THE BRITISH LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN NATIONAL LIBRARIANS 1997-8

1997 was perhaps the most significant year in the history of the British Library since it was the year when the Library moved into its new building at St Pancras. The first two, of nine reading room opened in November to media acclaim. Reader visits were up 48% compared with the same period last year and applications for new reader passes were up 53%. The Library spend a further £11.5million on the move to St Pancras in the financial year 1997/8.

Regrettably, this success has not been recognised in financial terms by the British Government, who imposed further cuts in the Library's funding a time of increased costs. This led, by the end of the year, to a realisation that there would have to be fundamental changes in the way the Library operated and a subsequent decision to undertake a major strategic review.

FUNDING

CENL Members will be aware from previous annual reports of the severe funding difficulties faced by the Library during the transitional period of its occupation of the new Library building. In its 1997 planning submission to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for the period 1998/99 - 2000/01 the Library had sought additional funds amounting to some £8million per annum in order to restore the funding of its acquisitions and conservation programmes to appropriate levels. In the event the Library's financial settlement for 1998/99 was reduced by £2.25million from previous indicative levels and the Library's request for additional acquisitions and conservation funding was not met. Moreover the Library has been asked to plan for the subsequent three years (1999/00 - 2001/02) on the basis of no increase on the 1998/99 cash settlement, despite growth in legal deposit intake, growth in user demand and trends in book and serial price inflation. The Library is facing the challenge posed by this difficult financial situation by undertaking during the Summer 1998 a strategic review (of which a zero-base budget review will form a part) against these new financial realities, with the objective of re-focusing its resources against its key priorities.

NEW BUILDING AT ST PANCRAS

The first two reading rooms were successfully opened to the public on 24 November 1997. During the year, 3.5 million books have been moved and by the end of the year some 600 staff members were working in St Pancras. The British Library at St Pancras is the largest and most complex public building to have been constructed in Britain this century. The media and readers alike have widely praised the new building and its improved standards of service. Following the successful opening of these first two rooms there is an air of confidence in the new building and its systems. There has been a marked increase in applications for reader passes and reader visits coupled with reduced book delivery times. The computer systems have been reliable. Although the building works well, there have been some teething troubles and need for remedial works, significantly on the air conditioning system, that have been an unexpected drain on resources.

The Library's aim now is to capitalise on the new building to provide high quality national library services that are expected of us.

LEGAL DEPOSIT

The British Library, with the support of other UK legal deposit libraries, submitted a proposal to the UK Government last year for the extension of legal deposit to non-print publications. In February 1997 a consultative paper was produced by Government which had anticipated would have led to legislation. However, this has not been forthcoming and the British Library has instead, been asked to set up a working group under Sir Anthony Kenny to consider how a voluntary scheme might operate.

ACQUISITIONS

The British Library spent a total of £12.3million on acquisitions which represented a reduction on previous years. 78,000 books, 80,000 serial titles, 23,500 newspaper issues, 20,000 maps were amongst the acquisitions purchase from the budget.

The Library also acquired some 85,000 books, 230,000 serial parts, 190,400 newspaper issues, 3,500 maps and 2,000 items of printed music through the UK legal deposit system.

Budget expenditure for heritage acquisitions in 1997/8 was £583K, of which £140K was allocated to antiquarian books and £443K to manuscripts.

Significant literary manuscript acquisitions during the course of last year included a miscellany of Restoration verse with poems by Andrew Marvell and John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester; a pocket notebook of poems, mostly unpublished of Arthur Henry Hallam, the subject of Tennyson's poem 'In Memoriam'; and literary papers (and a portrait -now hanging in the new Humanities Reading Room) of Sir Angus Wilson, novelist, presented by Tony Garrett. Historical manuscripts acquired included a collection of letters by Lieut. Henry Maxse and his brother Lieut. Frederick Maxse, ADCs respectively to Lord Cardigan and Lord Raglan, written to their parents from the Crimea. A fine Italian renaissance manuscript by Petrus Apollonius Collatius was added to the illuminated MSS collections.

PRESERVATION

With reduced funding for 1977/8, it was again necessary to reduce from previous years the expenditure on conservation and preservation. Total expenditure in this area was just over £5million compared with £6.2millon at its peak in 1994/5.

EXHIBITIONS, LOANS and PUBLICATIONS

The number of special exhibitions in 1997 was reduced to four from seven the previous year because of the move of the exhibition galleries from the British Museum building to the new site at St Pancras. Almost 4 million visitors were however received. Amongst the special exhibitions was *Fifty Years of the Folio Society, 1947-1997 ,* which celebrated the work of the Society in publishing books of exceptional quality illustration, design and production. The

new galleries will open at St Pancras in April 1998 and will be free thanks to very generous sponsorship gifts from the Pearson Group and John Ritblat.

Loans from the Library's collections were suspended for the latter part of the year because of the move to the new building but earlier in the year, the Tyndale New Testament was amongst the treasures visiting New York. Several manuscripts from our Oriental and India Office Collection as well as some Western manuscripts were on view in the New York in the *Glory of Byzantium* exhibition.

Over 50 new publications were produced over the year. Amongst the highlights were *The Illuminated Page* a lavishly illustrated survey of ten centuries of manuscript painting, *Towards the Digital Library* which details the British Library's projects in the form of case studies and *News Information: Online, CD-ROM and Internet Resources,* a practical guide to news information, sponsored by News International plc.

DIGITAL LIBRARY

The British Library's digital library developments aim to enhance the current collection and services and improve access to them and has an ambitious vision for the digital library encompassing four main areas of digital activity:

- Document supply
- Patent services
- Picture library service
- Heritage multimedia publishing

In order to harness the innovation, enterprise and investment required to realise this vision the Library is using the UK Government's Private Finance Initiative to develop the project. Extensive interest from leading players in the information and telecommunication sectors followed the project announcement in August 1997. Three bidders have been selected to submit proposals in response to the Library's Invitation to Negotiate.
The Library expects to select a preferred partner in September 1998 with digital services commencing during 1999.

OTHER IS DEVELOPMENTS
Inside web, the British Library's new current awareness and document delivery service was launched on 6 October 1997. At this time over 800 organisations began sixty day trials of the service.
Following beta-trials at sites in the USA , UK and France in June 1997 the product was subjected to significant re-design and modification before it could be released. The British Library's Information Services staff carried out most of this work in consultation with Dataware Technologies, the original developers of the inside web service. Specifically the relationships between the inside server, the document ordering and finance modules which collectively provide the service had to be addressed. **Inside** is now an active service generating increasing numbers of requests for journal articles and conference papers. Significant relationships are already in place with large organisations from both the business and academic worlds, searching for an improved solution to their current awareness and document delivery requirements.
The British Library has, as part of its strategic objectives, to "provide a simple means of access to the Library's collection and its services via electronic networks" In order to meet

this aim a project was started in late 1996 to develop a British Library OPAC utilising the power of the Internet and the World Wide Web. **OPAC 97** as it came to be known was publicly launched on May 20th 1997 at London Olympia's Internet World exhibition. The successful launch of **OPAC 97** enabled the Library to:

- Provide free world-wide electronic access to British Library catalogues for the first time.
- Provide easy-to-use access over the World Wide Web to the widest possible audience.

Since its launch **OPAC 97** has proved to be a major success for the British Library, proving immensely popular with users world-wide. Usage covers all types of access, from Australian universities to Russian Internet Service Providers. The **OPAC 97** server has around 1 million hits per month and carries out between 11 - 12,000 searches per day Monday to Friday. In addition, The Document Supply Centre receives over 5,000 requests per month via **OPAC 97**.
In April 1997 the Library awarded a contract for design, implementation and operation of the new British Library **Corporate Bibliographic System.** The system will exploit the latest technology to integrate and underpin the Library's cataloguing, bibliographic, and information systems, providing the basis for more effective working and better services. When fully implemented in 1999 it will have the capability to support up to two thousand concurrent users and to handle up to thirty million records. Axis Resources are the prime contractor, with overall responsibility for systems design and operational service, and will co-ordinate the work of subcontractors, CGI, ELiAS and IBM. The system will be based on AMICUS software, developed by CGI.

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION
The British Library continued to chair CoBRA+ which carried on the work of CoBRA, which was responsible for initiating a number of valuable projects, such as AUTHOR, BIBLINK and CHASE. The major action of CoBRA+ so far has been the launching of the NEDLIB project, which aims to produce a generic demonstrator model for the handling of electronic publications; work on this project commenced at the beginning of 1998. Other current CoBRA+ initiatives include a feasibility study for linking terms in subject headings lists for the purpose of multilingual access; a survey of current policies on electronic publications, proposed by the joint CENL/Federation of European Publishers committee; the development of a common European stance on the G7/Bibliotheca Universalis project; and agreement on a Z39.50 profile. It is being proposed that CoBRA become a permanent standing committee of CENL, with the aim of fostering further technical co-operation amongst European national libraries. In the meantime, the present CoBRA+ contract with the Commission is likely to be extended for a further six months until the end of 1998, thus enabling a full discussion of the implications of the Fifth Framework Programme to take place and thus facilitate further project work.