

INDEPENDENT LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2020-2021

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ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT LIBRARIES

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 31st MARCH 2020-1st APRIL 2021

PRESIDENT

Neil Pearson

OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

Officers

The following officers served during the last year:

Emma Marigliano, Chairwoman

Kay Easson, Secretary (Newcastle Lit & Phil)

Paul Ranford, Treasurer

Committee Members

The following served on the Committee 2019-2020:

Lisa di Tommaso, (The Morrab Library)

Melanie Duffill-Jeffs (Bromley House, Nottingham)

Thom Keep (The Portico Library)

Louisa Yates (Gladstone's Library)

Serena Trowbridge (Birmingham and Midland Institute)

Philip Marshall (The London Library)

Emma Laws (Devon & Exeter Institution)

Tom Corrick (Oxford Union Library)

CHAIRWOMAN'S MESSAGE



This image endures as my impression of the COVID years. One of the delights of being on the ILA Committee for more than 20 years has been the ability to visit our libraries and I have visited most of them. Past president, the late Peter Isaacs, could boast of having visited them all, but there are considerably more of them today – I'm very pleased to say. The pandemic has made visits to libraries, whether for meetings or events, impossible. We have been in lockdown virtually (pun intended) for the entire period of this report, save for a few illusory weeks. I hope it won't be long before we can have a physical presence in our libraries. For the time being, though, Zoom meetings rule.

This is not to say that Zoom is unwelcome. On the contrary, without it, and the internet generally, isolation would undoubtedly have made a most difficult job worse for some of some of our libraries. As it stands, they have proved, beyond doubt, that what they do best is **adapt**. Whatever the decades and the centuries have thrown at them the key to their survival has always been the ability to adapt to crises in whatever shape or form. This pandemic has proved it so perfectly. Innovation has enabled the people of our libraries to come up with so many successful ideas on how to continue to serve their members and their users – and to inspire new communities, and all the time balancing the books (the most difficult task of all). From quizzes and jigsaws to games and reviews, online talks to sharing news and views right across the Association, the libraries have maintained communication and support for the benefit of all their users.

It has been enormously difficult, of course, and the pandemic with all the restrictions and limitations it brings – not to mention heartaches – will continue to throw challenges for some time yet. But what I keep seeing is the dedication and determination from the staff, the Trustees, the members and the volunteers of all our libraries and the magnificent job they are all doing in ensuring that their doors will open again to whatever ‘normality’ awaits them. I can also see the loyalty and support of their communities in helping them to achieve this.

I can’t end without saying how wonderful it’s been to witness the outstanding support the libraries have given to each other. Whether through the Zoom Recovery Meetings organised by Melanie Duffill-Jeffs from Bromley House Library, the JiscMail group set up by Matthew Brooke of The London Library, the virtual collaborations and partnerships between two or more libraries and, of course, the amazing organisation of the Annual Conference by Louisa Yates’s ‘Conference Team’ and host library, The Leeds Library. I can’t doubt that the planned programme will be anything less than impressive. We’re also extremely lucky to have such a supportive President in Neil Pearson, who initiated access to the digital newspaper and magazine subscription, PressReader, early into lockdown for many of our libraries and for his general ambassadorship of the Association.

Emma Marigliano

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Dear Members, It’s been a long time. I don’t need to remind anybody how challenging life has been over the last eighteen months. COVID-19 has compelled us to make fundamental changes to the way we live, and work, and interact with each other. Those changes have been deep and difficult and have affected us all. But it does not surprise me in the least that ILA librarians’ response to those challenges has been extraordinary. As soon as lockdown made visits to libraries — to anywhere — impossible, ILA-on-Zoom began to thrum. Members came together virtually to share ideas on how best to continue to provide core services to our subscribers; how best to keep them informed; and how best to prevent those with limited connectivity from becoming isolated, not just from their library but from communal life in general. At a time when everyone could have been forgiven for turning inward a little, ILA librarians turned out towards the communities they serve, and continued to serve them. Postal book loan services, digital provision of libraries’ newspaper and magazine subscriptions — even safely-distanced pastoral visits to subscribers’ doorsteps. I’d like to talk more about those Zoom meetings, because both those with formal agendas, and those without, have done far more than help members keep core services running. Firstly, attendance numbers went through the roof. It’s been a great pleasure to see so many new faces at those meetings, and I look forward to welcoming you all to more, in person and online. Secondly, while the Zoom meetings of the past year have always, understandably, been primarily concerned with meeting immediate challenges, they have never felt either defined or diminished by coronavirus: at no time in the last eighteen months has COVID-19 been allowed to side-line the ILA’s plans for its future. These plans include ongoing discussions with JISC Library Hub to incorporate an ILA inter-library database into their National Knowledge Base, which would bring our library holdings more readily to the attention of scholars and researchers from all over the world; the establishing on JiscMail of the ILA Collections Group (prime mover: Matthew Brooke at the London Library), where ILA staff can network, share best practice and seek or give advice; and, of course, preparations for the 2021 ILA Annual Conference, to be held on 24th-25th September at Leeds Library. After the inevitable cancellation of the 2020 event, the work the Leeds team has done to ensure we don’t lose two conferences in a row has been frankly heroic. Work began in earnest long before it was possible to predict whether or not the Conference would be able to go ahead. But as a result of that work we can now look forward to a Conference which enables people to attend virtually if they can’t be there in person, and which is for the first time hosting speakers

from all over the world. It's a phenomenal achievement by everyone at Leeds, and on behalf of the ILA I congratulate them all. And finally — and possibly most importantly — the feeling of mutual support those regular online meetings fostered seemed to enable people to keep moving forward, at a time when one could have been forgiven for throwing in the towel. I was particularly struck by an email from one of our younger librarians, sent from the depths of lockdown, which spoke of how they found the meetings to be not only useful, but also encouraging — comforting, even. Planning for the future turned out to be a very good way to cope with the rigours of the present. My thanks and admiration go out to everyone who contributed so much to helping each other through. See you at the Conference.

Neil Pearson.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2020-2021

These meetings were held via Zoom on 29 May, 2020, 27 July 2020, 23 October 2020 and 25 January 2021.

COVID-19 RECOVERY GROUP MEETINGS

During the COVID-19 pandemic members of the ILA came together for online meetings over Zoom. These 'Recovery Group' meetings helped to connect library staff, volunteers and trustees to share ideas and concerns, and for vital peer support during a period of significant disruption to all our services.

With the immediate uncertainties of the pandemic now lifting, the ILA will continue to hold regular online sessions for library staff, volunteers and trustees but with a broader agenda to include issues around our collections and the management of our institutions. This is a positive step forward for the ILA, removing the geographical challenges of us working at such distances from each other and helping to bring us that little bit closer together.

Melanie Duffil-Jeffs, Bromley House Library

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2020

The Annual Conference and the Annual General Meeting was due to be held at The Leeds Library in June. The pandemic constrained us to move the Conference to an, at the time, unconfirmed date in 2021 and to hold the AGM online later in the year.

MEMBERSHIP

At 31 March 2021, membership of the Association currently stood at 36 institutions and 23 individual supporters.

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Independent Libraries Association
held on Saturday 7th November 2020 via Zoom.**

Present:, Emma Marigliano (Chairwoman), Kay Easson (Newcastle Lit & Phil & Hon. Secretary), Paul Ranford (Hon. Treasurer), Neil Pearson (President) Lynette Cawthra (WCML), Tom Corrick (Oxford Union Library), Nicola Davies (Royal Philatelic Society),Melanie Duffill-Jeffs (Bromley House), Anna Jackson (Liverpool Athenaeum), Helen Kemp (Thomas Plume's Library), Emma Laws (Devon & Exeter Institution), Margaret Mackay (Highgate LSI), Helen Williams (The Library of Mistakes), Gordon Willis (Leighton Library), Louisa Yates (Gladstone's Library), Jo Rooks (Ipswich Institute) Carl Hutton (The Leeds Library), Thom Keep (The Portico Library).

1. Apologies for absence

None were received

2. Chairwoman's Opening Remarks

Chairwoman Emma Marigliano began by reminding everyone that this meeting would reflect the year 2019-2020 and that there would be reports later regarding libraries' experiences during lockdown and the formation of the Recovery Group. She noted that libraries are working amazingly hard and continuing to function as best they can. Compared to some public libraries, independent libraries have been very innovative with online events and activities and have pulled together. She expressed her thanks to everyone in the ILA for their hard work and ended on an optimistic note for the future.

3. President's Remarks

Neil Pearson, the President, welcomed everyone to this year's AGM. He regretted that it was not possible to meet in person at the Leeds Library this year and recalled how much it meant to be able to meet with friends and colleagues in the Association, hear papers, discuss issues, have fun and indulge in our shared love of books. He noted the extraordinary efforts of libraries in the first lockdown to keep as many core activities as possible running, and the ways in which libraries had found new ways of keeping in touch with their members. As President he wanted to give everyone a pat on the back, acknowledging their dedication and willingness to undertake tasks well beyond their job descriptions – all this was nothing short of heroic. He was impressed but not surprised. In conclusion he confirmed that he would be more than happy to serve a second 3-year term as President and hoped that we could all meet in person in 2021.

4. The minutes of the meeting held at the Devon & Exeter Institution on 8th June 2019

These were taken as read, their acceptance proposed by Paul Ranford and seconded by Melanie Duffill-Jeffs.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes.

The Chairwoman confirmed that a copy of the updated Constitution was now available on the website. Regional Groups were not on the agenda for this year's meeting for obvious reasons, but libraries had been working together during this difficult period.

- 6. Annual Report 2019-2020**

The Hon. Secretary, Kay Easson, was thanked for producing this, and it was noted that the Chairwoman and the Secretary always worked together to produce the finished Report. The Chairwoman hoped people had enjoyed reading it, which included highlights such as the DEI Annual Conference and the American Libraries/London Library events. The Chairwoman mentioned the increased use of Facebook to keep in touch, and that this can be used to highlight the importance of our collections, especially if libraries' programmes of events are linked to collections. Independent libraries are showcasing collections in a way that public libraries are not. Thom Keep was grateful for the report and said that it contained some good ideas from libraries. The Report was adopted, proposed by Thom Keep and seconded by Lisa di Tommaso.
- 7. Financial Report & Accounts 2019-2020**

The Treasurer, Paul Ranford, noted that this was his first AGM, having been co-opted in January 2020. He reported a bank balance of c.£11,000, and that financially the ILA was in good shape. The accounts formed part of the Annual Report. Some funds had been used over the year to support libraries, such as for the Press Reader subsidised subscription. Approval of the accounts was proposed by Louisa Yates and seconded by Helen Williams.
- 8. Election of Officers and Committee 2020-2021**

Approval of officers and committee was proposed by Margaret Mackay and seconded by Lynette Cawthra. The Chairwoman reminded everyone that positions were not set in stone and could be contested. Whilst she, for example, would be happy to take the ILA through its next phase, she would also be happy to welcome a new candidate for that position.
- 9. Subscriptions 2020-2021**

The Chairwoman reported that there was no intention to increase these for the time being. This was proposed by Melanie Duffill-Jeffs and seconded by Thom Keep.
- 10. Response to Coronavirus: Recovery Group**

Melanie Duffill-Jeffs, who had instigated these, reported that these had been very beneficial and had allowed participants to give each other support and find positives despite the crisis. It was an excellent way of exchanging ideas. Two had already taken place and she hoped that another could be arranged before Christmas. She noted that the crisis had inspired some libraries to do things they would not have previously considered, e.g. digital events and e-books. She concluded by thanking Neil Pearson for his efforts to bring about the Press Reader offer.
- 11. Proposed future meetings**

It was hoped that the 2021 AGM & Conference (to be hosted by the Leeds Library) would indeed be physical rather than virtual. The Birmingham Library had offered hosting in 2022, and venues were sought for 2023 and 2024, with the Newcastle Lit & Phil offering 2025.
- 12. Any other business**

Thom Keep (The Portico Library) had a proposal for a future meeting but would speak to Louisa Yates in the first instance. Louisa Yates reported that a conference guide has been produced for institutions considering being a venue. It was noted that smaller libraries had successfully worked together in the past e.g. Innerpeffray and The Leighton Library.

Louisa Yates had surveyed committee members' regarding the software/systems they used for remote meetings. 50% had issues with time, resources and finance. She wondered if the ILA could help libraries and thought further discussion would be useful.

The Chairwoman concluded the meeting by emphasising the ILA's important role as a support network and how necessary this was, particularly in a time of isolation and crisis such as everyone had been experiencing. She thanked everyone for attending and looked forward to meeting in person in 2021.

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

The cash account for the financial year to 31 March 2021 is appended to this Report.

The Association generated a net cash deficit of £744.32 for the year. The financial year was impacted very significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the following special arrangements were agreed by the Committee:

- Committee meetings continued as normal, but in online form via Zoom. This relieved the Association of the travel and subsistence costs usually incurred in these meetings.
- The AGM was also held via Zoom, and the Annual Conference – originally planned to be held at the Leeds Library in 2020 – was postponed until September 2021.
- As allowed by the Association's Constitution, the Committee allowed member libraries suffering any financial hardship because of the pandemic the option of opting out of their subscription for the financial year to March 2021. It was gratifying to note that 24 member libraries undertook to pay their full subscriptions for the year.
- The Committee negotiated the 'PressReader' initiative, allowing a total of 12,859 members of 11 member libraries the facility to access national and international newspapers, periodicals and scholarly journals. The Association subsidised this initiative in the sum of £1,450, with participating member libraries contributing a further £800 (of which £200 remained outstanding at the year end).

The balance in our Bank Account for the Association at the end of the financial year was £10,297.26.

Paul Ranford FCA, Treasurer

Independent Libraries Association		
Financial Report - cash account		
	1 Apr 2020 to Period: 31 Mar 2021	1 Apr 2019 to 31 Mar 2020
Income		
Subscriptions - Libraries	1,140.00	1,890.00
Subscriptions - Individuals	90.00	
Donations - Individuals	270.00	
Subscriptions - Individuals & Overseas		200.00
Annual Conference and AGM		2,170.00
Pressreader contributions	600.00	
Members' plaques		210.00
Total Income	2,100.00	4,470.00
Expenditure		
Annual Conference & AGM		2,344.71
Pressreader	2,250.00	
Zoom subscription	143.88	
Website and email	450.44	24.00
Photocopying, postage		56.70
Travel Expenses		391.90
Members' plaques		571.23
Independent Accountant fee (2018-19)		190.00
Miscellaneous		47.16
Total Expenditure	2,844.32	3,625.70
Surplus/(deficit) for the period	- 744.32	844.30
Bank account balance at:	31-Mar-21	31-Mar-20
At beginning of period	11,041.58	10,197.28
Add/(less) Surplus/Deficit for the period	- 744.32	844.30
Closing balance	10,297.26	11,041.58
Prepared by: Paul Ranford FCA		

Independent Libraries Association Conference

*INDEPENDENT
LIBRARIES AS THE
GREAT GOOD PLACE*

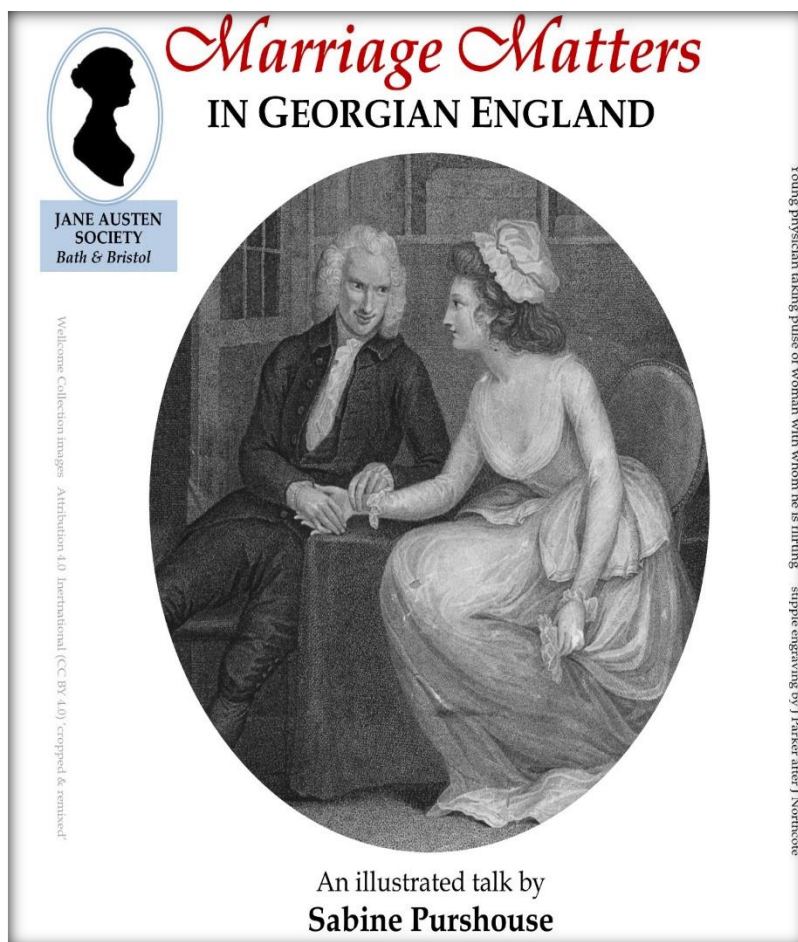
24 and 25th September 2021
Hosted by The Leeds Library



MEMBERS' REPORTS 2020-2021

BATH ROYAL LITERARY & SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION

Until March 2020, BRLSI actively engaged with its various audiences through a programme of talks, exhibitions, meetings, publications, newsletters, trails, trips and a symposium. However, in March 2020, the Institution was closed due to the pandemic and did not reopen until 17 May 2021. We did not stop providing talks, however, and instead of physical talks, we moved the programme online. So far, this virtual activity has generated 130 videos that are available through YouTube and we have gathered 500 subscribers. We planned two visual series, both delivered successfully, a week of Jane Austen related talks and, in March 2021, a weekend Symposium on Vienna.



We have been fortunate this year to be awarded funding from the Arts Fund and the MH Wray Trust that has permitted us to develop a Discovery App that provides 4 trails through Bath and then directs the user back to the Institution to see those items from our historic collection which are featured in the various trails. The design of these trails has been carried out by staff and students at the Bath Spa University, as part of our ongoing collaboration. The funding has also helped us develop a new website more aligned to our new online activities. We have recently received a second grant that addresses our need to improve our digital offerings and to assist us in reaching younger audiences through social media.

The major BRLSI exhibition planned for the year, 'Jurassic Ark', had to be postponed until May 2021. Throughout the year, via Instagram, highlights from the historic collections were shared on social media and information about the collections were included weekly in Bob's Bulletin, our regular newsletter for members and the public which communicates the latest information about our events.

A number of BRLSI activities for young people, including a Geographical Association Key Stage 3 Worldwide Quiz, our annual A Level Geography afternoon, featuring lecturers from three of our local Universities and the BRLSI A Level Philosophy group, all had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. BRLSI has developed a strong working relationship with Bath Spa University and their students have been involved in various aspects of BRLSI activities such as the International Women's Day Map and publicity campaigns. New efforts in this area are currently being undertaken and will hopefully be in place for the next financial year.

The number of Members fell this year during our closure as people could only join online and some previous members had difficulty renewing electronically. We will be trying to reach out during the upcoming year to bring our membership level back up to more than 800 and are working on a new website that will make joining and renewing online easier. We kept in contact with volunteers and Members through emails and the electronic membership newsletter. The newsletter improved in quality during the year enriched by more images and features. The data shows the newsletter is now being read by a majority of the recipients.

BRLSI continues to cooperate with other organizations and this year we contacted several like-minded organizations inviting them to use our online platform and take advantage of the experience we had gained about managing online talks. Bath Spa University partnered with us for a number of talks and especially for the Vienna Symposium. We also started a monthly Big Read. We invited the Bath Shakespeare Society to lead one Big Read on Maggie O'Farrel's *Hamnet* and additionally prepared a video of their members reading sonnets for our online platform. We are the Southwest Local Centre for the Royal Meteorological Society and have put on joint interviews and lectures with the Wales and West Country Branch of the Royal Geographical Society through the year.

Various internal meetings and the usual cycle of Board meetings were conducted through the year via Zoom. Directors agreed to make significant use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme by placing several staff on furlough during the lockdown. Three staff left during the year through redundancy and resignation, and we are currently assessing the impact that the changes in emphasis will have on our staffing requirements. A professional bookkeeper has been hired to ensure that financial matters are properly handled. Digital BRLSI has come on in leaps and bounds with over 2826 people attending an online talk and income generated during the pandemic of approximately £12,000. This has been possible because BRLSI volunteers have given generously of their time and talent working extremely hard. During this year we estimate conservatively that the total number of free hours contributed by our volunteers exceeds 10,000 hours per annum. This is a remarkable effort and permitted BRLSI to continue its outreach during a difficult year.

Betty Suchar, Chair of Directors

BROMLEY HOUSE LIBRARY

Unsurprisingly, 2020-21 was a challenging year for the library. The COVID-19 pandemic hit us just as we were coming out of a major renovation project and we had barely found our feet again before we were forced to close.



Bromley House Book Titles Quiz

Unable to deliver physical library services, we moved our communication with members online, on the phones and via a newly created 'Bookmobile' service which saw volunteers and staff take to the streets to deliver and collect books from our members. We also established new ways to connect with our members online – a digital library, Zoom events and even a library webcam (until the internet fell over!).

Despite being closed for 7 months of the year, we continued library business as much as we were able to. We continued to buy books and our circulation stats were surprisingly good, given that we had to find imaginative ways to get our stock into members' hands. Our staff showed great creativity and determination to keep the Bromley House spirit alive from their homes.

Our membership income fell slightly but the vast majority of our members stayed with us during the pandemic. Their calls, emails, postcards and letters of support were appreciated by the staff and will be put in the archives as a record for future generations who want to understand how the library found its way through this crisis. COVID-19 pushed us to re-imagine who we are and what we are capable of and, as a result our services are now more accessible than they have ever been. We still have challenges to face but we come out of this better prepared and with a new set of skills within the team to help us weather any future disruption.

Melanie Duffil-Jeffs, Library Director

THE DEVON & EXETER INSTITUTION

Introduction

While COVID-19 continues to sweep across the country, we have become experts in dealing with the pandemic and have adapted our work practices through yet another national lockdown this year. We are enjoying the summer months when we can fling open the doors to the garden and enjoy fresh air in the library. We are seeing our members returning to use the library research service and collections and to relax in the Outer Library to read the newspapers and magazines. We are also making plans to relaunch our in-person learning and engagement programme, including evening and lunchtime lectures, creative wellbeing workshops, and activities for our youngest members, as well as our

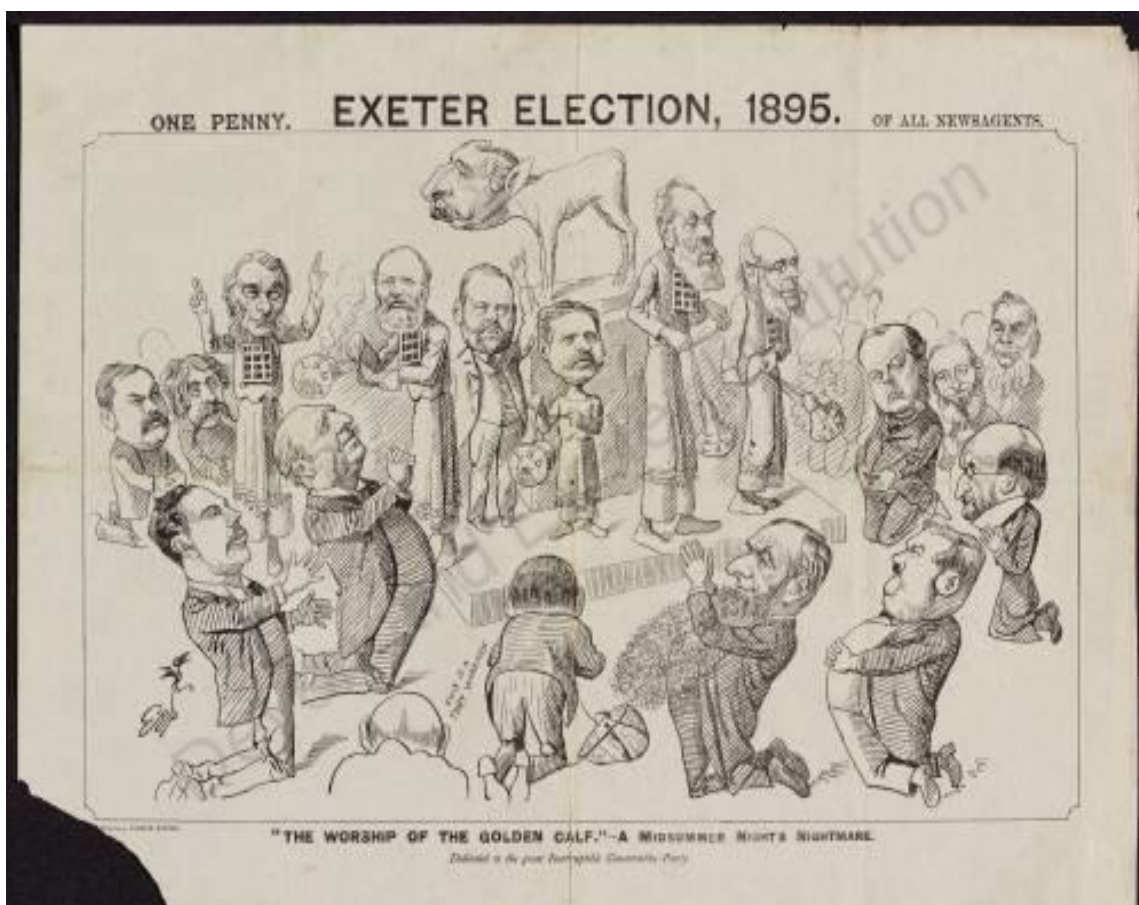
popular members' Cinema Club and Reading Group. Like many heritage organisations, we are ready for any eventuality and, if necessary, we will revert to an online programme and library service – but we remain hopeful.

Project: The Next Chapter

We have completed the Development Phase of our National Lottery project, *The Next Chapter*, and submitted our Activity Plan which will see the transformation of our front rooms and garden into vibrant community spaces. We have also finalised the methodology for an ambitious Collections Review that will allow us to investigate the significance of our collections for diverse audiences and to develop a long-term research strategy.

Project: Our Region Revealed

This year we completed the pilot for our digitisation project, *Our Region Revealed*, funded by The Pilgrim Trust, the National Lottery and Friends of Devon's Archives. We are planning the second phase of our project to bring our important collection of West Country prints and drawings to a wider audience via our online Collections Explorer and to broaden participation in our collections through our learning and engagement programme and research opportunities. In the meantime, our volunteers have continued researching and writing metadata at home and we have begun disseminating news of our project more widely through talks and lectures.



Exeter Election, 1895, "The worship of the golden calf"

Exhibitions and community engagement

Our collections were the inspiration for a city art project, Trade & Exchange. This exciting project, led by Exeter Culture, funded by Liveable Exeter and managed by Exeter City Council and the DEI's *Next Chapter* project, was launched in November 2020 and commissioned as part of the city's COVID-19 recovery plan, Building Exeter Back Better. Two Devon-based artists, Naomi Hart and Emma Molony,

took inspiration from the Devon and Exeter Institution's natural history collections to create stunning temporary works of art in two empty retail units in the city, transforming them into pop-up art spaces. We are delighted to be at the forefront of the city's recovery from the pandemic and to demonstrate the importance of art and culture for the city's wellbeing. Book displays in our Outer Library pointed our members and visitors to the installations.

This summer we also collaborated with our neighbour, Exeter Cathedral, to celebrate our shared green space in the heart of the city. While the Cathedral organised a trail through the diversity of tree species on the Cathedral Green, we curated a display of poetry about trees, *Out of the Woods* – the highlight was a shared sunny day of family-friendly activities and crafts on the Cathedral Green – and we were delighted that feedback from the children included a comparison to Hogwarts.

Learning from COVID-19

Weathering the storm of COVID-19 continues to be a challenge and we have all adapted our procedures and processes to be COVID-safe. At the Devon and Exeter Institution, however, we are not about to abandon all our 'emergency' initiatives. Moving from a help-yourself set-up to a bookable and bespoke research service has improved our member offer and enabled us to engage with our members and keep abreast of their research interests. Feedback from our members has been overwhelmingly positive. With the help of our fantastic volunteer team, we have also been able to focus on vital collection management activities that will improve the long-term storage and security of collections. Through social and online media, we have become connected to local cultural organisations, in particular UNESCO City of Literature initiatives, Liveable Exeter and Exeter Culture, as well as to other independent libraries and heritage organisations – in fact, we are more connected than ever before.

Finally...

Thank you again to colleagues in the Independent Libraries Association who have shared their experiences and offered advice this year.

Emma Laws, Director of Collections and Research

THE IPSWICH INSTITUTE

The Ipswich Institute started the year, like so many others, closed due to the national lockdown of spring 2020 and in April said a very sad goodbye to Hugh Pierce, General Manager, who retired after 15 years of service. Jo Rooks joined the Institute as his successor and finally got to see the Library open in July 2020 after three months in the job!

Over the following 8 months the Library and Page's Café were open and then closed many times - depending on local and national guidelines - but throughout we have done our best to offer a service to all our members. This has included a freeze on fines and charges, an additional four months free on every annual membership, a small selection of online courses and support with advertising our tutors' online courses and activities.

The staff who were not furloughed made good use of the periods when the Institute buildings were closed by cleaning out many cupboards and corners of rooms. We also took the opportunity to carry out a really thorough stocktake in the library and update our 'missing in action' list of books.

We have not been able to run our usual daytime or evening courses, have members' coach trips or have one of our buildings open for the whole year and we finished the year as we started, in another national lockdown *but* there is a glimmer of hope on the horizon for the next year ahead.

Jo Rooks, General Manager

LINEN HALL LIBRARY

While acknowledging the challenging year 2020 was for all, given the Linen Hall's long history we know the Library has survived through turbulent times and with this perspective we can focus on some of the positives there were – including the steadfastness of our Members, supporters and funders, and the loyalty and life-long affiliation that the Linen Hall engenders – all of which have ensured that, even at this most difficult time, the Library's collections have been enhanced for future generations. Thanks to funding from the Department for Communities we were able to enhance our children and young adult collecting to include works by writers and illustrators from or based in Northern Ireland and Ireland; books for children and young adults in the Irish language and Ulster-Scots; and from writers across the world which celebrate inclusivity and diversity; allowing voices which reflect a modern, confident and outward looking society in Northern Ireland to be collected and shared to engage the next generation of users of the Linen Hall with a great children and young adults' collection. The custodianship and preservation of our collections for future generations is both a privilege and a responsibility, and we were pleased to be able to progress our conservation programme with binding of issues of newspapers; preservation work being undertaken on treasures of the collections; and installation of fire suppression systems in our archive rooms.



The Linen Hall's extraORDINARYwomen project, which focuses on the culturally and historically significant collections and archives of the Library which reflect and illustrate women's lives and experiences in Northern Ireland, navigated the challenges of lock downs and restrictions, finding innovative ways to engage. A key aspect of the project is the creation and capture of heritage through contemporary collecting, and donations, and we were overwhelmed by the additions to the collections which the project has facilitated. The Linen Hall also took the first steps toward bringing together a sport archive and this exciting work will continue.

Samantha McCombe, Librarian

LIT & PHIL NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Although the Society was required to close its doors for large parts of 2020 and into 2021, we tried to do as much as possible via digital communication with members. As well as a reinvigorated email campaign programme, our newly established blog, digital music events, online lectures and content rich social media platforms played a vital role in sustaining engagement and encouraging loyalty at a time when we could offer very little in the way of physical services. We offered, however, a postal service and established a home delivery service with the aid of volunteers.

Kay Easson, Librarian

LIVERPOOL ATHENAEUM

During 2020 and 2021 we have spent a considerable amount of time re-organising the layout of our two-floor stack area. The installation of further roller stacks has increased the capacity to house our large Folio collection and provided more space on the upper floor. We have been able to do some re-binding and are now debating the logic of shelving new publications alongside much older material.



There has been time and space to consider our plans for the future. A strategy document has looked at matters such as staffing, security and disaster planning and certain measures are already in place.

Throughout the closure periods of 2020-2021 we still received Research enquiries and were able to deal with them as soon as possible. During this time several ideas for talks and a possible publication were discussed. The latter centres on a manuscript journal concerning plantations in the West Indies

Our Library Stewards provide cover for the Library when Library staff are not present. Some of the Stewards are also interested in helping with our Cataloguing project and have been trained by our Senior Cataloguer- Anna Jackson.

We are looking forward to the day when we will be able to re-start bookings from outside groups for our popular tours of the building. In preparation several Proprietors have volunteered to act as Tour Guides and are receiving training.

Joan Hanford, Librarian

THE LONDON LIBRARY *

2021 is the Library's 180th year and despite the difficulties of a year of lockdowns and restrictions there has been a great deal to celebrate.

Through the expansion of our postal loans service and prompt reopening of the building we managed to maintain widespread access to the collection throughout the pandemic. We introduced a new eBooks offering, now comprising several thousand books, and continued to invest in our other online and print collections.

On several occasions during the year the Library was described to us as a "lifeline". Members were grateful for the work of our helpful and dedicated staff who managed to keep books arriving at members' doors; for the regular and vibrant contact we managed to maintain through our magazine, newsletters and online events; and, for the efforts that enabled us to open the building safely, as soon as restrictions were lifted.

Our membership increased by 105 over the year to March 2021, driven largely by our Remote Access membership offering which provides access to the collection online and through postal loans. We were also able to raise over £200k in donations for the Library's unexpected Covid-related costs.

The Library's sense of community has remained strong, now supported more than ever by the use of online technology. Our events programme moved online almost immediately after the first lockdown began and has been considerably expanded during the year. During the year to March, we held 24 events with speakers and audiences from across the world, sometimes reaching audiences of over 500. We were also able to host a string of famous names in delivering a festive celebration of readings and music, and a highly entertaining online quiz to help raise funds and bring members together when they were not able to be together in the Library in person.

We continued to support new writers with the second year of our Emerging Writers Programme, providing year-long support to a cohort of 40 new writers. We also launched our first anthology of new writing from the first Emerging Writers Programme group

In February we published a report showing the economic importance of the Library as a centre of creativity. Our Impact Report demonstrated that the Library supports the creation of hundreds of books and scripts, and thousands of articles each year. It estimated that the Library's role contributes over £21m to the UK economy – a remarkable illustration that the Library provides a financial benefit to society as well as a cultural one.

After the end of the financial year, we went on to celebrate our 180th birthday with an online literary festival in May and have continued to see strong growth in membership now that Covid restrictions have been greatly eased. We can, therefore, look forward to the year ahead with some optimism.

Philip Marshall, Director

THE MORRAB LIBRARY, PENZANCE

Morrab Library closed on 20th March 2020 due to the global pandemic. We remained closed for 117 days - our longest ever closure in its 203-year history. During this time, the librarian and two library assistants worked from home - answering enquiries, keeping in touch with members in a variety of ways, and focussing on projects. The library reopened to members on 15th July for three days a week by appointment only for loans and room bookings. Volunteers came in on the other two working days each week to continue their projects, allowing them to work safely. Lockdown 2, between 4th November and 2nd December, saw us close again, with a short reopening before Christmas. We weren't to open again until 14th April, still under the same heavy and limited restrictions.

In the week before we closed, maximum loan restrictions were lifted and our members borrowed a month's worth of books in four days to 'tide them over'.

Despite being closed for most of the last year, membership numbers did not fall dramatically, and we still attracted many new members. The current membership figure stands at 580.

Given the lack of resource and IT infrastructure at Morrab Library, we were unable to offer a 'click and collect' service to members, or online talks and events; instead staff initiated a "Weekly Links" email. Each week we sent out free links to online events and activities members could enjoy at home - talks, podcasts, yoga for over 50's, webcams of African safari parks, quizzes, and anything else we could find for our members to enjoy, alongside any library news, photos from our archives, and poetry. It attracted quite a cult following and proved a cultural lifeline to many. This email became something of the public face of the Morrab in the months of closure and is now so popular we have not been able to stop them despite having reopened fully (although they are now sent fortnightly). For our over one hundred members not on email, the librarian broke the postage budget, writing numerous letters, with photos of the library and invitations to keep in touch, in order to maintain contact. We were especially concerned about our more vulnerable members who were on their own and phoned them regularly too.



Whilst in lockdown, staff mastered the intricacies of KOHA, the open-source library management system, and as a result the pilot scheme to catalogue our book collection was able to begin earlier in the year when the Library reopened. The Archives collection indexing continued throughout the year with a few hardy volunteers undertaking data entry from home to create records for uploading to the National Archives catalogue – we have now added 17 archive collections.

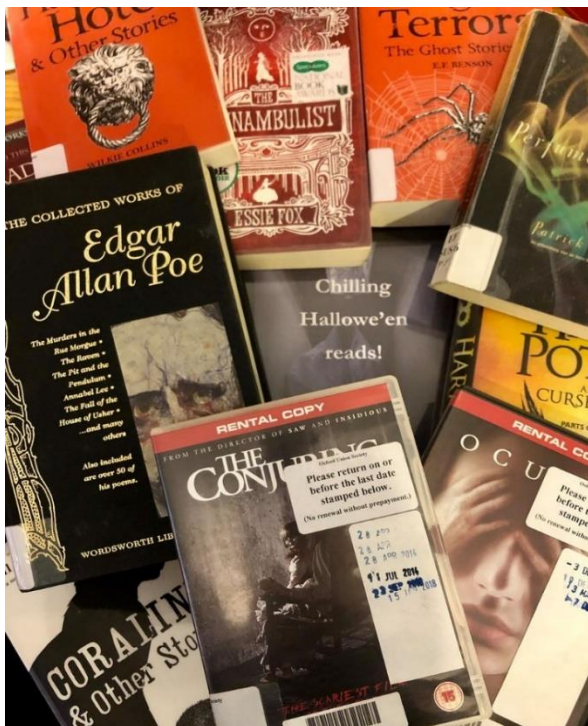
The most positive thing Morrab Library can take from this challenging year is the unwavering loyalty, encouragement and support we received from our volunteers and members, and how much their library means to them. Their membership renewals and donations, their encouraging messages, and support for the action we needed to take, gave staff the motivation to work hard to make sure the library would persevere and in time, once again provide its members with an important community space and resource for learning.

Lisa di Tommaso, Librarian

THE OXFORD UNION SOCIETY LIBRARY

April 2020 to the end of March 2021 was a year which we are glad to put behind us. Inevitably the year was dominated by the global pandemic. However, I'm proud to say that the Oxford Union Library has endured and will continue do so with the support of our members.

Following the initial announcement of the first lockdown, the library team were quick to shift to a new online way of working: Meetings took place over video calls and we were able to continue some basic work from home. As restrictions eased in July we began to offer a 'click and collect' book service for our members, many of whom were international students who were effectively stuck in Oxford trying to finish up their studies. We offered a postal loans service and at times our Librarian even got out on his bicycle and dropped books off to those who needed them. Also, thanks to the ILA, we were able to offer an online magazine subscription service for the first time, which proved very popular.



Some Lockdown reading recommendations from the OUSL

In October we were able to open our doors to our members once again. We implemented an online booking system, reduced seating capacity, put screens in place, and brought in a very thorough cleaning regime. The system worked, we were fully booked, and it was great to have people back. This lasted until early November, when the second lockdown came into effect. This time we were prepared and switched over to our now well-established click and collect service.

By the time we reopened again at the start of December, we felt we were able to tackle any challenge that came our way. We managed to stay open for just under four more weeks before lockdown number three came into effect, where, at the time of this review ending, we remained.

I'm exceptionally proud of our library team: We were able to offer a reduced library service for almost the duration of an extremely challenging

year. It was also fantastic to be part of the ILA during this time. The support, camaraderie, and shared experience of all the member libraries was one of the few positives to come out of this year!

Tom Corrick, Librarian-in-Charge

THE PORTICO LIBRARY

The period between April 2020 and March 2021 has been one of the most remarkable in the Library's two-hundred-year history. The coronavirus closures and subsequent rebuilding process have ushered in a new era for the Portico. There have been disappointments, but several highlights too. Regardless, the Library is immensely grateful to its staff and volunteers who have helped keep the Portico running during these difficult times and to the enormous support from our members, partners, funders, local communities and the public throughout the pandemic. We would not be here without them.

One of the focal points of the Library's COVID-19 response was to change how we communicate with our communities, members and partners. Through a successful application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we were able to redesign our website with accessibility at its core and space to promote the Library's collection, membership and public programme. The new website was launched

in early 2021 and now includes an online membership portal where users can read newspapers and magazines and build interest groups through forums.

Connected to the Library's new website was the turn to digital events. Crash-courses in Zoom webinars led to a series of successful online events on the extraordinary origins of chess, the life of Giovanni Belzoni and a conversation with Uluru custodian Rene Kulitja where she spoke about the colonisation of her people and language. She also contributed to *What it is to be here: Colonisation and resistance*, one of two digital exhibitions created by the Portico during the pandemic period. The exhibition focused on the 250 years since Lieutenant James Cook arrived, uninvited, onto Gweagal shores at Kamau in what is now Australia and considered how the process of colonisation and First Nations people's resistance to it continue to this day. The second exhibition, *Fun and Games: Playtime, past & present*, celebrated games and recreation through the ages. Using digital interactive activities, the exhibition explored the roles that pastimes play in our cultural lives, and the social, moral and intellectual aspects of game playing.



At the heart of the Library's work during this period has been its continued commitment towards creating a welcoming and inclusive Portico that represents Manchester's communities which is accessible to all. The Portico is currently embarking on ambitious development plans and key to this work has been the creation of a new Equity and Representation Action Group. Through the guidance of this group, the library looks to build and shape a library and wider cultural sector that represents and serves its communities in Manchester and beyond.

Literature and learning continued to play an important part of the Library's activities since April 2020. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we were able to relaunch The Portico Prize, which celebrates the best of Northern writing, and deliver the Portico Sadie Massey Awards for young readers and writers. The Awards ask school age children to submit a review of a book or a piece of creative writing based on life in the North of England. Winners received writing mentorships, prize bundles and an Adopt-a-Book choice. This year also marked the launch of the Book Awards, which was only open to pupil referral units and schools with special educational needs. 53 schools from around the country took part in the Awards with hundreds of entries submitted.

In March 2021, Aoife Larkin departed the Library after six years at the Portico. Aoife has been a leader in the Library's development as a fledgling charity and will be sorely missed. We wish her all the best in her new venture at Leeds Art University.

Thom Keep, Librarian

THE ROYAL PHILATELIC SOCIETY LONDON

The library has been closed to members and visiting researchers for the whole of this reporting period. Our Head of Collections remained working throughout (mostly from home) and our collections assistants were furloughed during the lockdowns. Where possible, enquiries were dealt with remotely and, once staff were able to return to the premises, we resumed postal loans.

In May 2020, we should have been heavily involved in the international stamp exhibition in London and hosting the first International Philatelic Libraries' Symposium to take place during the show. Sadly, this had to be postponed until February 2022 but most of the planned speakers gave online presentations and this gave birth to a regular webinar series on matters relating to philatelic libraries, archives and museums. These are available to view on our YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/c/RPSL1869/>.

We continued to receive donations during the lockdown period as we were fortunate to have a member of staff within walking distance of the premises who could attend the building every day to accept deliveries and carry out environmental and security checks. We received the final 150 boxes from the former library of the National Philatelic Society, as well as the libraries of the Postal



Stationery Society and the Malayan Study Circle. We also received donations from the Spellman Museum of Stamps and Postal History in Massachusetts and the Philatelistische Bibliothek in Munich.

Our volunteers were unable to continue with their roles but many of them volunteered to carry out digital tasks remotely. Volunteers from The Arts Society assisted our own members and volunteers with the transcription of the Perkins Bacon engraving books held in our archives. The RPSL purchased the records of the Perkins Bacon security printing company in the 1930s, when the firm collapsed. Perkins Bacon (PB) are best known for printing the famous Penny Black, but postage stamps were only about 5% of their business. PB's primary business was UK regional banks (printing bank notes, cheques etc.) but they also produced company and personal letterheads and business

cards, amongst other things. These records are now available online:

<https://www.rpsl.org.uk/Quick-Links/Perkins-Bacon-Archive-Keywords-Browse>

Nicola Davies, Head of Collections

TAVISTOCK SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARY

2020 was a challenging year for The Tavistock Subscription Library.

The first rumblings about a new respiratory virus became louder as the first quarter of the year progressed, with a pandemic being declared on 11th March. Library members ceased to visit the Reading Room which remained closed to the public for the remainder of the year with consequent curtailing of income. Meanwhile, an ineffective drainpipe outside was causing damp inside the Reading Room of such proportions that a dehumidifier had to be run day and night for most of the year.

Trustees conducted daily COVID-19-secure visits to check on the condition of the Reading Room and collection, empty the dehumidifier, keep clocks wound and deal with post and administration. Trustee meetings continued as usual via video-conferencing.

As restrictions eased during the summer, trustees carried out a risk-assessment and implemented COVID-19-compliant rules and policies along with changes to the lay-out of the building to enable members to make COVID-compliant visits. To facilitate remote contact a Facebook group was set up, being used frequently by members and kept up to date.

Outside, the Library enjoyed being part of the Guildhall Square refurbishment area along with the next-door Museum and the Tavistock Heritage Trust. The trustees began thinking about potential changes for the future of the Library as part of the Guildhall refurbishment project and how to better achieve the charity's objectives.

The writers' groups were unable to meet as usual but that did not prevent several member authors publishing works during the year about varied subjects, for instance the issues of Refugees, Policing and the Guildhall. The Tavistock Canal Poetry reinstatement project was supported as were the moves to publish the works of a late member Dr Mary Freeman.

Financially it was a hard year but with the support of loyal members and trustees, and a much-appreciated grant from West Devon Borough Council, the Tavistock Subscription Library can face the challenges of 2021 confident of a brighter future.

Simon Dell, Chairman

THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT LIBRARY, SALFORD

The big, cheering news is that in the calendar year 2020, Despite It All, we managed to top 2019's total number of people attending Library events live. Having our events available remotely has been a huge hit, and we will never be going back to events held solely in the Library annexe.

Library usage

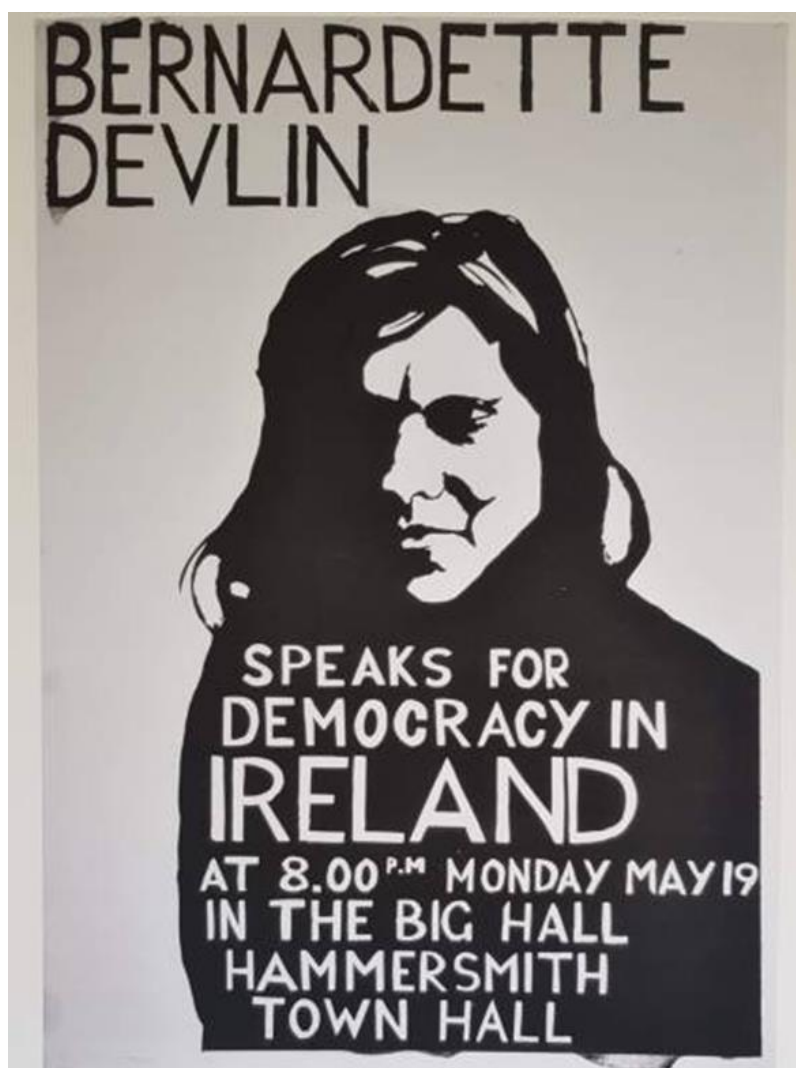
The reading room reopened as a pilot in August 2020, welcoming 'duos' researching our podcast project (see below). The safety processes instigated for the 'duos' gave us sufficient confidence in the resilience of our risk management to enable us to greet readers officially. We reopened the library to a maximum of two readers per day on 16 September, and until we had to close again on 4 November we were 'full' nearly every day. A lot of effort was required to get just two people into the building, but all were very appreciative to be back. We were disappointed to be unable to reopen after

Lockdown 2 (and specifically that libraries did not seem to feature in formal government guidance) but by the end of the year were looking forward to being able to welcome back readers in mid-April.

2020 saw a 40% increase in usage of our Website over the previous year, including over 40% new visitors. The Library followers on Twitter increased by nearly 20% to over 8,200, and 'likes' on our Facebook page increased by 13% to over 6,800. Our Instagram account followers also increased significantly, due in part to the success of our podcast.

Events

Although we'd never heard of Zoom until March 2020 we have made the most of it ever since, and our use of it has been the most far-reaching aspect of our 'reinvented' library – we have hosted 37 free online talks over the last year, with audiences always considerably higher and more geographically spread than we could ever have dreamed of welcoming to our premises. We also offered up musical and spoken word treats with *Radical Sounds*, curated by trustee Maxine Peake, a virtual event which premiered both on our Facebook page and our YouTube channel on the evening of the August Bank Holiday. All our talks have been recorded and you can catch up with any or all of them at www.youtube.com/wcmlibrary/videos.



Exhibitions:

We have welcomed online guest exhibitions about [posters from the Irish civil rights era](#), [the centenary of an extraordinary strike by Derbyshire boot and shoe makers which lasted for over two years](#), and more recently [the centenary of the Communist Party of Great Britain](#). Our exhibition *Thomas Paine: citizen of the world*, which had been due to end in March 2020, found its life extended online as [we put up on our Web site](#) the booklet containing the text of the exhibition boards.

Arts Council England

Emergency Response Fund:

We were successful with our joint application, with Salford outdoor arts organisation Walk the Plank, to the Arts Council's Emergency Response Fund for our project [Begin the World Over Again](#), which aimed to

deliver a dynamic digital aspect to the sharing of the Library's amazing collection, via a creative engagement project, supported by artists, developing six episodes of a podcast based on different parts of our collection.

Working in partnership:

Working digitally offered us many opportunities for partnership working. For example to mark the 75th anniversary in October of the Pan-African Congress in Manchester we digitised various documents for Manchester Metropolitan University, some of which they blew up large to feature in the windows of the old Chorlton-on-Medlock Town Hall, now an MMU building and where the Congress took place.

We digitised some interesting material from the Manchester and Salford Film Society (the oldest film society in the UK, whose archive we hold) to mark its 90th anniversary in November 2020 (www.wcml.org.uk/90NotOut), and held a joint event with them to mark their birthday.

Activist and boxer Len Johnson was the subject of the Library's contribution to [the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's Creative Care Kit](#) for young people (the link clicks to the second edition of the care kit). 22,000 copies were distributed to young people who are not online, and so may have been feeling more isolated and lonely during the pandemic.

We sent our 'top 100' undigitised tapes to be digitised as part of the [North West Sound Heritage project](#).

In March 2021 we were delighted to welcome a team from Creative Manchester, part of the University of Manchester, to undertake 360-degree photography of the building to allow us to create a 'virtual tour', which we will be able to use in a variety of different ways in future.

Conclusion:

In very depressing circumstances the Trust has come through remarkably well, and is even beginning to put in place ideas and ways of working that will make the Library better placed to provide a quality of service to the movement as and when we return to any sort of normality.

Lynette Cawthra, Library Manager

* London Library *contribution added after AGM*



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