisation and Public Libraries, 1990, p.9.

7. Kelly, ref. 2, p. 14.

8. Kelly, ref. 2, p. 14.

9. Kelly, ref. 2, p. 86.

10. Kelly, ref. 2, p. 353.

11. Kelly, ref. 2, p. 380.

12. Kelly, ref. 2, p. 427.

13. King, ref. 6, p. 26.

14. King, ref. 6, p. 39.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF LIBRARIES IN SOCIETY

> "The library, as a public institution, is both a cause and consequence of its society."(1)

So, the library is a place with books, books with the attendant image problem, a wide range of books. A place criticized for having too many 'shocking' or controversial books, a place criticized for lending too much 'pulp' fiction. The library is at the forefront of breaking down social barriers to literature and literacy but is criticized for being too elitist or too low-brow. The library is a storehouse "of knowledge and repository of 'high culture"' (2), and "over the past 30 years library users have been encouraged to have specific expectations of their local library service" (3). These expectations may be that a library should have books and newspapers and a place for children to play and perhaps read. Clearly, libraries provide for more than this basic service as initially revealed by the title 'Library and Information Service', which most libraries have today. Libraries provide many more services than the common stereotypes. There has thus been much theorizing about the place of the library in society and its function.

Patently, the library is more than a bookstore. From the outset public libraries carried with them something other. Initially they were intended as civilizing agencies against drink and violence, and as agencies for education. They were instituted to create a better and more productive society, an agency of social policy. From these

beginnings as no more than a bookstore, the library has developed more complex functions. It contains a multitude of media and provides access to a multitude of information, with the librarian acting as custodian of information, guiding the user or making sure that the user has full access to information. Information may be a D.I.Y. handbook, or it may be a tide timetable, a government document, literature or art, all held on various types of media.

Society has the right of access through the library and through the library could keep in contact with itself. As Reith says, "the link between society and its culture is provided through underlying institutions... An institution is, in fact, a procedure: an organized, formal, recognized, accepted, and stabilized method of completing an activity or performing a duty that benefits society..." (4). These institutions, be they of government, art or culture, communicate, or have contact with society through agencies such as museums, galleries, mass media or libraries. Indeed, "the library alone among these agencies serves both holistic and historic functions." (5). "Only the library serves all institutions of society and thus may be recognized as an essential force of integration." (6)

The vision of the library as a force for social good and harmony was seen by Reith when he said that the library may, "function as a disconcerting and controversial agency of society, regardless of whether its activities are passive or conducted through deliberate initiation and advocacy." (7). This danger does not emanate from librarians but through those who use the library "resources toward their own benefit and advantage." (8). The danger arises only when one group has

access to certain information and another does not. The use of, and access to, information is an essential right in a modern democracy. "The provision of information makes the library an essentially democratic, and democratizing, vehicle." (9). The library does not bar people from information and is an appropriate agent for breaking down barriers to information, including art. As Christine Ware wrote, "we are almost two nations in a cultural sense," and the library as a democratizing force has a part to play in democratizing culture.

Usherwood supports the view of the library as a vital communication agency, but mentions the danger of the formation of an information elite. This is particularly worrying in a world where information means power. He warns that "if market forces are given free rein, the result could be not only an information elite among users but perhaps more dangerously, an elite group of information providers." (10). The library being fairly free of market forces, not having to sell information to the highest bidder or most influential institution, can provide information democratically. The library provides information to what Usherwood terms the 'Information Poor', a vital function in contemporary society. Usherwood identifies traditional roles for the public library which include the preservation of material, aiding education and research, and provision of information, recreational and cultural facilities. The social function of recreational library use must not be undervalued as it is the main function in terms of numbers although the value has been underestimated by some librarians. The library is capable of promoting all aspects of culture and art - high, mass, pop or local, says Usherwood. Reith identifies four functions of repository, information, education and social advocacy. This may involve cultural activities but

Reith emphasised the uses of information held by a library as most commentators do.

There is a danger in concentrating on the library as purely an information service. McKee points out that there is, "a tendency to look at the library service only from the perspective of information provision." (11). He asserts that concentrating on, or emphasizing this aspect of the library service reinforces the, "concept of information as a commodity and the desirability of commercially exploiting information resources." (12). This would contribute to the undermining of the library service and the development of an 'information poor', and should be avoided. Yet, Mckee also states that, "the public library service is conditioned by the social, technological, economic and political environments in which it operates." (13). This may mean that the public library service will one day have to operate, in part, commercially as an information broker, causing a concentration of information provision to the detriment of other aspects of the service.

Although provision of information is very important, information has a broad definition applying to many things, such as types of information. There is more to the library than information provision. McKee suggests four roles for the library in a concept of community development - recreational, informational, educational and cultural. Most definitions of library function include some statement, or mention of culture or cultural provision. McKee's roles coincide with the provision of the Arts by libraries, Art being a recreation, either by participating or observing it, whether it be a book, a painting, a performance or a workshop. Art can be educational, Art can teach how to do art through example and

through encouragement to those who may be intimidated by Art or think Art not for them. Art provides information on society and how it works. Art can comment on politics and relationships or provide a new perspective in local landscape - rural or urban. Art can act as a mirror for society. Art also represents culture or the type of culture present in society. The library is, or should be, a perfect conduit for art that fulfils these rules, although it may not necessarily be the place for very experimental work.

Art can also play a part in the library function as, "a collective social memory whose presence provides an interface for constituencies at different points on a time-space spectrum" (14) - or in the function of, "libraries [as] the collective memory and mind of society." (15), meaning that the library is a repository of memory through its function of keeping books, papers and other media and art. Art also holds cultural memory, representing shifts in thought and value through history. The library can provide space and time for local artists to chronicle at a local level, not parochially but in the sense of being close and accessible, these shifts and changes. In effect, the library is a forum for ideas, although those who use the library and experience art may not necessarily or immediately think in these terms. The terminology of the function of libraries does not show that there is joy, happiness and constructive thought and activity to be gained through libraries and art involvement.

"The social functions of the library today are more important and comprehensive than at any other time in history as a result of the shift from a rational and individual philosophy to a collective

philosophy." (16). The library has a great part to play in providing Art through this collective philosophy, which has been under attack in the past 14 years, as individual choice is the core of the political 'philosophy' of the government.

"We must... overcome the fear that collective social functions are achieved at too great an expense to individual liberty." (17). The provision of Art through such a collective institution as a library does not restrict individual choice and does not represent the removal of choice from the individual. The individual can choose whether to participate or not. The individual is not having its decisions about art and culture made for it but is being provided with a variety and choice of experiences which might otherwise not be available. The individual retains its freedom of choice despite what critics of libraries might say to the contrary.

FOOTNOTES

1. Usherwood, B. Social Functions of the Public Library : An Exploration, 1985, p. 1.

2. Libraries: Reaching out to the community. In: Two-way Street: Arts and the Community, 1982, p. 12.

3. Ibid., p.12

4. Reith, D. The Library as a Social Agency. In: R. Rogers & K. McChesney, eds. The Library in Society, 1984, p.6.

5. Reith, ref. 4, p. 6.

6. Reith, ref. 4, p. 6.

7. Reith, ref. 4, p. 7.

8. Reith, ref. 4, p. 7.

9. Reith, ref. 4, p. 7.

10. Usherwood, ref. 1, p. 8.

11. McKee, B. Libraries Into the 90s, 1987, p. 23.

12. McKee, ref. 11, p. 1.

13. McKee, ref. 11. p. 1.

14. Reith, ref. 4, p. 9

15. Usherwood, ref. 1, p. 2.

16. Reith, ref. 4, p. 7.

17. Usherwood, ref. 1, p. 9.

CHAPTER THREE

ART, ARTIST AND SOCIETY

"The history of the idea of culture is a record of our reactions, in thought and feeling, to the changed conditions of our common life."(1).

The relationship of the artist to society, and arts to society and the role and function of arts have changed considerably through time. These changes have led to the current, often ambiguous, relationship between the arts and society.

The systems of patronage have changed particularly since the Industrial Revolution. Today, patronage is not of one or two types, as a plethora of possible patrons and funding bodies is at work. The most significant patrons are those in the mass media, in particular the BBC which employs five orchestras and broadcasts 100 hours of classical music a week and 500 plays a year on the radio.

The artist today is seen as an outsider, one commenting on society and events with detachment, often sniping at the establishment and funded by that same establishment. This state of affairs is a comparatively recent development and one created by artists and media to form the ideal of the romantic artist or some variation on such a theme. However, the term 'artist' is as broad as that of art itself. Commercial artists are often well paid for their work as are some writers, actors, painters and musicians. The majority of artists in Britain cannot live

by their work, many being amateur or part-time professionals. It is said that only four or five poets in Britain are able to live by their writing alone.

The artist was initially an instituted figure, part of a court, being recognized officially. The function of such artists, mainly poets or bards, was to record events in their society, in effect making history. They would have been fairly high in the hierarchy, as long as they remained in favour. They were part of the 'system', patronized by the ruling class, as it were.

This is the preliminary position of the artist in a series of five transitions that Raymond Williams identifies in his book 'Culture'. These chart the changes in relations between artist and patron and also society. The first stage was from the instituted artist to one in which a household or family would 'take on' an artist for "what was at once a responsibility and an honour."(2). The function of this arrangement was to define the family's place in society, the artist being a status symbol. The second stage was one in which an artist was retained with money by a court/household; this, particularly, was the case for painters and musicians, a prime example being that of church artists. In the third stage the patron gave protection by social recognition and the patron received honour through the art produced by his pet artist. The fourth stage has seen the development of sponsorship and commercial sponsorship. The patron gives early support and encouragement to the artist or supports the artist's work in its progress to the market. A firm might sponsor in this way, or commission work for itself, to receive publicity and prestige. The fifth stage involves the public as patron,

funding the arts via taxation with public money through public bodies, both local and national.

Williams also describes four types of relationship between artist and market:

1. Artisanal, an artist producing work for direct sale, dependent on the immediate market.

2. Post artisanal, the artist selling work to a distributor who thus becomes their employer.

3. Market professional, particularly writers, ownership remaining with the artist, e.g. through copyright and royalties. Artists are thus directly involved in the market process.

4. Corporate professional, artists employed within corporate structures such as the new media of television, film and radio, including advertising. The institution organizes production from beginning to end.

Artists may have relations with government as well as with, or instead of, the market. The government may fund arts which are not profitable, through its institutions, e.g. the Arts Council or the BBC These institutions are ostensibly free of government control but receive most of their finances from the government. Furthermore, a government may influence arts through its cultural institutions, providing policy or direction to the arts. This would be effected by the more extreme forms

of government. It can be seen that the artist may have many different relationships to the patron and to the market. However, in Britain there are few instituted artists or artists on a retainer. The form of patronage by protection is quite rare too, if not non-existent. The most common form of patronage or employment for an artist is by sponsorship or by government institution. This is not to say that all artists must have a patron, of whatever nature, as many rely on a relationship with the market.

Today the most significant patrons or employers of artists are the media and the government. Local authorities have an important role to play in employing artists. "Apart from the Arts Council, local authorities are the present-day patrons of the arts."(3), whether such be writers in residence, visits by theatre groups or string quartets to schools or events in libraries or, indeed, libraries purchasing 'literature'. Obviously the cutbacks of the 1980s affected the relationship and the emphasis on sponsorship instead of State funding and, some would say, had a devastating affect on the type of arts being produced and shown in Britain. The accusation that companies would sponsor only 'popular' productions, particularly in theatre, has proved mostly correct. Although some experimental work has found sponsorship it has often been found by the better-known experimental companies or artists.

The increase in sponsorship occurred at a time of change in society that saw an increased emphasis on 'style' and 'lifestyle'. There was a sense in the 1980s that 'a correct lifestyle', as approved by style magazines and other media, could be purchased. The Arts did, in a sense, become a lifestyle accessory. Many people had surplus income-those in

employment – and some of this income was spent on Art. This trend was particularly noticeable in opera, which had something of a populist renaissance, seeing Pavarotti at number one in the pop charts. Sponsorship for the 'elite' arts rose and fringe productions decreased. The Arts were a luxury synonymous, often, with lifestyle rather than quality of life. Brent Council cut its arts funding completely as a luxury it could not afford; this was mainly a consequence of poll tax and charge capping. The effects of this action cannot be quantified directly, but it is an indication of the polarization of society.

As has already been mentioned, the cutbacks meant that libraries had to justify themselves to survive. Part of this process involved marketing themselves as a package, part of which was the provision of arts by libraries. What could be called a gap in the market could be identified and libraries could offer arts to those who could not necessarily afford them or, more importantly, felt barred from the arts on the grounds on grounds of their race, sex, social class or standard of education. The libraries are often seen as neutral areas and therefore do not intimidate on those grounds.

FOOTNOTES

1. Williams, R. Culture and Society 1780-1950, 1963, p.285.

2. Williams, R. Culture, 1981, p.39.

3. Wares, C. Libraries and the Arts - the Libraries Perspective. In: P.M. Coleman ed. Libraries and the Arts in Action or Inaction?, 1985, p.23.

CHAPTER FOUR

ART - WHAT IS IT?

"We need religion for religion's sake, morality for morality's sake and art for art's sake." - Cours de philosophie, Victor Cousin.

"Art never expresses anything but itself." - The Decay of Lying, Oscar Wilde.

"My library/Was Dukedom enough." The Tempest (1.ii.109)

"The Arts have the power to enhance our lives and revitalize our environment." - Peter Palumbo, 11th June, 1991.

'Yes, but is it art ?' is an oft-asked question to which there is a myriad of answers. By merely signing a urinal Marcel Duchamp had created a work of art, or so he said, the logic being that an artist creates art. Also his peers and critics, the people that arbitrate about art and its worth, were willing to agree that Duchamp had created a work of art by signing a formerly commonplace item. What about the workman that actually made the urinal? At one time the act of creating an object, even of everyday use, would have been a work of art in a sense that it involved the skill of an artisan to create. The original sense of the word art was "a human attribute, a 'skill'."(1). Yet Art has come to mean "a particular group of skills, the 'imaginative' or 'creative' arts."(2). In the Oxford English Dictionary both original and current

usages of the term Art are listed – in fact, several permutations of the word – examples of which are as follows:

1. "Skill; its display or application, skill in doing anything as the result of knowledge and practice.
2. Human skill as an agent, human workmanship. Opposed to nature.
3. The application of skill to the arts of imitation and design, painting, engraving, sculpture, architecture; the cultivation of these in its principles, practice, and results; the skilful production of the beautiful in visible forms."(3). In the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary the definition given varies slightly; "the application of skill to subjects of taste, as poetry, music, etc.; esp. in modern use: perfection of workmanship or execution as an object in itself."(4).

The modern usage, then, includes part of the older and newer definitions of art, those of skilful production and of what would now be known as the Arts. Note the use of the words 'beautiful' and 'subjects of taste and skill'. The former suggests that value judgements have to be made about taste and beauty, and this factor contributes to ambiguity or conflict in defining Art. The latter word, 'skill', suggests training to acquire such skill as to create art, but which skills, and what about the appropriation of objects by artists such as Duchamp, Warhol and, most recently, Jeff Koons?

So 'Art' at first referred to any skill but, although this meaning is still used, "a more specialized meaning has become common"(5) i.e. works of Art, Artist and the Arts. The word was first used in English form from the 13th century but did not begin to be specialized until the 17th century when it began to be used in reference to 'liberal arts', as

taught at university, these liberal arts being "grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy."(6). From the 17th century the word became increasingly specialized and came to refer to "painting, drawing, engraving and sculpture"(7) and " came to stand for a special kind of truth, 'imaginative truth'"(8). Artists became special people, people who were artistic or artistical, meaning blessed with special skills, more than workmen/women. "The arts - literature, music, painting, sculpture, theatre - were grouped together as having something essentially in common which distinguished them from other human skills."(9).

The notion that the arts and its practitioners were outside of normal everyday experience, 'something other', begins with such definitions. This creates the cult of the artist but also excludes people from the arts. The use of such words as taste and beauty has already been commented on as requiring certain value judgements and these judgements are generally made by critics, artists and patrons.

It is the case, perhaps less so today, that art requires a certain education to appreciate because art was created by those of a certain education who had access to galleries and publishers or other such intermediaries with the market. Art is often perceived as the preserve of the well educated as it is produced by artists(well educated/intellectual) for their own kind: thus, the lower classes are excluded from art by their own perception, by their education and by their being unconnected the experience of the artist. However, if broader definitions of art are used those formerly excluded should be able to participate in art and contribute as well.

Is it the case that a broader definition would remove the snobbery surrounding art ? Rock-and-roll music, advertising posters, soap operas, situation comedy, farce and naive painting are all art forms, but many choose to make divisions between high and low art, e.g., classical music (high art) and pop music (low art). These divisions are based on certain value judgements based on assumptions such that a more complex piece of music or painting is of greater worth than a less complex work. Another example of these divisions is a recent debate held on The Late Show asking whether a Bob Dylan song is better than a Keats poem. Some argue that certain art forms are naturally higher than others but this really, again, relies on certain value judgements being made and in a collective manner. Yet, this tenet should mean that a pop song is of higher worth than a classical symphony because more people buy and listen to pop music than to classical, more people read Jeffery Archer or Jackie Collins than Chaucer or Joyce. The logic of the market would lead to the assumption that on the basis of collective value judgement the so-called low forms of art are in fact high, and the high art low on account of their lesser popularity. 'I don't know much about art but I know what I like'. The notions of high and low are used to segregate society by assuming that 'low art' is for the lower classes and 'high art' is for the higher classes; this is particularly English. As Judith Williamson has written in The Guardian, "If you actually think an item of popular culture is good, you appear to be ill-educated or cynical: either ignorant of 'high culture' or deliberately 'slumming it' among the low to make a political point."(10). She goes on to assert that there is good and bad in all forms of art and that there "is scope for beauty and truth in every form. The thing is, you have

to be prepared to find it."(11).

This is a well rehearsed debate and could go on-and-on and, indeed, does. There are so many conundrums to be solved which never will be. It is clear that art can be defined in many ways but what should art mean to libraries ? The library is not a gallery, theatre or music venue, but can be. It is not the libraries' job to mount popular musical extravaganzas nor to mount highly experimental German theatre in the inner cities or elsewhere for that matter. Libraries do have a place in art provision and it probably lies between the two extremes mentioned above. Libraries need not try to convert people to art but should make available a wide range of art and, through that provision, experiences that may have been beyond its users' scope for whatever reason. The library should not be a bastion of snobbery and should to try to overcome the poor image of the arts held by many people due to the historical reasons already chronicled. Neither should the library be an evangelist in the arts field, if only because that would put people off. The library can provide a wide experience of various art forms and information about them but it cannot educate its users: they must be encouraged to do that for themselves if they wish. The education system has a great role to play in this but has consistently failed to do so, thus contributing to the exclusion of a great many people from the arts, and vice versa.

FOOTNOTES

1. Williams, R. Culture & Society, 1780-1950, 1963, p.15.
2. Williams, R. Ref. 1, p. 15.
3. Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd. ed., 1989, p. 657.
4. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1983, p. 109.
5. Williams, R. Keywords, 1983, p. 40.
6. Williams, R. Ref. 5, p. 41.
7. Williams, R. Ref. 1, p. 15.
8. Williams, R. Ref. 1, p. 15.
9. Williams, R. Ref. 1, p. 15.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ARTS AND LIBRARIES PARTNERSHIP

The arts and library partnership has been in existence for quite some time. The original libraries in Britain would have held works about art and, indeed, some books were, or are, works of art themselves, e.g. illuminated manuscripts. However, by the very nature of the libraries and their owners' place in society these collections were seldom open to the public. With the gradual development of the public library service, first commercially and informally (ad hoc) and then by legislation, 'arts' were more widely available to those who wished to enquire. As the Librarian of Liverpool public library, opened 1852, reported to Parliament in 1852 "the ready access, without any unpleasant restriction, to high class works of art and science, hitherto (almost) beyond the reach of the artisan, will no doubt have a tendency to improve, and to raise new desires for intellectual enjoyment; this progress is shown in the increasing interest in the reference and lending libraries, and doubtless a new and beautiful tone of thought, of feeling, of refinement, and of happiness will arise from the diffusion of these innocent and elevating pleasures which such institutions are calculated to provide."(1). Note the use of language: 'beautiful tone of thought', 'high class works of art' and 'raise new desires for intellectual enjoyment'. This is the language of improvement, of philanthropy. The assumption is that the arts would raise the workers intellectually, keeping them from the gin palace or some such vice. However, the arts here means high-class art, the established forms of art, the art of the establishment. It was not art produced by the people or that they had

intellectual access to through education. Yet, it was meant to elevate the people.

The concept of the arts and libraries in partnership started at the beginning of public libraries but has gone through several changes of emphasis, and name and style. The initial provision of the arts was not universal, but a fair number of libraries did provide lectures, sciences and arts classes and engaged in "encouraging the activities of local cultural societies."(2). Indeed, in the early 1850s there was something of a lecture boom in libraries, a trend which would level out eventually. Many of the activities provided by libraries took similar form to those provided by the mechanics institutes and although technical classes were initially well attended they did not continue; and by 1900 they were an unimportant part of library work and became the responsibility of the education authorities after the 1902 Education Act.

Lectures were very popular, booming in the early 1850s and continuing to be popular into the 20th Century. As Kelly quotes from Library World of 1898 (Vol. 1, 8121), lectures "are generally recognized, not only as valuable aids in making known the contents of the library on particular subjects, but as tending to foster a closer relationship between the institution and its frequenters."(3). This view is closer to the contemporary uses of arts in libraries, no longer purely improving and educating but publicizing too, raising consciousness of the library and its services. Lectures were the most prominent type of arts activity but talks, readings, exhibitions and concerts were also given by libraries. World War One had a somewhat weakening affect on library provision of such services as libraries reverted to providing a

basic service. It is important to note the absence of mass media prior to World War One; there were newspapers and phonograms but nothing like the range of items available today or in the post-war era. Public meetings and talks played a major part in the communication of ideas and thought. The medium for mass entertainment was the theatre or music hall, not television or radio.

Between the Wars libraries began again with 'extension activities'. Lectures, exhibitions, story hours for children, encouragement to local societies and lending books to adult education classes. Kelly points to the rise of the mass media and its 'probable affect on libraries' i.e. fewer people attending lectures. The mass media between the Wars comprised radio, cinema and newspapers, all of which increased in popularity in the inter-war years due to improvements in technology resulting in wider and cheaper availability. About 3,000,000 people attended cinemas each week in Britain in the 1930s. The BBC was formed in 1927 as a company, later to become a corporation, with Lord Reith's mission to entertain and educate the public. The mass media proved tough competition for libraries, the cinema being particularly glamorous and escapist during the depression era. The BBC was also very popular. Although the style of the early BBC may seem stiff and elitist today it was very popular indeed and did succeed in entertaining and educating a mass audience in their homes. Libraries did hold 'wireless listening and discussion groups' but these were short lived. Librarians were hindered in providing arts activities by the depression and consequent lack of funds. The most important aspect of the library service was free reference and lending of books which would include literature and those on art.

A London and Home Counties report for 1939 showed that of 102 urban libraries 36 organized weekly, fortnightly or monthly lectures from their own funds, given free. 40 held exhibitions of painting, pottery or photographs. 45 libraries provided meeting places at nominal rates. This level of provision was quite good, if not entirely adequate, and it does compare quite favourably with later library work with the arts. However, the nature of libraries' art provision remained , for the most part, based in the books the libraries held.

World War Two brought further set-backs, although libraries played a more important role than in the previous world conflict: they were not a priority area for funding. Many libraries were severely damaged or destroyed by bombs. A great many books were lost when the British Museum was struck. Indeed, the book warehouses of several publishers were burnt out, creating a book shortage and, incidently, the stimulus for encouraging new writing.

In 1945 the Library Association produced 'Proposals for the Post-war Development of the Public Library Service', which held that, "It is the function of the public library to provide books;...The organization of lectures and other adult education activities, therefore, is not properly part of the library service, but the provision of books for these purposes should be the responsibility of the public library system."(4). Despite this seemingly discouraging signal the post-war period provided a stimulus for arts activity. Groups were formed, the first being the St. Pancras Arts and Civic Council in 1946. These groups attempted to bring together libraries, individuals and organizations interested in

music, drama, the visual arts and other cultural activities. A further stimulus to libraries and arts was the 1948 Local Government Act which allowed that a 6-penny rate could be spent by local government on entertainment and cultural activities. The new legislation was couched in vague language, which may have contributed to the disappointing outcome of its provisions in many areas. Ralph Berry illustrates this with the example of a local authority which, thinking itself generous, sent one guinea to a theatre to support its work.

Libraries experienced a building boom in the late 1950s and this coincided with the education boom. Yet, in a statement to the Roberts Committee of 1958, the Library Association affirmed yet again that the primary duty of the library was to satisfy reading needs; "It is not considered a proper extension of library function for the librarian to indicate such activities as amateur dramatics, art exhibitions, pageants...."(5). The 1950s were disappointing in the light of what could have been achieved, taking into account education and post-war optimism. In 1962 a survey of 585 libraries, 236 of which issued figures, showed the following:(6)

	ADULT	JUNIOR
Lectures	42	26
Film-shows	20	24
Play reading	4	19
Poetry reading	2	1
Art exhibitions	25	4
Book weeks	3	17
Concerts	16	-

Drama	7	1
Arts festivals	4	-
Film making	3	-
Letting rooms	56	-

Another survey, from 1964, showed that of 380 library authorities 276 were doing some form of extension work. 135 had art exhibitions, 137 'general exhibitions', 122 held public lectures and 18 were involved in arts festivals.(7).

The 1960s saw much change in libraries, and expansion of extension activities. The 1964 Act had a very positive effect and helped create an "expansionist, outward looking attitude characteristic of this period."(8). Theories of the purpose and nature of extension activities began to emerge, for example in H. Joliffe's Public Library Extension Activities (1962). The purpose of extension work was to inform people about the library and "the library would seek to identify itself closely with all kinds of people, individually or in groups."(9). Other purposes were to inform users, widening their outlook and horizons, and as propaganda for the library to get support. Joliffe also stated that "all activities must be concerned with the whole population, even if only theoretically."(10). These principles are essentially those that are in operation today, to involve, or be open to the involvement of, the whole community. Joliffe also recommends a continuous programme of events and urges a long-term vision. Furthermore, "dignity and good taste, provided 'stuffiness' is avoided, must always enter into the work; the second-rate activity should be shunned."(11) and the library "should strive to be novel"(12) by employing constant review. Joliffe also urges

co-operation between authorities. These ideals are relevant today but are not always adhered to.

Coinciding with an increase in extension activities was the beginning of the community arts movement. It developed "from a number of related cultural strands. It bought together in a rather muddled form a number of practices; bringing art to the community, promoting art in and by communities and representing communities ignored by the dominant culture."(13). This and the general mood of the 1960s contributed much to the expansion of arts and library involvement. It was hindered by the economic difficulties which began in the mid-1960s but much positive change was initiated. The view that the library was a community resource centre became popular. The library was becoming more than merely a book repository with lectures. This change was reinforced by change in the availability of new types of media such as audio tape and computers, the period of the information explosion and 'white heat of technology'. As already noted, the 1960s were not without troubles, but genuine efforts were made to redefine the libraries' role and these included a change in the provision of art. "The social consciousness of the 1960s was reflected in a national cornucopia of library outreach services... but when the financially troubled 1970s hit those outreach items were the first budget items cut."(14). There was a severe retraction of library services in the 1970s due to the economic slump experience after the 1973 oil crisis. Outreach/extension activities were the first items to go and, yet again, services were cut to the minimum, i.e. book-lending and reference.

In 1979 the Conservatives were elected and a change of policy was

brought about. Further austerity was created by changes in local and national government funding. The effect of the changes was dramatic, a drive for efficiency and effectiveness meant that any free service must justify itself and so "the marketing movement arrived on the library scene, with buzzwords such as 'output measures' ... helping to put outreach on the rebound."(15). As Joliffe stated in 1962, one purpose of outreach/extension is for propaganda, to gain support from users and funders. Public libraries were made aware of the need to establish goals and long-term plans, to survive and to seem relevant. This awareness created a service which was "not as morally driven as in the 1960s"(16) and yet, as Maidment points out, "arts in association with public libraries have been hampered in Britain 1. By financial restrictions, 2. By legal restrictions and 3. By the deliberate choice of librarians and library authorities."(17): these tenets are true on all three counts . Librarians are not necessarily keen on arts activities, seeing them as sideshows to the purpose of a library. Such an attitude is reinforced by the training given to librarians, which lacks arts emphasis.

The 1980s were a time of change for library services, a time of constant turmoil, and they were forced to adapt to a new and hostile environment. Many questions were raised about the function of libraries in society and this will be addressed in the next chapter, together with the role that the arts and library partnership plays in the new environment.

FOOTNOTES

1. Kelly, T. A History of Public Libraries in Great Britain, 1845-1975., 1977, p. 45.

2. Kelly, ref. 1, p. 95.

3. Kelly, ref. 1, p. 199.

4. Kelly, ref. 1, p. 411.

5. Kelly, ref. 1, p. 412.

6. Joliffe, H. Public Library Extension Activities., 1962, p. 21.

7. Kelly, ref. 1, p. 413.

8. Kelly, ref. 1, p. 439.

9. Joliffe, ref. 6, p. 21.

10. Joliffe, ref. 6, p. 23.

11. Joliffe, ref. 6, p. 42.

12. Joliffe, ref. 6, p. 42.

13. Lewis, J. Art, Culture and Enterprise: The politics of Art and the Cultural Industries., 1990, p. 113.

14. Suyak Alloway, C. Bookmobiles: Alive and Kicking. Reference Quarterly, 1989, 29(2), 177.

15. Suyak Alloway, ref. 14, p. 177.

16. Suyak Alloway, ref. 14, p. 177.

17. Maidment, W.R. Public Libraries and the Arts. Library Review, 1986, 35(1), 33.

CHAPTER SIX

HOW SHOULD AN EVENT BE RUN?

"The public library is a major agency of arts support by nature of its premises, resources and information function." – Peggy Heeks.

The first comprehensive attempt to map out the relationship between public libraries and the arts in the U.K. was carried out by Peggy Heeks and published in 1989 under the title, 'Public Libraries and the Arts: An Evolving Partnership.'. The report attempted to quantify the relationship by collecting data on various aspects of arts and libraries, by questionnaire, such as the title of the librarian and committee responsible for the arts, and use of library accommodation. It is worth mentioning some of that report's findings as they comprise the most up-to-date commentary on the current arts and library partnership.

47% of library authorities answering the questionnaire had a "Chief Officer of department/directorate responsible for public libraries included an arts or leisure element."(1). 74% of authorities said the library department had a responsibility for the arts. 75% of the committees concerned with public libraries had an arts/leisure element. Many of these departments also had a leisure and/or museum remit. Heeks comments that it is clear that many of these interests were running parallel and not co-operating, the structure being "an administrative convenience."(2).

43% of authorities answered yes to the question as to whether the

library had a policy statement with reference to art/culture. 37% had a separate statement on the arts. However, 71% believed that "libraries have no obligation to promote the arts."(3). The report notes that many librarians distrusted arts policy statements, the perceived role of the library to the arts being varied, mentioning words like 'entrepreneur' and 'enablers' and "a growing belief that local government has especially a strategic and monitoring role in arts promotion."(4).

48% held no regular arts events except for clubs and book weeks, and 45% of authorities' arts events were 'one off' events. The report notes that active authorities were in the minority with 40% having a high arts involvement. 41% reported involvement in a major arts initiative in the previous 3 years (prior to 1989). 32% had initiatives planned and 37% had had an artist in artist or writer residence. Some authorities with little or no arts involvement said it was not necessarily because they did not want to be involved but because other organizations were doing it already. This suggests library authorities feel they are in competition with other 'venues' rather than providing a particular type of arts service. This may be in part due to the fact that only 43% of authorities had formed liaison with the relevant Regional Arts Association (RAA), although 61% said that they had informal links.

One of the most surprising findings of the report was that "public library support for literature is not widespread, but is intensive in some authorities."(5). Only 38% had a policy on acquisition and promotion of works of literary merit and a majority of librarians felt no specific commitment to literature. This is very surprising in the light of the continuing debate about the high levels of borrowing of 'pulp'

fiction. Perhaps the problem lies in any definition of literary merit or an unwillingness to seem so politically incorrect as to champion, or even politely recommend, a well-written book.

The report then makes some recommendations for the improvement for the arts and library partnership:

1. Include space for arts use in all new public library buildings.
2. Guidelines should be made for such spaces.
3. A study should be carried out of video hire services.
4. There should be regional studies of information needs in the arts field.
5. Closer liaison between public libraries and RAAs.

A look at other recommendations made by various people and organizations will help highlight areas of concern and map out what libraries should be doing in relation to the arts.

In 'Libraries and the Arts – the Arts Perspective'(6) Raphael Gonley sets out 'eight commandments' for arts and libraries to follow for a successful partnership:

1. Use of taxpayers' money must involve all sections of society in the benefits.
2. Do not arbitrate on taste.
3. Structures should be based on the first 2 commandments.
4. Optimize resources – human, physical and others.

5. Funding bodies should be overall planners' assessing needs rather than promoting projects directly.
6. Funding bodies should be enablers and encouragers.
7. Needs must be assessed at the point of benefit; the community must be deeply involved in assessing its own need.
8. Local Authorities should all devise policies for the arts and targets to achieve policy objectives.

Gonley also calls for all Local Authorities to appoint arts officers, as such an appointment is an investment. Also, libraries should use the RAA services more, and their own facilities.

Patrick Conway in 'Libraries and Community Arts' (7) mentions the advantages of libraries to the community arts. He says that libraries are catalysts for community arts work, a library being a "treasure house of resources."(8). The advantage of a library includes its location, opening hours, local links, and library staff who are trained and educated people. Many people use libraries, thus creating an audience for community arts. Those people use the library because they want to, not because they are forced or obliged to, and that provides an open-minded audience. Part of the library's treasure house stores information and ideas essential to community arts. Having stated why the library is such a good place for community arts he suggests what the arts should be like and involve. They should involve participation, not necessarily only by audience/spectators, but also by means of the personal and creative self-development of those creating. The arts should be accessible, and barriers should be broken be they

geographical, financial or psychological. The arts should be relevant to the community by creating initiatives from a continuing dialogue with individuals and groups. Finally, Conway states that the arts are not an optional extra but a means of community expression, a vehicle for comment and opinion.

In 'Libraries and the Arts in Partnership' (9) a strategy for arts development is suggested. Beginning with a survey of local arts' needs and facilities then formalization of an arts policy. An arts officer should be appointed and a three-year development plan should be drawn up, involving other departments and setting year-by-year priorities.

Justin Lewis questions the use of cultural strategies and suggests 6 areas of cultural value to be considered when organizing, or being involved in, art, as follows:

1. Value of diversity.
2. Value of innovation (R and D in industry).
3. Value of art in the environment.
4. Value of social pleasure.
5. Value of creative expression.
6. Economic value of art.

Lewis questions the definitions of, or assumptions about, art, saying they are too middle class and elitist. Lewis says art has an image problem due to "the legacy of the dominant aesthetic values" in society and this creates invisible 'no entry' signs to the arts which serve "to exclude a majority of people."(10). Marketing, Lewis suggests, is the way to overcome this and suitable marketing strategies must be

developed to this end. "A broader definition of art and culture is needed. It is not enough to merely revamp the traditional 'high' arts for popular consumption or, conversely, to leave the commercial popular entertainment to the free market."(11), and he goes on to say that "you do not give everyone access to the arts simply by making them cheaply available or free."(12). A library may provide excellent arts events and facilities but, due to the image and definitions and preconceptions of art, they will not reach as many people as they could and "the aim should be to attract as broad an audience as possible"(13). As the primary purpose of the library is to expose the maximum number of its users to the exhibits. There is no shame in an arts event being popular or well attended but, often, libraries seem ashamed of the arts. Librarians should not be apologetic, shy or ignorant of "their catalytic role in arts promotion and development."(14). Indeed, "if libraries were to show some gumption and initiative in supporting new writing... then the literary novel might have a future."(15). This is comment which applies not only to literature but to all arts that a library can house.

The final set of commandments is set out by Messenger:

1. Audience research must be carried out because although "there must be stimulation if the arts are to fulfil one of its primary roles, that of challenge"(16), there must also be an audience.
2. An appropriate venue should be used.
3. The event should be professionally mounted.
4. The artist should be properly treated – contract, travel and accommodation properly arranged.
5. Make sure that the staff share enthusiasm and

commitment.

6. You must have funding and aim to recoup at least some money spent.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Studies of the provision of art and arts facilities should be carried out, and local arts needs should also be investigated.
2. There should be closer links with local arts bodies, e.g. RAAs.
3. People should be given what they want but, also, room must be left in a programme for challenging material, a balance; research the audience.
4. You must involve, or attempt to involve, all sections of society: they pay the taxes and people should be involved in the work whenever possible.
5. Use the resources of the library to advantage and optimize them.
6. Arts in libraries should break down barriers between people and art that are present at other venues.
7. Funding bodies should enable and encourage.
8. Perhaps move towards less elitist definitions of art.
9. There must be good marketing - not to exclude but to include - to encourage the whole community to attend.
10. More space should be given to arts in new buildings.
11. There should be more and better training of librarians;

they should not be expected to 'do the arts' in the lunch break.

12. Local authorities and libraries should create policies to these ends. Arts officers should be appointed and strategies drawn up with yearly targets set.

Perhaps these recommendations/guidelines will seem idealistic or impossible to some. The funds are not always available to appoint arts officers, send librarians on courses or carry out studies. However, any attempts towards implementing these recommendations would help the library and arts partnership; not all of them involve extra funds, as some entail solely a shift in thinking or attitude. A different way of thinking often brings good results and does not necessarily cost anything, as with goodwill.

Footnotes

1. Heeks, P. Public Libraries and the Arts: An Evolving Partnership, 1989, p. 15.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

CASE STUDIES

LEICESTERSHIRE LITERATURE FESTIVAL

The Leicestershire Literature Festival ran from 21st September to 5th October 1991, and was the first County-wide event and the largest event undertaken in the County. The initial impetus for the Festival came from the Arts Council's 'Glory of the Garden' report after which Leicestershire County Council freed some money and created the post of Arts Development Officer. However, the Festival was not run by this officer but by the Head of Arts Services to People with Special Needs.

The Festival involved 27 authors' visits/talks, workshops, music and a specially commissioned play. In all there were 70 events mainly taking place in Leicestershire libraries, with one event in a museum and one in Leicester's Arts Centre (Phoenix Arts). The average attendance at the events was 35%; the majority of the events were attended by between 11 and 30 people, which was a good number.

As it was the first undertaking of its kind in the County the library organizers had no background in promotion or running of large events, in selecting events the organizers relied on 'gut feeling'. A broad appeal was wanted and it was therefore not too literary; attempts were always made to link events to literature but the links were sometimes tenuous. In pursuance of broad appeal there was a wide range of events, hopefully catering for as many people as possible. A play was

commissioned based on the local history and local reminiscence series of books 'Leicestershire as I remember it'.

The long term planning of the Festival meant that problems arose in securing the involvement of authors and performers who could not necessarily commit themselves months, or even a year, in advance. For example, 270 authors were approached but only 27 were able to appear. The organizers were aware of the practical problems as a feasibility study had been carried out, by looking at other festivals and events. As a result of these investigations a festival-support group was established through which ideas could be discussed and problems solved.

One of the limitations placed on the Festival was that of audience size; fire regulations limited attendance to about 80 per library. Space was another limitation as not all libraries are suitable for theatre or other live performance. The space limitations also dictated ticket prices, as libraries cannot provide the facilities for audiences offered by theatres and other purpose-built spaces.

Sponsorship was sought and found by studying the Yellow Pages and attempting to match sponsors to events. Three bands of sponsorship were offered to sponsors, starting at £50. The minimum amount of sponsorship that had to be found was £4,000, and £6,000 was raised. The sponsors, mostly local businesses, were approached by letter on paper specifically designed for the Festival. Design and presentation were to play an important part in the promotion of the Festival. The sponsors were offered a good 'package': in return for their sponsorship

they gained prominent mention in all promotional literature and at the events they sponsored. Another aspect of the importance of presentation was that of 'selling' the Festival to the library staff. A presentation was given to the area managers. They then spread the word to their staffs, and although this procedure was not entirely successful, the majority of staff did become well-versed about the Festival.

The Literature Festival was the major event in the County in 1991 but, additionally, a programme of 40-60 events is mounted each year with a budget. In 1992, for example, a budget of £13,000 provided a small series of events with a Battle of Bosworth theme: a play, some music contemporary to the battle, and a talk. There were also two World War One events, one a presentation about the war poets and the other an Ivor Novello concert. Such events are non-profit making, as was the Literature Festival, and the most popular are music and drama, literature events being the least attended, and hence the need for a festival of literature to redress the balance. The festival succeeded in promoting not only libraries, but also the literature held in libraries. Furthermore, the Festival was successful in attracting audiences that were sizeable for a festival of its type.

Another such festival is planned for 1993, this time with a theme of 'New Horizons' which is intended to help marketing and publicity, and a larger budget has been allocated to the 1993 Festival. Also planned are theatre involvement and a link with dance, as 1993 is the Year of Dance. Ideally dance events with a theme of literature will be arranged.

The aim of Leicestershire's Arts and Libraries programme is to develop the potential of libraries in Leicestershire as venues for arts activities and to create an audience for literature-based activities. The initial, 1991, Leicestershire Literature Festival fulfilled this aim and the organizers of its 1993 successor intend to build on that achievement.

LYTCHET MALTRAVAS, DORSET

In early 1992 Dorset County Council decided to mark the opening of a new small library (with a stock of only 8,000 books) in Lytchet Maltravas. It was discovered that the new building had excellent acoustics, and in order to take advantage of this, a string quartet was hired to play 'background' music during the event.

The occasion was organized by the Deputy County Librarian, rather than the local librarian, and as the purpose of the event was individual, simply to mark the launch of a new library, funds were provided by the Dorset County Council Chief Executive and not through sponsorship: it was not designed to serve any publicity purposes. There are no similar events planned for the future, as funding is a problem.

READING CENTRAL LIBRARY AND THE BERKSHIRE LITERATURE FESTIVAL

The library and arts partnership has been spasmodic in Berkshire because of funding and policy difficulties, and is undergoing a major policy rewrite. The purpose of this change is to improve cost-

effectiveness and focus on enabling people to carry out arts activities. The resulting policy will then act as a framework on which individual libraries will base their own policy. The Library and Information Service has drawn up a mission statement and Service aims which states that the; "Berkshire Library and Information service provides major community facilities the purpose of which is to enable and encourage individuals or groups to gain unbiased access to information, knowledge and works of creative imagination." The statement upon the Arts acknowledges "the significant part which the Arts have to play in the economy of Berkshire and the positive contribution which the Arts already make to the social well-being of the people of Berkshire." The statement also promises to promote knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts and to liaise with other appropriate agencies.

The Central Library in Reading (built in 1984) has a specially designed performance space which has been little used. Examples of its use include a performance by a Chamber Music Trio and the performing of excerpts from plays by local amateur dramatic societies to promote the works. The reasons for the lack of use of this space were identified as problems in planning and marketing. The events that were mounted were of a one off nature and sparsely attended; there was continuity of events, and little money was available for marketing such sporadic productions. The lack of funds meant there could be no continuous programme despite a wish to establish one.

The major event in which Berkshire libraries are involved is the Berkshire Literature Festival, which has been running annually since 1989. This is a community-based venture, initiated by a local poet, and

its formula involving an even mix of readings by authors and workshop events has proved very successful. The Festival is funded by Berkshire County Council, Southern Arts, sponsored by a local bookshop and run by a non-profit-making organization, despite a turnover of £2,000 in 1992.

The 1992 Festival took the theme of 'New Worlds', this aided marketing and attracted media attention. A writer held writing surgeries successively in four libraries across the County, and four of the other eighteen events also took place in libraries. And although their involvement in the venture does not seem large, the libraries are represented on the Steering Committee of the Festival.

The arts and libraries events are limited by the funds available to libraries which have been limited by the structure of finance within the Local Authority. However, as with many other Authorities, a reorganization is taking place with the aim of enabling people to arrange events or activities with as little drain on library resources in terms of money and staff time. This is an example of an increasing trend in libraries.

MURDER IN THE LIBRARY: ARTS FESTIVAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

'Murder in the Library' was a large-scale, County-wide arts festival with a crime theme, which took place between the 3rd and 30th of October, 1991: it was mainly library based. The events included a specially commissioned play, author visits/talks, concerts, police lectures, a literary dinner and several competitions.

A working party of interested persons from libraries throughout the County ran the festival, the activities of which were coordinated by the Arts Unit of the Cambridgeshire Libraries and Information Service. The organizers faced particular difficulty in mounting the Festival because reorganization and funding streamlining were taking place while the Festival was being planned. Nevertheless, the difficulties were overcome, and success was achieved. The Festival was the second of its type in the County and was based on the structure of the previous festival, of 1989, which had a Science-fiction theme and had been successful. The theme of crime was chosen in 1991 because it was popular as a fictional genre in all media and thus a commercial proposition. That popularity facilitated expansion of the Festival by building on the experience of the previous festival. It also attracted outside organizations' participation in addition to that of libraries, although the Festival was to remain library orientated.

The organizers commissioned a play rather than use an already written work. Thus they were able to dictate the play's theme and how it would be performed in the libraries, which were not built with theatrical performance in mind. Also, royalties could be gained from the performance of the play after the Festival. For the visits/talks, authors were found by contacting two publishers who identified appropriate writers with local links. Two extra 'stars' were also hired, useful for publicity and certain to attract a large audience. Cambridgeshire schools were involved in the musical side of the Festival when pupils performed a specially commissioned work from Patrick Gowers based on the themes he wrote for the television series of Sherlock Holmes. The

concert was compered by Edward Hardwicke (Dr. Watson.) and was attended by HRH The Prince Edward. The musical side of the Festival is one example of the involvement of other organizations' participation. There were three competitions running throughout the Festival, each requiring its own discipline: short-story writing, photography and book cover designing. A general-knowledge quiz also took place with the clues being broadcast by the local radio station. Other quizzes could be found on the book marks available in libraries which featured well-known crime writers.

Sponsorship and funding for the Festival came from a wide range of sources. They were the Arts Board, the local newspaper (which also printed the 'Festival Diary' promotion leaflet), the Arts Council, publishers, small businesses and bookshops. Despite the level of sponsorship and funding, a small charge was made for most events to generate income for libraries. The Festival did make money in the sense that it raised income from charging, but it was not self financing.

The library resources used by the Festival were the staffs' time which was volunteered, as no money was available to pay staff for overtime. The librarians drew up book lists and promoted the Festival locally. However, the County's librarians have no specific Arts remit, only an activity remit, and, therefore, whether they participate in art activity is a matter of personal choice. Furthermore, consequent upon the reorganization and streamlining of library resources there is now no time available to librarians to organize activities, and neither is there any funding. These lacks place severe restrictions on the organization of a further festival; the only alternative would be to hire a

professional organizer.

The time and commitment of library staff at 'ground level' to the staging of the Festival have been identified by the organizers as very important factors. When the staff were not committed to the Festival events failed because of lack of promotion. Staff members needed training in promoting and organizing events. Furthermore, the organizers recognized that the Festival had not been 'sold' to the staff as well as it might have been; this was a vital factor, as the staff volunteered their time. The difficulty with staff time and commitment would seem to militate against library involvement. The libraries were used as venues to further diversification of the libraries' role, to combat the stereotype of that roles' being solely the mundane lending of books. It was useful publicity for libraries, providing opportunity to demonstrate the variety of functions hitherto not recognized by the majority of the public. Many libraries proved very successful as venues, although others were poorly attended and some events were cancelled. Post-Festival review suggested that success or failure of an event did rely on the commitment of staff. Such conclusions highlight the need for training and the promotion of events to staff, no matter what the type of undertaking. The training should involve an explanation of how funding works and how to market an event.

In summary, the Festival was a success but, regrettably, the experience gained will probably go unused because of the severe limitation of staff time imposed by implementation of reorganization and streamlining measures, which will prevent participation by staff members in matters other than provision of a basic library service.

BATH CENTRAL LIBRARY, EXHIBITION SPACE

The Bath Central Library was built in the early 1980s, in a shopping mall, with a specially designed Meetings and Exhibition Room. The Room is 83-metre square, and seats 70. It can be used as a self-contained unit as it has its own entrance, small kitchen and toilets with facilities for the disabled. The space is used mainly by local groups and societies. The library seldom organizes events as there is no staffing allocated for the purpose. However, the space is very popular and is always fully booked.

Bookings for the exhibition space are taken on a first-come first served basis, subject to certain restrictions. The space is also used as a meetings room and so the exhibitions must be capable of easy removal. The criterion used for allowing exhibitions is that they must be of a general cultural or community nature. Such necessity provides an excellent, broad basis for a wide spectrum of artistic presentations, provided that these do not promote causes which are at variance with the County Council's policy or decisions. Neither are party political or religious exhibitions allowed.

The exhibition space is free of charge for non-commercial exhibitions. When work is sold or orders taken, a commission of 20% is levied, payable to the Library. A charge is also made if an exhibition is connected with an event taking place outside the Library. A high standard of display is requested and equipment is available free of

charge to hang pictures. Any exhibition found to be displayed poorly will be removed.

All publicity material must be approved by the librarian in charge, including press releases. The Library helps with the publicity by distributing leaflets in the Library and to other libraries. Otherwise all other publicity is the responsibility of the exhibitor, as are setting up and dismantling the exhibition. The Library is unable to participate to any greater extent, because of staff and funding shortages. The Library would like to be more involved as the space is very popular and very well run; it is also a very lucrative enterprise for the Library.

Bath Central Library sets a very good example of establishing firm guidelines and running arts activities in a businesslike manner. By professional management the Library has become an attractive venue for exhibitors of a high standard of work. By having strong control and setting high standards, the Library has created a good reputation and will attract more and more visitors and business. The Library's exhibition space offers local artists a facility to exhibit and offers the opportunity to local people to experience Art in a welcoming space, unlike the sometimes 'hostile' official or commercial gallery.

JAZZ AT NUNEATON LIBRARY

Nuneaton staged a one-off jazz concert by a local jazz orchestra to coincide with a promotion of the Library's audio-visual resources and to

promote the Library as a cultural centre, diversifying its role. The jazz orchestra had performed there previously to promote a 'Music Month' at the Library.

The local press was interested in the event and publicized it with a photograph of the jazz orchestra. This and photocopied leaflets distributed in the Library was the extent of publicity for the event. It was said that there could have been more publicity but for lack of staff time and commitment. The event was organized on a voluntary basis, there being no librarian with an arts remit. However, staff did help at the concert, which was held after the Library had closed, as they could work for time owing (in lieu). Three staff members were involved directly and this involvement was a significant use of library resources, in addition to allocation of library space to the event.

Admission to the concert was free but a charge was made for refreshments, served in the interval by the Library staff. A charge could not be made for listening to the music because the Library did not have a performance licence; this fact, obviously, restricts the income generated by such events.

It was hoped that the concert would increase awareness of the audio-visual stock, but no significant rise in borrowing of this material has occurred. It had been realised that a single event would not achieve that objective but, regrettably, there was not enough staff time or funding available to mount a continuous or larger programme of events.

Other arts events that have taken place in the Library have been

initiated centrally, as part of County-wide programmes, and have often been poorly attended as a consequence of a lack of local input. It was suggested that to improve this situation, and any event taking place in a library, a regular programme would have to be established and the publicity would have to reach out into the community. However, such an eventuality seems unlikely because the County has been severely charge-capped. Also, the Arts Strategy is a typically vague document and Arts events seem too centralized to be successful - in Nuneaton at least.

FRIEZE AT LEIGHTON BUZZARD CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

The Frieze in the children's library at Leighton Buzzard consists of 22 paintings and is entitled 'Just Imagine'. The paintings take their inspiration from children's stories throughout the world, each picture telling a particular story. The pictures are painted in bright, vivid, colours which immediately catch the eye. This is not to say that they are a mere exercise in decoration. The stories depicted are evocative and have a sense of myth about them. Each picture rewards detailed study as layers of meaning are revealed. The Frieze thus works on several levels; certainly it is colourful, eye-catching and guaranteed to draw the attention of adults and children. It is also a thought-provoking work which provides the starting point for as many stories as a person can dream up and tell. It is an inspiring piece of work and an inspired commission.

The idea to commission the work came initially from the Youth Librarian,

who wanted the children's activities room to be decorated with murals painted by children. However, the project straddled two schemes of Eastern Arts already in process and so funding was not available. So, the Arts Officer suggested commissioning a local artist to paint a series of pictures for the the children's library to form a frieze above the book-stacks on the largest wall. It was thought that the frieze would be an ideal way to raise the profile of the children's library and help storytellers visiting the library.

Business sponsorship was sought and secured and further marketing funding was given by the Government's Business Investment Incentive Scheme (BIIS). As a result of BIIS involvement the business sponsors provided further funding to pay for full-colour, double-sided posters given free to local children. The posters comprise reproductions of eight pictures from the Frieze, each with a small description of the story it depicts. Money also went towards a free reception with food and drink given for invited guests at the opening. The Libraries Division paid for a children's' television celebrity, Floella Benjamin, to attend the unveiling of the Frieze. The Libraries Division also donated some money toward the cost of the commission. Most money for this came from Eastern Arts and the business sponsors. This also enabled the Library to install exhibition lighting and other aids to seeing the Frieze.

The unveiling of the Frieze was a very high-profile event gaining much publicity. The Frieze is a permanent enhancement of the children's library, as intended, and has led to a storytelling event and residency and an art-education workshop.

The commissioning of the Frieze was carried out by an Arts Officer who, unlike librarians, was trained in such matters. Advice which was sought from, and given by, an expert on public-art-commission contracts proved invaluable. Were a librarian were to attempt such an undertaking, however, considerable help would be needed from the Regional Arts Board visual-arts expert. A paintings-commission panel was set up to draw up the design brief and oversee the commission through to its final stages. The panel consisted of the Librarian, Children's Librarian, Eastern Arts Visual Arts Officer, Arts Centre Manager and Art Education Officer from the County Education Service. The whole undertaking presents a good model of co-operation between libraries and other organizations.

THE BIRMINGHAM LIBRARIES CREATIVE READERS

The leaflet promoting Birmingham City Council Library Service's 'Imagination Services' proclaims that "the library is your local free point of access to world culture, used by a wide cross-section of all ages and backgrounds who go to the library of their own choice, on their own terms, in a receptive frame of mind, expecting to look, think and choose."(1). This is a most refreshing and positive statement to find in library publicity, very inviting and encouraging and presented in a colourful manner. The Readers and Writers Festival was part of the Imagination Services and a particularly interesting aspect of this was the Creative Reader in Residence. The Creative Reader's responsibility

was to encourage library users to read more and, to this end, draws up book lists on various themes. The writing of book lists in this manner is common enough but it is the way the lists were so effectively promoted that is most pertinent. The book lists were promoted positively outside the Library, using imaginative posters and leaflets distributed via appropriate outlets. For example, a book list about food was distributed via restaurants and various food shops such as takeaways and delicatessens. The scheme was particularly effective because great emphasis was placed on the initiative of local library staff. Also, a competition was run, in which the winner was the library distributing the most publicity. The outcome of this method of promotion is obviously varied depending on the commitment of local staff, but is generally encouraging. The purpose of the scheme was to encourage people to use librararies more imaginatively and to recognize the many uses of literacy by using the book lists. An example of the themes was 'In Groups' which encouraged readers to share their reading and to think of starting a similar reading group, not only to that end but also to encourage people to write by being inspired by others' work. 'Food Thought' was not a list of recipe books but of books which celebrate food and other aspects such as restaurants and cooks' reminiscences. 'On Journeys' recommended different types of books for different types of journey and had a section of books that would impress fellow travellers; this encourages reading in different environments, as reading does not have to be a solitary-confines activity. It must be made clear that the lists were solely suggestions and not instructions: "fiction to lose yourself in, ideas to find yourself in,...all kinds of books to read <u>on your own terms.</u>"(2).

The Creative Reader initiative is a very good example of how to encourage library users to read. The lists and promotional literature were not at all condescending or suggesting of philanthropic improvement. The aim was to make people aware of literature and to remove barriers to reading by illustrating the uses of literacy, both practical and spiritual. The publicity did reach out into the community further than within the library, which it must do in order to expand the 'audience' for library activities.

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER PROMOTION OF CONTEMPORARY POETRY PROJECT

Promotion of the Hereford and Worcester Contemporary Poetry Project started in 1991 and spanned approximately 17 months, including the planning stages. The aim was to promote and build the libraries' stock of contemporary poetry, poetry being a neglected area of most libraries' stock, and the practice of writing and performing poetry. This objective is indicative of the Library Services Department's view that libraries are cultural centres and that literature forms an important part of cultural life.

The Project was run in conjunction with the Poetry Society, West Midlands Arts and the Office of Arts and Libraries. These bodies' main contribution was funding, except for the Poetry Society which took a more active role. The reasons the Poetry Society wished to be involved in the Project were that it wanted to be seen as less of a London-based

organization and to increase the circulation of its magazine, 'Poetry Review'.

Five libraries were chosen from throughout the County to take part in the Project, a sixth receiving extra stock only. The Project involved the purchase of contemporary poetry books to boost stocks and this was followed up by installation of a poet in residence. Throughout his sixteen week residency, the Poet visited the five libraries within the project year, allocating an equal amount of time to each. This spread resulted in problems with continuity as the five library towns were quite far apart. It had been recognized, however, that to have concentrated the project in one library would have decreased the impact of the Project in the County. The visits of the Poet in Residence, in which he held surgeries and workshops and gave readings, were supplemented by readings by other visiting poets and groups of local poets; these readings proved popular.

The Poet in Residence intended to work with individuals as well as established writers' groups. He contacted as many people and organizations as possible that might have been interested, and this proved to be an important part of publicizing the Project. The Project received national and local media attention, including the press, but not all of it was positive. It was mainly the national press which commented negatively about the use of 'Poll Taxpayers' money' on poetry. In fact, only £20,000 was spent on new poetry stock out of the £1,000,000 book budget. The local media, however, were mainly positive about the Project and, although the County's Library Department does not have a publicity department, the libraries distributed posters, leaflets and

exhibited displays. Furthermore, bookshops promoted the Project. Indeed, an important aim of the Project was to develop links with bookshops, and this did prove successful.

The worth of the Project was monitored by keeping records of stock and loans for sample periods and recording the views of users by means of questionnaires which were circulated mainly through the mailing list of more than 450 people who had expressed an interest in the Project. Also, reports on the Project were received from the Poet in Residence and organizations involved. In addition, a survey was carried out to gain users' views about the Project, other cultural work in libraries and a proposal to establish an Integrated Library System.

The contemporary-poetry stock improved greatly and "indeed it is probable that a cross-section of available contemporary poetry present stock holdings are unrivalled in British public libraries."(3). The selection of new poetry stock highlighted the need for new selection strategies using the specific knowledge of others. It also highlighted the lack of experience and confidence among professionals in selecting poetry. Readings of poetry were found to be very valuable to librarians in selecting material. A particularly significant finding was that, in general, librarians need to improve their appraisal skills.

The use of contemporary poetry books increased considerably, in one library by 869%, and issues of work by living poets increased too – by as much as 1633% in one library. Readers expressed their appreciation of the Project and, subsequently, contemporary poetry stock was increased in response to answered questionnaires. The Project provided

the Library Service with insights into the organization of literature projects. It also proved that cooperative work with other organizations can be successful. Furthermore, it underlined the need for librarians to acquire greater skill in selecting literature - an acquisition necessary, too, to enhance their competency in giving advice to library users.

The Hereford and Worcester Library Department is small for the area it serves but has managed to generate many and varied arts activities; it even organizes a festival each time a new library is opened in the County. Funding is limited, but the Department has the will to provide good arts events. It fully appreciates that libraries are cultural centres and should be active agencies in their communities, promoting and encouraging cultural activity. The success of this Department's promotions is the epitome of the triumph of positive attitude and will.

It has eschewed vague policy statements and promoted a set of positive values which has achieved excellent results. Clearly, when the organizer of an event is positive, professional and enthusiatic others are keen to be involved to mutual advantage in the successful outcome.

FOOTNOTES

1. Birmingham City Council. Promotional Leaflet Imagination Services, 1992, p. 1.

2. Birmingham City Council, ref., p. 3.

3. HMSO. Public Library Development Incentive Scheme: Hereford and Worcester County Libraries and the Poetry Society, 1992, p.17.

CONCLUSIONS

The Arts-and-Libraries partnership has its roots in the philanthropic concerns of the mid-19th Century. It has developed, through various stages reflecting changes in society, art and politics, to its current standing. An indication of the its well being may be seen by studying some recent examples of this partnership and, perhaps, a glimpse of the future prospects. It is appropriate to consider whether the events studied comply with the ideal suggested in Chapter 6.

The literature and experts suggest that studies should be carried out of audiences, local arts needs and facilities. Such studies are not carried out, however, because of lack of funds and time. The only sure way for librarians to become aware of local arts needs is through discussion between librarians and members of the public about their needs, and the librarians' seeking and making suggestions. Librarians should make efforts to be aware of the local arts scene – and they generally do.

The relationship between local arts bodies and libraries is inconsistent to say the least. Recent reorganization of arts bodies has resulted in their being involved only in the larger events, which have higher profiles than small events in a single library; they have neither the funds nor the time. Where RAAs or other art bodies have been involved in library events, however, their assistance has been very valuable.

Do the people get what they want from library events? The only way to judge this is by the extent of attendances and this can vary for a variety of reasons other than that of the quality of the event. An

event attended by a single person could still be considered worthwhile, if not worth repeating. Attempts have been made to involve the people in the events through workshops and other participatory events. Libraries thus offer stages or forums in which local people or groups can perform or exhibit their work to the community, which isa valuable function of the library. Where libraries participate in arts events they do break down barriers, as they represent non-elitist access to the Arts, and the range of events on offer in libraries throughout the country is evidence of this. Art presented in libraries is worthwhile for library, artist and audience. Library resources, however, are not being optimized.

Library staffs are not being used or involved properly due to lack of funding and of appropriate training of library staff, professional or not. The staffs represent a substantial resource of experience, enthusiasm and education which go under-utilized or unsupported. The other great resource which libraries have is space. Yet, this space lies unused after the library closes. The potential use of the space after hours is unrealized especially during the weekends. The space goes unused not because of lack of demand but because of lack of funds either to pay staff to attend events after hours or to set up initiatives to attract local groups into libraries, which would bring funds in and thus optimize library resources. New libraries often have an art space included in them but it is frequently under-used. The foresight in creating arts spaces goes unrewarded because when the new libraries begin operation they have insufficient funds and organization to utilize the spaces.

Another deficiency indentified by the case studies is that of marketing. Most librarians seem to be aware that marketing and publicity are vital to the sucess of an event and to the library. However, many librarians do not have the time or funds to arrange good publicity or to provide for other organizations to publicize the event for the library, e.g. local newspapers. Furthermore, the value of desk-top publishing as a cheap but effective publicity tool has been underestimated. The publicity must reach as many people as possible and this objective cannot be achieved by placing leaflets on the issue desk: publicity must be taken into the community and to the media.

It is apparent that the declared Arts policies of various local authorities and library and information services are not being met. The policies on Arts provision are often vague statements of intent and lack any 'teeth' to implement those policies. To remedy this situation the Arts-and-Libraries partnership must be 'sold' to libraries as a benefit and not just something to be done as a sideline organized during the lunch break. When asked why their library wanted to have an arts event most organizers said, as part of their answer, that they wanted to diversify the role of the library and change its image. It is commonly thought by librarians that the library users consider that they, and libraries, are dull; this is an indication of the level of self-esteem that many librarians have. Yet, the staging of events in libraries could go a long way to changing perceptions of libraries by funders, staff and users. Such staging could also serve to boost the morale of the staff, but only if they were well informed about, and involved in, the events.

If this diversification is to be achieved it can only be done by having a

continuous programme of events backed up by marketing and enthusiasm. A desire for such was expressed by organizers where there is no continuous programme, a deficiency caused, yet again, by lack of funds, training and time. Indeed, the most common comments made during the study were about the state of funding and consequent time and staffing problems. The events in libraries do bring in some income but most are non-profit-making relying on sponsorship and public funds ; the exception to this is where libraries solely rent out rooms and gallery space and take commission from exhibitors. The Arts are thus vulnerable, having low priority. But libraries are not just a book-lending facility but are a many-faceted organization with many valuable resources available. The case studies have shown that these resources can be used effectively and that librarians are capable of good organization and learning from mistakes.

The other suggestion that organizers made was that there should be better training for librarians in the arts. Many mentioned that they had had no previous knowledge of performance licences and such like, nor of how art funding operates. Many events studied had obtained some sort of sponsorship, a sign that local and national businesses are willing to be involved. It would be of great benefit if this knowledge and experience were to be passed on to library students and staff so they they could run arts events sucessfully and support events in libraries. Ideally a national database of events should be created which would assist librarians greatly in organizing events and creating a network of communication to exchange experiences and information.

The events studied are just an example of the wide range taking place

in libraries but they are a useful indication of the current state of the Arts-and-Libraries partnership and its possible future, which, it is hoped, will be prosperous.

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