3rd Space – A new social learning space

The week of 17–21 May 2010 was the busiest week ever for the University Library. On one day we had almost 7,200 recorded exits where around 6,000 would be more usual for this time of year. Anyone using the Library at this time would have been well aware of just how full we were. In response to requests, we put out an extra 50 chairs to create more study spaces. This increase in use could be an emergent trend as other universities also recorded high usage during the same period.

The University addressed the need for more learning space by opening a new social learning area within the Student Centre called 3rd Space. Visitors to 3rd Space (which has similar opening hours to the Library) will find an attractive space, able to accommodate a variety of activities loosely defined as work, eat and play – although the boundaries are fluid. As well as a café and comfortable seating there is a small 'igloo village' of inflatable pods which can be used for individual or group activity. Laptops can be used throughout the space via the WiFi network. A 'no alcohol' policy distinguishes 3rd Space from The Waterhole on the ground floor of the building.

3rd Space has proved very popular as a venue with staff and students across the University.

So far it has been used for a student play, a fashion show, a photography exhibition, Maths Café and a 'speed dating' event with a few General Election candidates, to name just some events. At the beginning of next academic year the Students' Union are hoping to hold their induction events in 3rd Space.

Most courses include a group work element, so please recommend 3rd Space to students as a good place to get together and work, have something to eat and also relax. 3rd Space is also available to students looking for a small exbibition space or venue.

And you thought Twitter was just 140 characters…

There are those who dismiss Twitter as a complete waste of time. At best they see it as ephemeral – too limited to be of any real use in learning and teaching – or just a passing fad. However, microblogging is here and, I believe, there are numerous uses for it in an academic setting, as many people are discovering.

Some uses are:
- Collaborating with colleagues or other institutions.
- Tracking (or reporting on) conference activity, meetings and lectures.
- Linking up students for a particular project or piece of coursework.
- Promotion of your department, service or research.
- Keeping up with news in your research field.
- Keeping up with news from your department, the University or the Library.
- Professional development and networking.
- Keeping in touch with academic friends or those you don't often see face-to-face.

Twitter isn't just about the site itself, tweets, retweeting or even 'twooshes' (tweets which are exactly 140 characters). It's not even about services such as TwitPic (**http://twitpic.com**) which allows you to share images or yfrog (**http://yfrog.com**) which enables sharing of images and video. There are many other sites which can add value to your use of this microblogging tool which has become so popular in the last 18 months.

First, of course, you might want to search Twitter for items of interest or follow 'hashtags', which people are using as basic keywords to connect disparate tweets. You can do just that by using **http://search.twitter.com**. The advanced search allows you to even search for particular people, places or dates. Especially interesting is the feature to search by 'attitude' – what kind of smiley is used in the tweet, or whether it asks a question. In a similar vein, Twapper Keeper (**www.twapperkeeper.com**) allows you to archive tweets. You can store hashtags, keywords and person timelines for posterity.

Wouldn't it be great if you could schedule tweets about events that you know are upcoming – but might not remember at the time – or tweet while you're away, or simply have 'regular' tweets without having to log in frequently? You can do all this, although not through the normal Twitter interface. A tool such as SocialOomph (formerly TweetLater), **www.socialoomph.com**, lets you do this and you can also pay for a professional version which provides even more features.

You might be interested in collecting statistics related to your usage of Twitter – how many followers you have, how many tweets you make, what time of day or week you typically tweet.

There are many tools which do this, of which three, in no particular order, are:

- **http://twitteranalyzer.com**
- **http://twittercounter.com** allows you to get weekly emails of your stats. Figure 1 shows an example of my follower and tweet counts for the last three months. It also predicts that the author will have 100 followers within a month. [Stop Press: it was past 100 within a fortnight.]
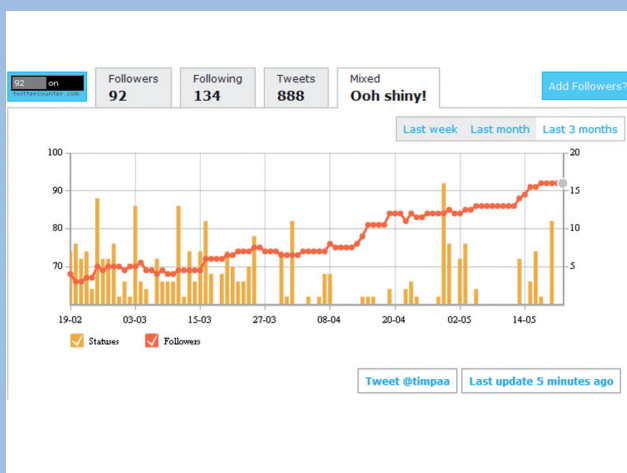

Figure 1

- **http://tweetstats.com** produces a number of interesting graphs. Figure 2 shows my 'Tweet Density' or patterns of posting across days of the week and hours of the day.
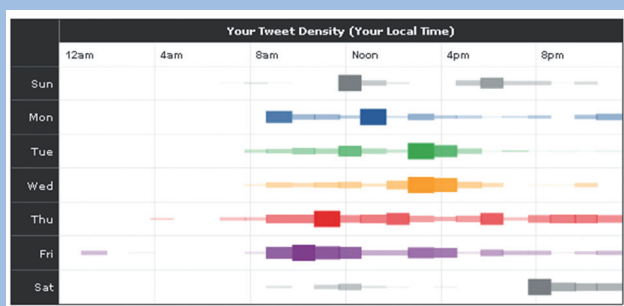

Figure 2

Figure 3 shows a tag cloud for my tweets which would probably give a psychoanalyst a field day!
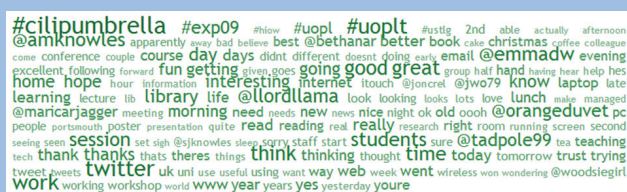

Figure 3

Several other analytic tools are listed at **www.socialmediatoday.com/SMC/165191** and for five useful tools for keeping tabs on Twitter trends take a look at: **http://mashable.com/2010/06/16/twitter-trends-tools**.

Other developments include content from Twitter tagged with a geocode. At **http://trendsmap.com**, 'trends' from recent tweets are plotted on a map and allow you to see what's being mentioned where in the world. For those who prefer images to words, however, live video streaming on Twitter is also possible, which you can see at **www.twitcam.com**.

If you're still using the Twitter website itself to tweet, you might want to look at some of the alternatives, especially if you're using an iPhone or iPod Touch. Tools such as TweetDeck, HootSuite, TwitBird or Echofon can either be used via a web browser in the usual way, as downloaded software on your PC, or as an 'app' on the iPhone. As expected, iPad versions are either available or coming soon. These tools can offer many advantages over the simple Twitter homepage by allowing you to follow multiple 'streams' (columns) of tweets, for example, your usual followers, a particular hashtag you're interested in, or even other social networking status updates such as those from Facebook. It's often possible to post to multiple places at once as well. For example, with TweetDeck you can post the same update to either Twitter or Facebook or both at the same time, though of course you're limited to the shorter number of characters – 140 – that Twitter allows.

Finally, if you'd like advice on how to twitter acceptably from a conference, try this helpful note from Mark Stelzner **http://inflexionadvisors.com/blog/2010/05/13/how-to-live-tweet-a-conference**, and for an excellent look at how you can extend your creativity by following strangers take a look at **http://scienceblogs.com/cortex/2010/07/twitter_strangers.php**. If all these aren't enough, you can try '47 Awesome Twitter Tools You Should be Using' at **www.deontee.com/47-top-twitter-sites-services-software-and-tips**. If all that has only left you wanting more, Jim Grygar's '60 Twitter Tools to Track Tweets' ups the stakes even further: **http://jimgrygar.byethost12.com/60-twitter-tools-to-track-tweets**.

Eric Griffith, in *PC Magazine*, writes that: 'There is no way to create a completely comprehensive list of tools for tweeting. They spring up as fast as rabbits in springtime.' So of course he's put together a two part 'Ultimate Twitter Tool Guide' with slideshow, which you can find at **www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2365829,00.asp**. If all this has left you somewhat dazed, you could try a complete change of pace, as it were, in how data is presented in the rather intriguing parade of followers at **http://isparade.jp**.

This short article barely scratches the surface of what's available. So search, watch what others use, read blog postings and articles – and of course tweets – for more, and pass on the best finds to others. Better yet, send them to **totd@port.ac.uk** with the subject line 'twitter tip' and we'll tweet them on the Library's Twitter stream which you can find using **@UoPlibrary**.

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Analogue ➡ Digital Twitter

If you'd like to demonstrate the utility of Twitter to staff or students, but are aware that some people might be a bit shy of jumping straight in or may not have the technology to tweet live in a session, why not try our analogue ➡ digital twittering that we've tried a number of times quite successfully.

Firstly, slice up coloured paper into strips (an A4 sheet will make at least 20; if you want to be really slick print a space for a name/nickname, a line for the tweet, and a space for the time of the tweet). Estimate how many you'll need by looking at the length of the presentation and the number of attendees. You probably want around 10 per attendee/hour, although this will almost certainly be generous. Encourage the audience to 'tweet' (on the paper) about anything and everything, from ephemera ('presenter has a nice tie', 'room is too hot') to learning and teaching points or contributions ('hmmm, that was a good point about Y' or 'have you considered X?'). Then either get people to create a stream of tweets sticking them to the wall or a window (blu-tack works well temporarily), which can be collected afterwards and typed up/distributed, or set up a dummy Twitter account and get a volunteer to type the tweets into the account as they're handed in through the session. This is great for after-lunch sessions to give people the opportunity to move!

Refer to the tweets throughout the session by going to the stream on the wall or having a browser open on the live twitter stream. If you're using PowerPoint simply <alt><tab> to a browser periodically; if you're already on the web for your talk, either have two tabs on the go or consider using a browser such as Flock which is specifically designed to handle social networking in a sidebar to the main screen. This is a great way of getting people to participate and to give the more wary a taste of twittering!

The Body in the Library:
A year in the life of a murder mystery

'The Body in the Library', a self-contained activity hosted within Victory, was launched by the University Library in September 2009. Designed to address parallel concerns about information literacy, teaching for distance learners and the administrative workload of the Law and Criminology Librarian, the activity has proved both a positive experience in collaborative working and a beneficial tool in addressing the problems faced by both staff and students.

Distance learners have, for many years, been subject to a deficit in Library instruction and guidance. Increasingly dependent on online research tools, they have found themselves largely without tailored teaching which presents material in an engaging and attractive way. The role of the librarian in supporting their learning has been to respond to their enquiries at a point of need, with the possibility of a brief session during summer schools or similar events. As such, a vast amount of the librarian's time is spent answering standard questions of a simple nature, and solving problems of off-site authentication and access.

Over the summer of 2009, I worked with Linda Jones, Law and Criminology Librarian, and the Department for Curriculum and Quality Enhancement (DCQE) to produce an online learning unit within Victory which would address these concerns. The unit would provide online tutorials covering the access and use of eresources, and thus answer and filter out some of the more common questions before they became enquiries. Consultation with relevant academics in ICJS established the key resources required by students for their first assignment and these were incorporated into the activity as integral parts of interactive clues. To complete the activity, students would be required to access and find information within databases, electronic journals, electronic books and the University Library website. Students who collected the correct information would solve the 'mystery'.

One of the most important elements of the design process was the creation of the clues and ensuring their relevance to the students' learning experience. Finding elements within the resources recommended by the academic staff, which would illustrate the various methods of accessing and searching for information, was a time-consuming exercise, but one which I felt was integral to the success or failure of the project. If the clues did what they were intended to, they would provide practical, step-by-step demonstrations of searching and information retrieval from each of the key resources. If they didn't do this, the unit would have failed in its objectives.

The concept for the visual appearance of the activity was always intended to be graphically strong, and not to resemble 'traditional' online tutorials, offering instead a less formal, and possibly more attractive, way of learning. Liaising with DCQE on the project enabled me to draw upon their skills and expertise in transferring my ideas into an online presence. The interface was intended to visually resemble a police case file, with dividing tabs which would facilitate navigation between clue elements. Having each clue effectively on a new page meant that focus would be kept upon the clue in hand. We used a combination of photographs I took in the Library and stock images, such as textured papers, to create the impression of a vintage case file, and we linked to PDF files created by Linda to provide extra sources of help and reference.

We asked the students to collect specific letters and numbers from each resource they visited to provide a conclusion to the activity and create the illusion of having 'solved' the crime. A matrix was devised into which these letters and numbers could be inserted to generate both the name of the 'killer' and a URL. The students would then use the URL to take them to a 'Case Solved' location, which included links to further multimedia resources (such as playlists on Box of Broadcasts) as a 'reward'.

The activity was launched live via a link on the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies (ICJS) website on September 2009. Posters and leaflets were targeted at undergraduate students attending the study school later that month and the activity was promoted verbally by both Linda and academic staff in ICJS.

In the two months directly following the launch, figures from Google Analytics showed that the activity had been visited 864 times by 407 unique visitors, who viewed 3,442 individual pages. The statistics showed that students visited an average of 3.98 pages per visit, staying for an average of 9 minutes and 25 seconds.

Although the majority of the visits to the activity were from the UK, others were from registered students in more remote locations including the Netherlands, Zambia, Canada, Ireland and the US, indicating that the activity reached places that traditional library instruction could never have hoped to. Peaks in usage were clearly visible and could be matched with instances of marketing and at times when coursework was set, indicating

recognition of the link between the activity and the practical application of the skills it introduced.

In terms of the administrative burden on Linda, statistical analysis of email enquiries alone provides a strong indication that the activity achieved very positive results. In the two months following launch, Linda's total number of email enquiries dropped by 75 per cent. At individual subject level, enquiries regarding access (via Athens/Shibboleth) had a 94 per cent reduction from 292 to just 17, whilst enquiries about the electronic journal *Criminal Justice Matters* dropped by 97 per cent from 66 to only 2. Enquiries regarding other resources used in the activity each dropped by between 40 and 50 per cent. These reductions paid noticeable dividends in terms of staff time at a key point in the academic year, with time freed up from repetitive replies used more profitably for other purposes.
In the early stages of usage, tangible and measurable benefits have clearly resulted from the project. Student feedback has been positive, with email and verbal comments indicating the students have both recognised the direct correlation between the activity and their initial assignments, and been willing to engage with this guided introduction to resources which may at first have intimidated them.

In December 2009, the project was highlighted in a breakout session at the University Learning and Teaching Conference by Lindsey Fulker of DCQE, Linda and I. Having the chance to present the activity to academics in this forum was extremely valuable in terms of feedback,

and interest in tailoring it further for other courses and groups of students was both encouraging and thought-provoking.

Linda presented the project as part of a talk at the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL) Conference in Brighton in March 2010, where she received further positive feedback and enquiries from several other providers who were interested in either using the activity or adapting it for their own use. Both Linda and I think that the main strength of the activity is the correlation between it and the coursework the students are asked to do. Conversely, to ask students or users to engage with something not directly course-related in the early stages of an academic pathway would be counter-productive. We were keen to express this concern in conversations and correspondence with interested parties, whilst remaining available to answer questions and offer advice, when asked, on the process of creating such an activity.

Bringing to an end the first year of the project, I was very pleased to be asked to display the activity and speak informally about it during a poster session at the Architecture Librarians' Group (ArcLib) Conference, which was hosted at the University in July 2010. Speaking to librarians from other institutions and sectors about the project reminded me how far we had come since its inception and how positive an experience it had been for both those involved in its production and those using it.

Ongoing development of the project will provide a version of the activity for campus-

based students in ICJS for the start of the new academic year. This has come about as a result of conversations with academic staff and students, who felt that many full-time students, even those who make regular use of the Library in person, could benefit from the same kind of online introduction to electronic resources as distance learners. The project has, therefore, come full circle. Initially intended to offer distance learners something we felt they missed out on in comparison to their campus-based cohorts (as well as facilitating more efficient use of staff time), we have identified a need for the same provision to be made for those we thought we catered for well – a reminder that in an ever-changing educational environment, adapting to and providing for the multitude of our students' learning styles and needs is an ever constant challenge.

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Citation classics: Jerome Lettvin

Surround a frog with one of its main sources of food – flies – and if the flies are dead, and thus immobile, the frog will starve to death. Paradoxically, surrounded by plenty of inactive flies, the poor creature fades away and dies. But if the flies are alive and thus moving around, it's a very different matter. The frog prospers and the flies do not. This is because the frog's visual system has evolved to detect movement, particularly the rapid movement characteristic of its main sources of food.

One day in 1965, when I was a student studying biology A Level, our biology master mentioned that he had been reading an article in *Scientific American*, published originally and more fully in an unlikely journal, the *Proceedings of the Institution of Radio Engineers*, about the frog's visual system. Generously he passed his copy of *Scientific American* among the assembled students, and though I cannot now remember much of the content of the article, I have never forgotten its title: What the frog's eye tells the frog's brain. Now is that a catchy title or is that a catchy title? This paper published in 1959 is now, according to the Science Citation Index, one of the most widely quoted of scientific papers, a true citation classic. And this short article is the first of an occasional series in which *Harvest* will look at the people behind some citation classics.

So what of the man behind this paper? The paper's primary author is one Jerome Lettvin, and there is much more to him than simply a man with a penchant for writing scientific papers with memorable titles. Best known as the author of the aforementioned paper, co-written with Humberto Maturana, Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Lettvin is alive and well and still carrying out research in neurophysiology to this day, holding the post of Professor Emeritus of Electrical and Bioengineering and Communications Physiology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Lettvin and his co-authors were obviously generous men since at the end of the paper they paid tribute to the work of Oliver Selfridge, a colleague but not a co-worker, also at MIT. Selfridge had carried out pioneering neurophysiological studies on the spinal cord of lower vertebrates and made the first demonstration of 'feature
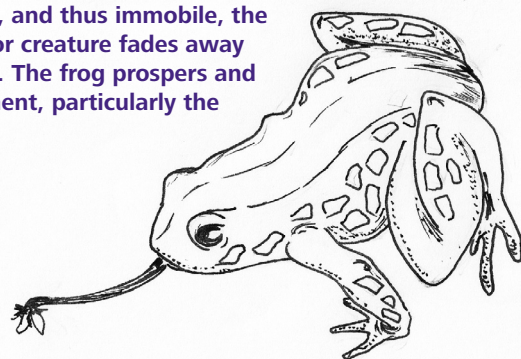
detectors' in the vertebrate visual system. It was this work that inspired Lettvin and his colleagues to study, so fruitfully, the visual system of the frog. Lettvin had an unusual approach to experiments; he considered any experiment a failure if the experimental animal did not return to a full and normal life. This must have made his experimental design quite tricky. One story reported him opening up a frog's skull with a can opener. Questioned about this by a journalist, Lettvin denied the story, saying that he hadn't used a can-opener at all, but rather a pair of toenail clippers!

Lettvin was an impassioned champion of the rights of smokers; in almost every photograph of him there is a cigarette clenched in his fist. He carried this love of tobacco to extraordinary lengths: when Building 20, in which he worked at MIT, was demolished and replaced with a building in which smoking was banned, Lettvin promptly decamped to a workman's hut where he could think (and smoke) in peace. Even in his youth his figure was portly, as photographs attest, so as well as a love of tobacco, my guess is that he also had a love of food.

Jerome Lettvin was born in Chicago on February 23, 1920, the eldest of four gifted children born to first-generation Jewish immigrants, Solomon and Fanny Lettvin. Jerome's younger brother Theodore (1926–2003) became a highly respected pianist, teacher and conductor. Possessed of a near-Mozartian precocity, he gave his first public recital at the age of five and his first concerto performance at the age of 11, later training at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia under the great pianist and teacher Rudolf Serkin. Like his older brother, Theodore fought in the Second World War, interrupting his musical studies to serve in the United States Navy.

Jerome Lettvin trained as a neurologist and psychiatrist at the University of Illinois, graduating with his Doctorate in Medicine (MD) in 1943. Immediately he joined the US Army and practised medicine at the 'Battle of the Bulge', the bloody, but ultimately unsuccessful, German counter-offensive through the Ardennes at the end of 1944. After the war, he continued practising neurology and researching nervous systems, firstly at Boston City Hospital and then at MIT with Walter Pitts and Warren McCulloch, working under Norbert Wiener. Norbert Wiener, a *wunderkind* who received his PhD in mathematical logic at the age of 18, is one of the towering figures of computing in the twentieth century. Almost single-handedly, Wiener created the discipline of cybernetics (which he named

from the Greek word kybernetes, meaning a steersman or helmsman), a discipline which focuses on the ubiquitous role of feedback in engineering, scientific and social systems.

One of the potential perks of being a post-war neurophysiologist was that one might get invited to work at the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn in Naples (**www.szn.it**). Founded in 1882, this marine research station, commandingly set in public gardens on the waterfront of Naples, has an international reputation as a biological research station. Not only is the Stazione known internationally, but in the dull post-war years the opportunity of experiencing some Neapolitan sun and food was probably a draw that few researchers could resist. So it was that the Lettvin family found themselves spending some time in Naples. Lettvin's laboratory was a 30-foot long room, housing the holding tanks for the research station's octopuses, the devious cephalopods being contained in mesh-covered tanks.
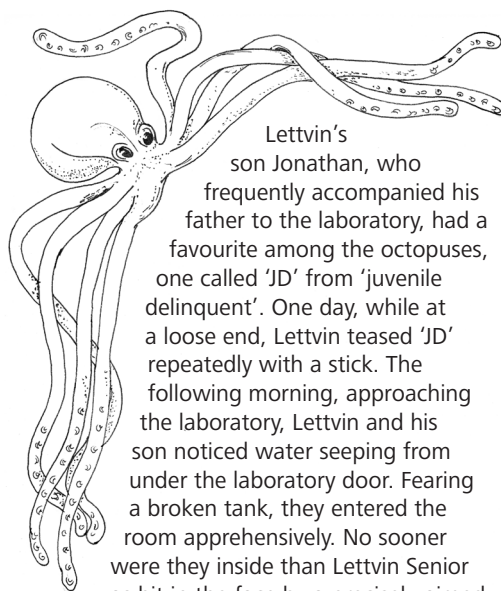
Lettvin's son Jonathan, who frequently accompanied his father to the laboratory, had a favourite among the octopuses, one called 'JD' from 'juvenile delinquent'. One day, while at a loose end, Lettvin teased 'JD' repeatedly with a stick. The following morning, approaching the laboratory, Lettvin and his son noticed water seeping from under the laboratory door. Fearing a broken tank, they entered the room apprehensively. No sooner were they inside than Lettvin Senior was hit in the face by a precisely-aimed jet of seawater, fired from over 30 feet away, through the mesh, by 'JD', who promptly fled to the bottom of the tank, discharged a cloud of ink and went into hiding for the

remainder of the day. Puzzled as to the water they had seen seeping under the door, Lettvin looked back at the door and saw a number of splashes on it, all at around head height: his head height. 'JD' had plainly been practising his revenge shot! From that day on Lettvin never again ate octopus, considering them, on this and other evidence, to be highly intelligent creatures – his 'colleagues', as he often referred to them. Jonathan, who had not teased 'JD', escaped without a drop of water hitting him.

The last vignette I will share about Lettvin is that he met Claude Shannon, the founder of Information Theory. Shannon was being shown around MIT shortly after being appointed as a professor there. Casually he asked his guide who was the 'best circuit man' in MIT. The reply went like this: some ex-psychiatrist guy, Jerry Lettvin. He's in the radar lab...' (Years before, Shannon, then a research student at MIT, had become bored with his engineering lectures. Looking at alternative lectures, Shannon decided to take a few lectures in philosophy, as one could in an institution that, though modelled closely on German educational institutions, promoted the values of a 'liberal' education. And in these lectures he came across the Boolean algebra of George Boole, quickly seeing that it had real-world applications. And so, Boolean Logic, which underpins the operation of so many electronic devices, came into being. But that's another story).

And for the curious, here are the details of Lettvin's paper:

Lettvin JY, HR Maturana, WS McCulloch and WH Pitts (1959) *What the frog's eye tells the frog's brain*. Proceedings of the Institution of Radio Engineers, 47(11), 1940–1951.

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(The artwork for this article was kindly drawn by Lynn Gard.)

Continuing adventures in eLearning

In the last issue of *Harvest* you may have read about the provision of tailored RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds for Victory sites. The project had come to a conclusion except for maintaining a watching brief on the sources to ensure that the pipes – the electronic conduits built to carry the RSS feeds – ran smoothly. This is often the way with work in the Library; we provide access to resources and guidance, but we tend not to see the end results. It was therefore very interesting to attend a recent session on the Hubs in which the feeds had been placed, and to hear about how they were working for staff and students.

I thought it was worth sharing this with other colleagues who may be contemplating working with the Library on such projects. I therefore canvassed for the following feedback from academics leading work on two of the Hubs.

- **Academic versus News RSS feeds** (featured in last issue of *Harvest*). Feedback from Paul Norman (Institute of Criminal Justice Studies) on their use in the Terrorism Hub.

  'News feeds provide a real-time opportunity to get students to relate their subject matter to real-world events. If integrated into teaching, via space for reflection and discussion of current events, this can usefully lead them to follow up relevant academic texts, either organised beforehand in online reading lists or that 'occur' in the live academic journal feeds, which can be honed to specific journal sources and filtered by keywords. Academic journal (or official, research) feeds often get students to consider more specialised,

complex or peripheral issues, that can stimulate dissertation project ideas if timed for the right period. Overall, feeds make Victory sites worth revisiting, given the dynamic content that that has been customised for their unit curriculum.'

- **Information Landscape** (interactive slide available for linking to any Victory site from Directory of Library Guides). Feedback from Paul Norman on its incorporation into the Terrorism Hub.

  'Taught (implicitly) in Year one, Semester one, and not considered again – perhaps until they get back a marked dissertation proposal – integrating information literacy skills is a challenge for all well-designed courses and units. But it is hugely rewarding for students to be able to appropriately 'discover' text and personalise their own learning in the context of a unit. How about a research-based assignment? Or a limited reading list where students also have to locate other specific sources? Fight against reading list dependency and draw upon the Library's excellent visual renditions of the information landscape.'

- **Evaluating newspaper resources** (a tailored search for the treatment of a specific topic across a range of newspapers to create a stable resource for student discussion). Feedback from Suzie Clift (Institute of Criminal Justice Studies) on its incorporation into the Diversity Hub.

  'It is integral that students are able to apply the theoretical content of the course to the 'real world'. Using contemporary issues is fundamental to this and using newspapers, especially 'online' newspapers, is an easy means of doing this. Through elearning and library tools, newspapers can be collated not just by date or type, but also by themes allowing for easy use in such areas as discourse analysis. Students have found this ease of access and availability a useful way of allowing them to relate theory into practice, thereby promoting critical thinking.'

- **Using images** (a tailored photo gallery compiled from Creative Commons licensed images to a specific brief). Feedback from Suzie Clift on its incorporation into the Diversity Hub.

  'Students are encouraged to undertake reading at all levels and this is of course the cornerstone to any degree. However, with the development of multimedia and our increasing understanding and knowledge of differing learning styles, when used in isolation, reading may not always be the most effective means of learning. The use of images allows for content to be placed into a different context, often involving examples of events to illustrate a theme. This allows for work to become 'relatable' and students seem to engage with content for longer and in more depth. Images also allow students to think beyond their assumptions and can provoke emotions and thought, allowing for stereotypes to be discussed and challenged.'

If you would like more information about any of the above topics, please contact the persons mentioned in the above texts.

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Father of the journal: Henry Oldenburg

It's highly appropriate in 2010, the 350th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Society, that we should reflect a little on what is, certainly in some people's view, the most important innovation of that society, the scientific journal.

The circumstances of the Society's founding were unpromising: a meeting held on a wet November night in 1660, in Gresham College in the City of London. The assembled company, gathered to hear a lecture on astronomy by Christopher Wren, decided that it would be a good idea to create a society to assist and promote the accumulation of practical knowledge. This was done, and in 1662, with the granting of its Royal Charter by Charles II, the Society became the Royal Society.

Although small scientific clubs had existed on the Continent for many years, the Royal Society was, from its foundation, of a very different order of magnitude. Its achievements have been enormous; the Society invented scientific publishing and the peer review process and it has been instrumental in bringing about the eventual triumph of English as the language of scientific discourse, aiding our native tongue in its slow but sure replacement of Latin and German as the *linguae francae* of science. It may not be too high a claim to say, as Bill Bryson does in his book on the Royal Society, that it 'invented modern science' (Bryson, 2010, p3).

Europhilic from its inception, even in its earliest days the Royal Society unashamedly looked out to Europe, appointing as its first Secretary the German polymath Henry Oldenburg (1619–1677), a theologian, diplomat and scientist. It was Oldenburg who was charged primarily with maintaining links with scientists in Europe. Oldenburg had come

to London in 1653 as a diplomat, but settled in England, forging a strong relationship with his lifelong patron Robert Boyle, as tutor to Boyle's nephew Richard Jones. Through the poet John Milton and Boyle's sister, Lady Ranelagh, Oldenburg gained entry to the most important intellectual circles of their day, one of whose membership included Samuel Hartlib. Oldenburg took over and used Hartlib's extensive web of foreign correspondents in his role as Secretary to the Royal Society.

Oldenburg quickly recognised that scientists working in Britain needed to be aware of what their counterparts in Europe were doing and so, in 1665, he published the first scientific journal, then really no more than a collection of letters from scientists in Britain and Europe. It was called *Philosophical Transactions: Giving Some Accompt of the Present Undertakings, Studies and Labours of the Ingenious in Many Considerable Parts of the World*. Thankfully, it was later shortened to *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, and now in the twenty-first century is accompanied by six other journals from the Society. Following Oldenburg's example, the French Academie des Sciences quickly produced its own journal, the *Journal des Savans* and so, almost synchronously in Britain and France, the scientific journal was born. During the next century over a thousand journals, mostly ephemeral, were founded and the number has increased rapidly after that, the number of journals in all disciplines doubling approximately every 13 years – the so-called 'information explosion'.

Oldenburg's later career was a chequered one. The breadth of his contacts on the Continent lead him to be imprisoned (albeit briefly) as a spy during the Second Anglo-Dutch War of 1665–1667, but despite this short-lived incarceration, Oldenburg lived on for another decade dying in 1677 at his home on Pall Mall. He was interred on 5 September 1677 at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Bexley. I may visit his grave one day.

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PrepUP goes postgrad: A new Library section

With PrepUP entering its fourth year and introducing an element for pre-entry postgraduates, the Library has been keen to continue its involvement in the project. We've written elsewhere about the work done over the past few years (Collinson & Kendall, 2009), so this article doesn't endeavour to cover the same ground again. However, as plans for a postgraduate centre in the Library were just beginning to be discussed, it seemed a particularly opportune time to build on the success of our 'international' section last year, and develop a virtual postgrad centre to allow us to introduce this group of students to the facilities and resources available to them.

Postgraduate induction across the University varies from faculty to faculty, but just as the undergraduate students can benefit from a glimpse of what's to come before they arrive, we felt that even students who can reasonably be expected to have some familiarity with library resources, could find an introduction to our Library helpful. Libraries tend to have idiosyncratic practices and certainly have individual collections of resources which will require familiarisation. In addition, students may have been out of an academic environment for some time and simply need to once again acculturate themselves to get the best out of what we offer. If they can hit the ground running, as it were, so much the better for their studies and research.

In a flowchart of the research student lifecycle (Postgraduate research students, 2010), Premia maps the experience many postgraduates go through. We see the PrepUP project assisting in their orientation in the first four stages at least ('pre-entry advice' through to 'on entry') and possibly even beyond, although we recognise that most will graduate to simply using the Library website or bookmarked pages once they are more familiar with what is available. There's no reason, however, that PrepUP couldn't be part of the 'HEOUs' (Higher Education Orientation Units) that Bennett et al (2008) refer to. It is interesting to compare the Premia flowchart with a similar one for international students (The Higher Education Academy, 2010) where again the PrepUP project clearly relates to pre-arrival support, induction, learning and teaching in the classroom, life outside the classroom and even employability.

Once again a team got together in the Library to generate ideas and to consider what should be included in the new area. Using mind-mapping techniques to collect the wealth of possible information and ideas of how to present it, we were keen to keep to the graphical style of the Library's contribution to PrepUP. In the absence of a real postgraduate area to use as a basis for the virtual space, it was decided that an open area just off the atrium would be ideal in terms of making access simple. As it happened, the photographs we intended to use included one wall of a room that was under consideration for becoming the real postgrad space. We chose not to use images of any real rooms as almost invariably they were too cluttered for our purposes and we didn't want to feel held hostage to having to redesign the PrepUP visuals once there was a real physical space.

Once the ideas about which visuals to use were decided on, the team were apportioned various sections of the postgraduate information provision to generate PowerPoint mock-ups of what we intended to do. These included notes on working from home, tips on EndNote and our provision of guidance and software, adverts for workshops we run, and pointers to external libraries. These were then submitted to the Department of Curriculum Quality and Enhancement (DCQE). One of DCQE's Education Technologists, Marie Kendall, worked her magic with Flash and produced engaging graphics, encouraging students to explore, and providing the 'pre-entry experience' which we've been working

to foster. If this project can improve retention, as Shobrook (2003) and Trotter & Roberts (2006) suggest, then the effort put into it will be amply repaid.
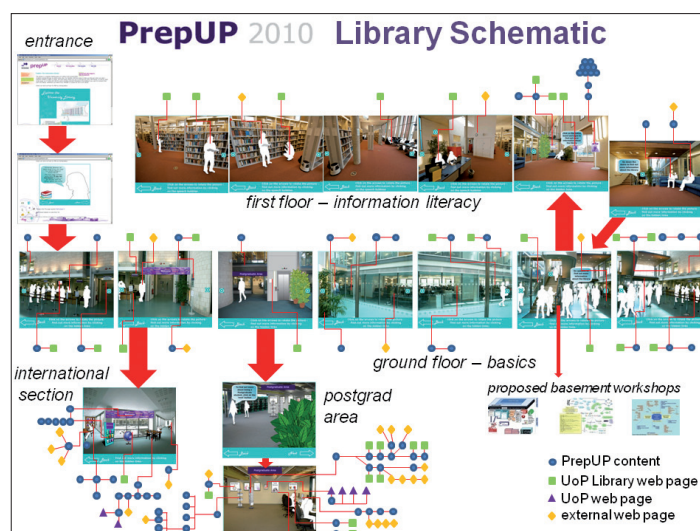

Figure 1

Figure 1 shows a schematic of the whole of the Library portion of PrepUP. The graphical nature of the Flash pages can clearly be seen and the 'hidden' links to explore are marked with one of four shapes. Originally, these links were only to either further Flash screens within PrepUP or to various examples of our Library webpages. As development continued, however, we included University webpages and also external websites of relevance and interest. You can see last year's new area in the international section represented in the bottom left corner of Figure 1.

Figure 2 shows an expanded view of the postgraduate area. The top image is a welcome screen which invites students to find out more about being a postgrad and then leads to the lower image which is the main postgraduate
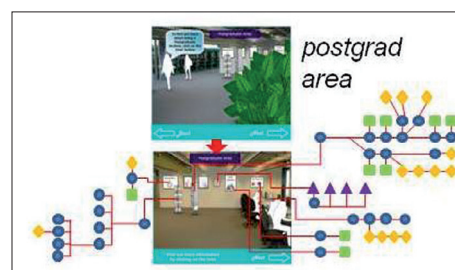

Figure 2

area. Although this area maintains the look and feel of the Ground Floor, just as with the international section, we've not 'hidden' the links. It's fairly obvious what to click on and mousing over the various elements in the pictures as usual lets you know there is something to 'find'.

Very briefly, the links are from bottom left, working clockwise:

Workshop stand: various tasters and adverts for our workshops that would be appropriate for postgraduates such as 'Information Overload', 'Return to Learn' and 'The Darkside of the Web'.

Picture of stopwatch: links to our opening hours.

Leaflet stand: links to short 'leaflets' (which only exist here) on various subjects of relevance such as 'Research', 'ILLs', 'Keeping up-to-date', 'End Note' and 'Other Libraries' (including the 'Public Library').

Café poster: provides information about the café attached to the Library, but also details about 3rd Space and other eateries around campus.

Faculty Librarians poster: reuses an image from the First Floor of the Library PrepUP to inform students that there is specialist help they can access.

Other resources poster: links to a Library webpage developed for researchers with a wealth of information.

PC screen: set of pages related to working from home. Everything from 'Getting started with e-resources' to 'Dealing with distractions'.

It's early days for this section to know yet how useful it will be for postgraduate students, but anecdotal feedback so far from those looking at the PrepUP has been very positive. (See box below for some impressions from one visitor.)

Where next for PrepUP?
It would be great to see a mobile, friendly version of the suite – although with its dependence on Flash this could be an issue for Apple products such as the iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad. Apple steadfastly refuses to cater for Flash and that policy doesn't look likely to change soon (Jobs, 2010). This being the case, and Apple being so dominant in the market, a mobile version of PrepUP is almost certainly a long way off. Other possibilities, albeit perhaps somewhat further off, include location aware-augmented reality, so that students using appropriate technology in the real Library spaces, might see additional layers of information as though they were in the PrepUP space and are able to click on various items of interest. Rowell (2008) describes this kind of Web 3.0 development well.

From the Library perspective, we have ideas for potential development, should the larger project want them. We've long mooted the possibility of a cut-down, 'taster' version of some of our workshops, perhaps in a 'basement workshop' (see bottom right of Figure 1). The idea here is

to offer two or three tips that would be useful learning points in their own right, alert students to the possibilities of such workshops, but try not to overwhelm them with too much complexity too early. We've also long considered the possibility of making the Library part of PrepUP more gamelike – perhaps introducing avatars to explore the space and creating puzzles to solve, before moving on to more 'advanced' sections such as the Information Literacy on the First Floor. We think engineering fun in this way can lead to greater engagement. Piatt (2010) writes: 'Although not always applicable to more mundane projects, I think it provides an alternate perspective to consider when planning internal services, which can only be for the better.' Whether we could venture as far as developing something along the lines of Manchester Metropolitan University's alternative reality game might be more questionable (Whitton, 2009), but it would be an interesting avenue to explore.

Moving on from PrepUP, students face the usual rigours of Freshers' activities, induction week and the ongoing stresses of their first semester. The Library has long tried to help spread the load of the information that needs to be imparted by participating at every point we can, from pirates and Daleks at Freshers' Fayre and nifty induction PowerPoints, to an ongoing commitment to be involved with whatever academics feel appropriate. However, there may be room for a more formal interactive package of the kind that Jordon and Badger (2004) describe, which links directly with PrepUP or the 'Shock Absorber Project' of Manchester Metropolitan University (Dawson et al, 2009).

As PrepUP goes from strength to strength, however, the Library remains committed to contributing to the project and enhancing the student experience from their very earliest interactions with the University. As usual, our thanks go particularly to the DCQE staff who so ably convert our ideas into reality and our rough and ready sketches into something usable.

PrepUP: A student experience of the Library tour

To be perfectly honest, while preparing for university, a student's mind does not immediately go to 'how on earth will I find information for my courses?' Generally a student will be occupied with where they will live, who they might be subjected to living with, how close is the accommodation to lecture rooms, and where the nearest pub is. However, the University of Portsmouth has taken the last-minute fears about the academic side of university life and tried to put them in an organised place to be conquered in the student's own time. This, in my experience, is generally a couple of days toward the end of Freshers' Week. Nevertheless, the Library tour on the PrepUP website is an invaluable tool for the student who may not want to trek what could be a twenty-minute journey to the actual Library before classes begin. Instead they can take their laptops, curl up in bed, and take a quick glance around the building, and possibly absorb some of the wealth of information stored here.

Only a super keen student, or perhaps an incredibly scared one, will take the time to explore every last detail of this website. I am neither, but have gone through every aspect of these pages, finding out what the Library is offering to help its students. And it is a lot of help. The most useful part of the entire thing, I found, was the series of students voicing concerns, and by clicking on them you received either a webpage or text specifically answering their questions. However, a negative to this is that there are several pages to go through before getting here, and the attention span of new and nervous students isn't great. You can skip through pages quite easily, without getting bogged down in the detail if you don't wish to. If the student wishes only to take a look around and see the physical interior of the Library, they can stumble onto these goldmines quite by accident. Or so it would seem to them.

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Quick Response Codes

QR Codes have been around for some years now but only seem to have become the mainstream recently. Apparently they are very big in Japan, which may not be so surprising given that they were invented by a Japanese company in 1994 (www.denso-wave.com/qrcode/index-e.html).

So what are they? Basically, a QR Code is a two-dimensional barcode. The 'QR' stands for Quick Response. QR Codes can hold more information than the more ordinary shop-style barcode, they can be read by mobile phones with the right 'app' and they can be decoded into a variety of messages: plain text, a URL, a number to text or phone, email addresses, contact details (VCard), a Google Maps location and so on. It really is that simple. The one on the left below contains the main Library URL – so your mobile device would 'read' this via its camera and then open up a browser to **www.port.ac.uk/library**.

copying, no errors). Give it a go if you have, for example, an iPhone. Download a free app for QR Code reading and point the camera at the code. You don't even have to print the things out – just direct the phone's camera to the screen.

Andrew Walsh from the University of Huddersfield[1] Library has:

- Added them to leaflets to provide additional information or links to the electronic version of the leaflet.
- Put them on (or near) the print journals to link to the electronic versions.
- Placed them by the catalogue to link to the 'text a librarian' service (enquiries via SMS).
- Stuck them to a change machine with links to a video on YouTube describing how to use the machine (perhaps we could do one for the self-issue machines?).
- Added them to shelf ends to provide further information or links to RSS feeds of 'new books in this subject area' In fact, they can be put anywhere in order to link to context-relevant information, such as on the law shelves linking to electronic versions of law legislation.
- Used them on adverts allowing users to sign up to get helpful text messages from the library.
- Added them by means of a short piece of programming, to all the library catalogue records so that instead of scribbling down book details or making a note in your phone or just taking an ordinary picture of the screen, the catalogue record for the book is transferred to the mobile device, again with no copying errors (see http://library.hud.ac.uk for an example of this; search for a book and then scroll down the record to see the code).

The QR Code on the right contains the following text:

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(023) 9284 3224 Twitter: **@timpaa**

It still has room for another 91 characters (if this had been done in VCard format, it would be easily added to an address book: no hand

The University of Huddersfield Library has created a short guide to QR Codes[2] and the University of Bath is also using them in a big way[3]. Bath have also given thoughtful consideration to what hasn't worked, how they're contributing (or not) to learning and whether we should bother with them[4]. Other ideas which might be possible are uses with quizzes and treasure hunts, tour information, even staff 'tagged' with QR Codes on t-shirts. Perhaps we could host discussions of a particular book on Facebook and then link from the physical location of the book to the discussion or place them around the University with links to opening hours/catalogue and so on.

Of course, this is just use in libraries. It's not hard to think of other applications around the University and the 'Further Reading' below has a section on uses in education which you might like to explore. We think you're going to start seeing more of these and while strange at first, we suspect that students will eventually grow used to them and perhaps even prefer to 'note down' information via this technology.

Reading them is straightforward if you have a smart phone with a camera and the right 'app' on it. Free versions of an app to do this can easily be found online. Creating them is also very straightforward.

Simply Google 'qr code generator' and take your pick. For example, **http://qrcode.kaywa.com** does the trick nicely and generates a QR Code you can copy and paste into a document or web page.

All done, it couldn't be easier. Look out for QR Codes in daily life and try some of the 'Further Reading' mentioned below, which is all online, to explore further.

[1] http://librarymobiles.blogspot.com/2009/10/extreme-makeover-transforming-face-of.html
[2] www2.hud.ac.uk/cls/library/usingIT/qrcodes.php
[3] http://blogs.bath.ac.uk/qrcode/2009/03/23/uni-of-bath-library-including-qr-codes-in-catalogue
[4] http://blogs.bath.ac.uk/qrcode/2010/06/03/a-year-in-the-life-of-qr-codes-at-bath

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Further reading

Some web pages with other ideas:
http://lonewolflibrarian.wordpress.com/2009/03/27/using-qr-code-in-libraries032709
www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=QR_Codes
http://bibliothekia.blogspot.com/2008/09/qr-codes-and-libraries.html

A three-part series from the ReadWriteWeb:
www.readwriteweb.com/archives/the_scannable_world_mobile_phones_as_barcode_scanners.php
www.readwriteweb.com/archives/the_scannable_world_part_2_scan_web_printouts.php
www.readwriteweb.com/archives/the_scannable_world_barcodes_scanning_in_the_real_world.php

A video demo complete with a George Clooney look-alike:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=uf_DNHPBV-s

And of course a Wikipedia entry:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/QR_codes

Uses in libraries

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Uses in education

7 things you should know about. . .QR codes. (2009). Available from: **http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7046.pdf**.

Fujimura, N., & Doi, M. (2006). Collecting students' degree of comprehension with mobile phones. *Proceedings of the 34th annual ACM SIGUCCS conference on User services, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada* , 123–127.

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Ramsden, A., 2008. The use of QR codes in Education: A getting started guide for academics. *Working Paper*. University of Bath, Available from: **http://opus.bath.ac.uk/11408/**.

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Slightly more technical

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Rohs, M.& Gfeller, B. (2004). Using camera-equipped mobile phones for interacting with real-world objects. *Advances in Pervasive Computing*, 2004.

And a fascinating idea for helping visually impaired people get about:

Chang, Y.J., Tsai, S.K., Chang, Y.S. & Wang, T.Y. (2007). A novel wayfinding system based on geo-coded qr codes for individuals with cognitive impairments. *Proceedings of the 9th international ACM SIGACCESS conference on Computers and accessibility*. Tempe, Arizona, USA, 231–232.

Teaching and research resources on nineteenth century industrial development in the US

Over the last fifteen years, as and when relevant books became available at moderate cost, it has been possible to progressively enhance the University Library's collection of materials relating to nineteenth century urban and industrial development in the US. While the acquisition strategy is orientated towards the requirements of groups of final-year undergraduates and Master's students in the fields of geography and American studies, it is also apparent that the resources are of value more generally to students interested in comparative economic or business history.

A particular motivation was the belief that students needed to be exposed not only to recent interpretations of past histories and geographies, but also to the views of nineteenth century commentators and to the nature of nineteenth century statistical sources on which these interpretations were (or should have been) based. A further motivation was support for staff research, though in the light of the previous comment, it has long been felt inappropriate to make artificial distinctions between 'research' and 'teaching' materials, a view gratifyingly supported by the wide-ranging bibliographies of final-year student essays.

Rather, the selection of materials has been based on intrinsic scholarly interest and merit, and increasingly, as the collection has developed, on building linked or related series of items that would facilitate comparative study of different industries across various regions of the US. Interestingly, this kind of targeted acquisition of often out-of-print material has been rendered much more feasible since the early 1990s by the rapid rise of the internet bookselling community and the willingness of past and present Faculty Librarians and acquisitions staff to engage with it, a willingness which is much appreciated.

While there are some very general resources, such as microfilms of the *New York Times* for selected spans of years, (including the Civil War era 1861–1865), the majority of the materials are industry - specific. The collections are particularly strong for the iron and steel, mining and railroad sectors, though banking/finance, oil and textiles are also represented. That said, the University Library now also has an excellent collection of general works on nineteenth century immigration to the US, as well as other studies which examine immigrants in specific industries or from different ethnic groups. In line with the basic approach to enhancing the collections described above, contemporary works are complemented by reports of the 1911 Dillingham Commission in Immigration, which are shelved in the Statistical Reference section.

Returning to the specific industrial sectors, the same approach can be seen. For the iron and steel industry, classic histories and geographies by both nineteenth and twentieth century authors are available, accompanied by an excellent series of statistical reports and ironworks directories, published by the American iron and steel industry between 1874 and 1908. A similar picture emerges for aspects of the coal mining industry, whose nineteenth century geography extended from Pennsylvania in the east to Illinois in the west and Alabama in the south. Again, a range of recent studies is available, which covers not only economic aspects, but also trade union issues and the role of immigrant labour. These questions are illuminated by samples of original reports of State Mine Inspectors, to provide both contemporaneous views and evidence of the types of statistical data collection employed at the time.

However, it is perhaps the materials related to the railroad industry that are now becoming most prominent in the collections. This is entirely appropriate, as the railroads expanded to cover 200,000 miles of track across the continental US by 1900 and the industry became one of the leading employers in the nation. During the period of interest, thousands of different railroad companies were chartered, and most of them built and operated their own lines before becoming consolidated into larger regional railroad systems by the beginning of the twentieth century. In the course of this extensive and highly complex set of industrial processes, tens of thousands of annual reports, many of them books in their own right, were published, not to mention investment prospectuses, stockholders' investigations and government investigations of corruption, rate fixing and strikes. Individual states then established their own railroad commissions, which produced even more voluminous reports, leading to an enormous primary printed literature, which in turn has spawned a twentieth century secondary literature of large proportions, across the spectrum from popular volumes for rail enthusiasts through to major research studies by historians, geographers and economists.

Not surprisingly, even the largest of transportation collections in major US libraries, such as at the universities of Stanford and Northwestern, struggle to provide an adequate coverage of such a vast twentieth century industrial (and publishing) phenomenon. In

the UK, the availability of US railroad materials is limited, with the exception of the British Library and the British Library of Political and Economic Science (BLPES) held at the London School of Economics. The former has a reasonable collection of state railroad commission reports and very early pamphlets; the latter has a good collection of annual reports of some representative major railroads, especially from the 1870s onwards. The intention in building up our own resources has therefore been to complement, rather than duplicate, these resources, while providing worthwhile runs of a range of different types of reports that are valuable for teaching and research purposes. This ongoing process has now reached the stage where the University Library holdings of original railroad material in specific areas are important in UK library terms, placing us in third place behind the two national collections listed above. In particular, our holdings of Civil War-era annual reports of New England railroads, housed in the Rare Books Room because they are fragile pamphlets, are the largest in Britain although still small. Our nineteenth century collection of State Railroad Commission reports is approaching that of the British Library in size for the same period, while differing in much of its geographical coverage. In addition to these primary printed materials,

the Library also has a very good range of the classic histories of major railroads, such as the Erie, the Baltimore and Ohio, the Pennsylvania, the New York Central and the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern. These provide excellent case study examples for student essays.

In these financially straitened times, it is also worth mentioning that references to the quality of our Library materials in the areas listed above and in relation to railroads, in particular, now form part of the text of research grant proposals. Two such proposals, focused on nineteenth century railroad topics have already attracted funding from ESRC and JISC. In both cases also, the grants have contained budgetary provision for the acquisition of original nineteenth century railroad printed works and these works will in due course be added to the Library collections, on completion of the research in question.

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RAF Hendon Library trip

The destination for this year's summer Library trip, selected by a ballot of Library staff, was the Library and Archives at the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon.

Twelve intrepid trippers set off in the minibus, driven smoothly and skilfully by David Sherren, arriving at the museum just before midday to report to Peter Elliott, Keeper of the Archives. Peter had also very kindly arranged for free parking for our minibus, always a worry on trips to London.

After coffee and some rather posh biscuits, consumed in the museum's boardroom, Peter gave us an illustrated talk about the history of RAF Hendon from its beginnings as the London Aerodrome in 1911 to the opening of the museum in 1972 and beyond. Then we were conducted upstairs to see the library and archives. The library holds many books and periodicals dating from as far back as 1783. They also have an extremely large collection of technical manuals, maps (including escape maps) and aviation-themed ephemera such as cigarette and tea cards, and calendars.

The archive collection has been built up with donations from organisations and private individuals and contains some of the most interesting items. Peter had displayed a variety of books, manuals and ephemera that he felt would be of interest to us. The displayed artefacts ranged from accounts of ballooning adventures at the turn of the century to letters from Royal Air Force personnel serving in Afghanistan today.

One of the most moving items was a letter from a 20 year-old airman, a Beaufighter pilot in North Africa, to his father – the letter to be opened in the event of his death. He told his father that he had loved every minute of his life and his time in the RAF, and that he would even love his last mission if it came, which was sadly prophetic. It brought home to all of us the sacrifices made by ordinary young people in the theatre of war.

Among other items of interest was a book recording the punishments meted out to recruits of the Royal Flying Corps, the records being kept by Prince Albert George (later King George VI). He was certainly a martinet, one man being dismissed for joining the wrong church parade.

Another fascinating artefact was a black and white photograph from a POW camp in Germany. On the surface it looked like a scene from a dramatic production, but layered in between was a letter written in microscopic handwriting describing life in the camp. One of the writers was Douglas Bader who colourfully recounted his feelings on his situation, and indeed the writer of the second half of the letter

apologised for Bader's language (he used the word 'bloody' now and again). Further round the archive room table we were able to see Bader's aircrew logbook, kept in his own (fairly illegible) handwriting.

We would have loved to have stayed all afternoon just rummaging in some of the interestingly labelled boxes, but we eventually had to leave Peter and his staff to get on with their real work.

By common consent we decided to get a rather late lunch and then have a look around the rest of the museum, which unbelievably is totally free to enter. After a lunch we all followed our own particular spheres of interest, the new Battle of Britain Hall being very popular. Another part of the museum that found favour with our group was the Bomber Hall. Rumours that one of our party had to be physically prised away from an Avro Vulcan are only partially untrue.

At 6pm we all met outside reception for the journey home. Judging by the amount of carrier bags, Airfix models and inflatable aircraft, the gift shop's profits must have soared skywards as quickly as a Harrier jet.

So after a few last group photographs we arrived back in Portsmouth about 8pm, everyone agreeing that it had been one of our most successful trips.

Thanks are due to Peter Elliott of RAF Hendon, David Sherren for his exemplary minibus piloting, Andy Barrow for his organisation, Paula Thompson for her wonderful trip handout complete with plane spotters' guide and also many thanks to the University Librarian for supporting the trip.

By the way, did anyone see the Stealth Bomber? I looked everywhere...

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Leavers' Evening

People come and people go. It has often been remarked that the Library staff resemble nothing so much as actors in Australian soap operas; when one of them leaves, they usually pop up in another.

However, the friends that we are saying farewell to have far more interesting lives to lead than the inhabitants of Ramsay Street. An unprecedented number have found the escape tunnel and made the dash to freedom, seven through the voluntary severance scheme, two through retirement and one by bicycle.

So it was decided to have a 'bit of a do'. This was held in the Library atrium on Thursday 29 July, after the few remaining students had left the premises. Catering was provided by Sally Gissing, an ex-member of staff who left to set up her own highly successful catering company, drinks were provided by the management and the atrium itself was decorated by the artistic and skilful hands of Jenni King, Nina Moscrip and Emily White. Andy Barrow took on the role of mine host at the popular Pageturners Arms and live music (violin and accordion) was provided by Angela Martin and Janet Beale. The stage was set for an evening to remember.

Due to other commitments, only six of the leavers were able to attend. These were June Davey, Sue Doughty, Joyce Forhead, Clare Lewis, Sandra Patching and Chris Martin. The AWOL leavers were Chris Reason, Julia Sharples, Julie Weller and Stephen Yates.

Aided and abetted by Paula Thompson, *Harvest* photographer, your intrepid reporter advanced on the unsuspecting escapees armed only with a notebook and a fake microphone courtesy of Poundland. I had some searching questions to put to the ones that I caught. The answers were interesting and, I thought, quite revealing.

How long have you worked for the University and in which departments?
June Davey: 'I have worked at the Issue Desk since 1981.'
Sue Doughty: 'I have worked in Technical Services for 19 years.'
Clare Lewis: 'I have worked for the University since 2001 in Conference and Lettings, Campus Services and Learning at Work as well as the Issue Desk.'
Chris Martin: 'I started working in the Art College in 1972, then it was joined with the Polytechnic in 1982 and then I moved to the University Library when the Eldon Library was closed in 2003.'
Sandra Patching: 'I have worked for the Polytechnic/University for 40 years (can I just say here dear readers, that looking at Sandra this is hard to believe) in Mercantile House, Wiltshire Building and the Library and have been involved with book ordering and finance as well as other duties.'

What are you planning to do when you leave?
June Davey: 'Relax! Maybe do more cycling.'
Sue Doughty: 'Look after the grandchildren, chill out and have more time for painting abstracts in acrylic.'
Clare Lewis: 'Cycle round the world with Vernon. And a bike...'
Chris Martin: 'Become a student! I'm hoping to do a PhD in Film and Television studies. Also I hope to have more time for writing.'
Sandra Patching: 'Put my feet up, drink and read!'

In your opinion what has been the biggest change in the Library since you started?
Everybody agreed that the biggest change was technology (although not always for the better) and the huge increase in the number of students.

I'm sure that most people here didn't have a childhood yearning for library work. What did you want to be when you grew up?

June Davey: 'A children's nanny or to join the WRENs.'
Sue Doughty: 'A nurse, but my father thought I would be too soft-hearted.'
Clare Lewis: 'A vet!'
Chris Martin: 'A train driver, a bricklayer or a scientist (because of Jules Verne) or a film director.'
Sandra Patching: 'I'm quite happy to have lived my life as it has turned out.'

When I had stopped annoying my ex-colleagues, the University Librarian, Roisin Gwyer, called us all together to say a few words. In an affectionate and warm speech, Roisin told us that between them the leavers had over 170 years of experience. She also remarked on the variety of talents that were hidden under the guise of unassuming library people. There were artists, writers, round-the-world cyclists, cooks, genealogists, quizzers, local historians, and many other skills and hobbies. After an appreciative toast, the leavers posed for pictures next to their celebration cake and then more drinking, eating and reminiscing followed, accompanied by lively tunes on the accordion and violin from Angela and Janet. At this point, I think I saw some rather random dancing but I can be persuaded not to mention it by a small bribe!

All in all, it was a rather splendid evening and a fitting send off for our valued friends and colleagues. We hope that they will come back and visit, looking ten years younger I'm sure, to regale us with tales of the 'life outside'.

One final note from the management. In future all persons leaving the premises for the last time will be frisked for staff room teaspoons!

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