



## **ILA ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM 2023**

### ***Spirit and Ideals: Reimagining the Next 50 years***

*Siân Williams, Head of Special Collections & Librarian, South Wales Miners' Library, Swansea University*

The Miners' Institutes of South Wales have been described as "one of the greatest networks of cultural institutions created by working people anywhere in the world." In 1973, the South Wales Miners' Library was established as a research library and a centre for adult and community learning at Swansea University in partnership with the National Union of Mineworkers (South Wales Area).

Over the last 50 years, the South Wales Miners' Library has endeavoured to maintain the spirit and ideals of the original Miners' Institutes. As the Library prepares to move to a new location in Swansea city centre next year, this talk will reflect on the process to create a new mission and vision for the South Wales Miners' Library fit for the next 50 years. It will also consider some of the ways we have been drawing on the Library's spirit and ideals to re-assess our role within the community and how our collections are used. Examples include: "Waste of Our Time: Reimagining Pictures of A Changing Valley", where we used a documentary produced by an adult education class in the Library in 1983 as the starting point to work with the local community to create a new documentary on how life and landscape has changed. For the "Breakthrough Welsh Women's Banner" project we worked with new audiences to create a bilingual banner inspired by the women in our collections and our communities, which has been added to the South Wales Miners' Library's banner collection.

**Siân Williams** is Head of Special Collections at Swansea University, managing the South Wales Miners' Library, the Richard Burton Archives as well as the University Library's Rare Book, Art and History of Computing collections.

Appointed as Librarian of the South Wales Miners' Library in 1995, Siân has led its development as an internationally respected research and adult education centre. She has led or contributed to numerous successful externally funded projects, including digitisation projects and community-based exhibitions, collaborating with community organisations, academics, museum, library and archive professionals.

In 2013 she co-authored, with Hywel Francis, 'Do Miners Read Dickens? Origins and Progress of the South Wales Miners' Library 1973-2013', which was published by Parthian.

Siân is Secretary and a Vice President of Llafur: Welsh People's History Society, a Trustee of the Paul Robeson Wales Trust, sits on the Board of the DOVE Workshop, and is on the committee of Swansea Cricket Club.