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Published in:
Education for Information

Publication date:
2005

Citation for published version (APA):
Tedd, L. A. (2005). 40 years of library and information studies education in Wales. *Education for Information*, 1-8. http://hdl.handle.net/2160/186

Guest Editorial

40 years of Library and Information Studies education in Wales

This issue of *Education for Information* is a 'special' one to celebrate 40 years of library and information science education in Aberystwyth, Wales.

The setting up of the College of Librarianship Wales (CLW) in 1964 was, for many people, the realisation of a dream. The initial ideas of a "school for library training" can be traced back as far as 1917. However, it was the appearance of two reports in 1959 and 1962 (generally known as the Roberts report [1] and the Bourdillon report [2]) that provided the necessary impetus for the "establishment in Wales of a school of librarianship providing full-time courses" in order to meet the need for libraries in bilingual communities in Wales to have staff "acquainted with the Welsh language and well versed in the history and literature of Wales."

However, there were many problems to be overcome. Some people, including staff from the UK's Library Association (LA) and the Association of British Library Schools, felt that there was no need for another educational establishment dealing with librarianship in the UK - by 1963 there were 11 schools of librarianship and information science (LIS), the one at University College London being the oldest having been established in 1919. Professional opinion in Wales was also against the setting up of the school. After consulting its members, the Welsh Branch of the LA concluded that there would be insufficient students to warrant a school in Wales and in March 1963 the Association of Assistant Librarians (AAL) for South Wales submitted a critical memorandum arguing that "The art and technique of librarianship is the same in any language - German, English or Welsh". Also people felt that if there was to be a college to educate librarians in Wales it should be based in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales, situated in the south east of the country close to the border with England, and not in the proposed location of Aberystwyth, a small town on the west coast of Wales. This argument was similar to that which had raged in the early 1900s on the question of the location of the National Library of Wales which finally resulted in its establishment in Aberystwyth. Indeed the AAL memorandum noted that "As for the 'advantage of Aberystwyth, with its variety of libraries', the claim was 'surely exaggerated', indeed 'ludicrous'".

  Finally, with much help from some visionary senior officers of Cardiganshire County Council (including the County Librarian) and with the support of the then University College of Wales (UCW) in Aberystwyth (and its Principal, Thomas Parry), it was decided that a monotechnic, the first, and only one, for the study of librarianship in the UK should be established, and at Aberystwyth. The plan was for a small college with an intake of up to 30 students per year and a full-time staff of three: one 'head' and two lecturers. It was also felt the new establishment should operate as part of the Birmingham Library School, which would undertake to the train the two lecturers and that the Birmingham School might second one of its senior staff for a period with a view to succession in due course by a Welsh librarian.

        The appointment of Frank Hogg, then Deputy Head of the School of Librarianship in Manchester, as the first, and indeed only, Principal of CLW, was made in February 1964. At his interview Hogg made his vision crystal clear – he saw not a small localised college catering merely for the needs of Welsh librarianship but a college that would appeal to prospective students from all over the world. As New [3] states, the principle which Hogg adopted was " to think big, for only by being big

could CLW prosper." Although at the start there was no land allocated to the college, no buildings, no equipment or potential staff and a very limited budget, the CLW Board of Governors approved Hogg's mission to establish a quality college with excellent resources. Four senior lecturers were the first staff to be appointed and they were made heads of the four planned departments within the college: Welsh Studies (Norman Roberts), Administrative Studies (Ronald Sturt), Bibliographical Studies (Denis Grogan) and Information Retrieval (David Batty). Together these five people devised innovative courses, began the process of planning a brand new campus and in October 1964 the first 12 postgraduate students were enrolled. This 'top downwards' method of appointing staff ensured senior staff of high quality at an early stage in the development of the college, and these people were in a position to then appoint appropriate junior staff members.

By 1968 CLW had become the largest library school in the UK with over 400 students and 30 or so full-time academic teaching staff plus a number of visiting lecturers from Australia and North America. A joint honours degree programme (B.Lib.) in librarianship was introduced through a co-operative venture with the UCW, Aberystwyth. As David Stoker, a member of the academic staff in the department since 1987, describes : " This was the first undergraduate 'honours' (as opposed to a 'general' degree course) in librarianship to be offered by a UK institution" [4]. Students combined courses at CLW with a traditional 'academic' subject taught by one of the departments of UCW within the faculties of Arts, Science, Social Science, Education and Law. Hogg, in describing the developments in library education and research to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' (IFLA) annual conference in 1969 notes that "it was no longer sufficient to train librarians only in professional techniques… but it is now essential to inform these techniques with an awareness of the nature and heritage of the society that librarianship serves and the knowledge it controls" [5]. By 1972 there were 38 full-time academic teaching staff responsible for delivering the B.Lib. course, the one-year postgraduate diploma course, a 2-year Professional Studies course and a research degree of Master of Librarianship (M.Lib.), and CLW had become one of the largest schools of librarianship in Europe.

The initial challenges of accommodation were solved in the 1970s with the construction of a purpose built campus for CLW and its sister local authority-governed monotechnic, the Welsh Agricultural College (WAC). The purpose built 'library of librarianship' was the first building to be opened on the new campus in 1971; other buildings including a lecture theatre, refectory, halls of residence and an academic block of staff and administrative offices soon followed.

The library (now known as the Thomas Parry Library in honour of the Principal of UCW 1958-1969) soon gained a worldwide reputation for its collections. In describing the library collection at CLW, Wise notes that "the acquisition policy aims to collect comprehensively from English-language material, and to select important foreign language materials, especially those in European languages" [6]. In addition to the main collection of conventional publications, special collections of materials directly concerned with librarianship were made available, including library annual reports, library building plans, manufacturers' brochures and press cuttings as well as a collection of library furniture and equipment. The library was also developed as a teaching 'laboratory' for CLW's students using its special facilities including a Cataloguing Laboratory, a Reference area, a collection of children's books and a

Welsh collection to reflect CLW's special interest in the development of LIS in Wales. By 1977 the library had a staff of 12 professional librarians, a language specialist and translator, and a Media Services Unit (MSU) with a Director and Assistant Director as well as 11 clerical and technical staff. The MSU provided technical advice and production facilities (for tape-slide programmes, videotapes, audio recordings) for teaching staff as well as demonstrations, instruction and supervision in the production and useof non-book media for students.

The international character of CLW was evident from the start. At the time of the opening of the college Hogg gave a talk on the BBC World Service - the first ever about a British school of librarianship - and his invitation "we would welcome students from overseas" was heard, and acted upon, by many. A major objective of Frank Hogg's was to maintain the closest possible contact between CLW and the library profession, not just in the UK, but worldwide. By being big CLW was able to justify the appointment of specialist non-teaching staff such as the Liaison and Training Officers (LTOs) who formed the Liaison and Training Services (LTS). LTS staff were responsible for arranging fieldwork visits where students would work in a library or information unit for a period of two months, and study tours, where students would visit a variety of libraries and information-related organisations in a specific area (e.g. London, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow), as well as the month-long orientation courses for overseas students to acquaint them with the British LIS environment. LTOs were also responsible for organising short courses for UK and overseas librarians, careers guidance and longer term visits by overseas lecturers. During the 1970s and 1980s there were typically six LTOs, including a Director. Also at this time, many academic staff were seconded to work in libraries, or library schools, in many countries – including Brazil, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Palestine and Peru. Specific links with Africa are outlined by Evans and include:

- the Seriatim scheme which involved eight members of staff being seconded for a total of 14 visits (at no less that one term's duration) to the universities of Ibadan and Ahmadu Bello in Nigeria;
- short courses on school librarianship run in Zambia and Sierra Leone;
- consultancies in planning national library and documentation schemes in Libya and the Sudan;
- the setting up of a library assistants' training programme in Kenya for Unesco [7].

Such international activity was possible at that time as by 1980 there were some 45 full-time teaching staff employed at CLW.

The international standing of CLW was also greatly enhanced in 1973 with the setting up of the first International Graduate Summer School (IGSS) in LIS which was then held annually between 1973 and 2001 [8]. During 1969 Frank Hogg had been a visiting international professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh in the US and there discussed ideas of a possible international summer school with North American colleagues, Harold Lancour and Clem Harrison. The design of the summer school from 1973 until 1990 (with Frank Hogg as its Director or Co-Director) remained fairly constant with students being expected to study two courses (from a menu of between five and twelve courses on offer at any one time) during the eight-week long summer school. The numbers of students attending IGSS has varied greatly. At the first school in 1973 there were 21 students with most (15) from North America and the remainder from Ethiopia, Greece, Iran, Japan and Kuwait. Until the mid-1980s there were usually

between 40 and 55 students participating with 20 to 30 countries represented each year although in 1978 there was a record number of 90 students, 15 of whom were from Iran. Over 1,000 students from 70 countries participated in IGSS over the years and many of these have encouraged colleagues to come and study further at Aberystwyth. IGSS was an amazing experience for both faculty and students and provided unique opportunities for professional and personal development for all concerned.

After 25 years as an independent establishment CLW became a constituent department of the university in Aberystwyth (now known as the University of Wales Aberystwyth (UWA)) in 1989, firstly as the Department of Information and Library Studies (DILS) and more recently as the Department of Information Studies (DIS). The first Head of DILS, Hywel Roberts, outlines how the 312 funded places for UK and European Union students (awarded by the then University Grants Committee to DILS) as well as the ability to recruit large numbers of overseas students ensured that 26 teaching posts within DILS were funded on a permanent basis [9]. One effect of the merger was that the 'library of librarianship' lost its very close links with the Department and became the responsibility of the University's Librarian and in due time housed the 'agricultural' collection of the university as WAC also became part of UWA and the Institute of Rural Sciences. The library however maintains its strong and deep collection of international LIS materials and is used by many researchers from all over the world. Hywel Roberts was convinced that crucial developments in the education and training of information professionals could be achieved through distance and flexible learning modes and that such a move was essential if DILS was to survive as a separate entity within UWA. The provision of distance learning courses was not entirely new as a specialist masters course on the management of library and information services had been introduced in CLW in the mid-1980s and in 1990 this was followed by another specialist masters course in the area of health information management. In 1993, with specialist funding from the UK Higher Education Funding Council's Flexible Learning Initiative, a specialist team of staff was recruited to form the Open Learning Unit (OLU) within DILS. The OLU staff assisted teaching colleagues in the Department in the development of distance learning courses for an undergraduate programme leading to a B.Sc. (Econ.) in LIS. The first intake of 25 undergraduate distance learners started their programme in December 1993 and since then the Department has enrolled between 50 and 60 undergraduate distance learners every year. Distance learners typically are working in libraries and information services throughout the world and come to Aberystwyth once a year over three years for a week-long intensive study school. Since 1998 there have been sufficient numbers of Irish students to warrant holding specialist study schools each summer in Dublin. In order to be successful the OLU staff had to raise awareness of distance learning needs within the University and implement flexible methods for module payment, deferral procedures, self-set assignment deadlines and so on. In addition teaching staff needed to be trained in the development and publishing of distance learning materials and in using the systems developed to support students at a distance. Gray [10] explains how she has moved from being a distance learner to co-author of the two specialist modules on rare books available as optional courses for the undergraduates. A range of specialist modules is available for distance learners including Music Librarianship with Ledsham [11] and children's literature with Lonsdale [12].

The current head of DIS, Gwilym Huws, recognised that further distance learning programmes were a natural progression and so, since 1998, a further range of

masters courses have been developed in: Information and Library Studies, Records Management and in Archive Administration . In 2004 there were over 900 distance learning students (almost 600 masters and 320 undergraduates) currently studying within DIS. In addition, the teaching of full-time undergraduate courses in LIS and postgraduate courses in LIS, information management, information systems, records management and archives administration continues. The international 'flavour' of the student body has been maintained with students from some 40 countries being currently enrolled on the various courses. Staff, too, still continue the CLW tradition of links with the profession locally in Wales, nationally within the UK and overseas. For instance, in 1999-2002 a number of staff were involved in a European Union-funded project to assist in the professional development of LIS staff in Slovakia [13] and from 2001-3 staff were involved in the provision of training material (written in both English and Welsh) for public librarians in Wales as part of the People's Network [14].

At the masters study school in September 2004 a day of celebrations was held for the 40th anniversary and was attended by current and former students as well as current and former members of staff. Three former students were invited to talk to the current students about their life after CLW. Firstly, Gwenda Sippings (joint honours with Education 1975-8, and in 1986 a distance learning masters) now Director of Information Resources at the Inland Revenue talked about "From CLW to the Revenue: a librarian's journey". Secondly, Andrew Green (postgraduate student 1974-5) talked about "Developments in academic and national libraries" having worked in academic libraries in Cardiff, Sheffield and Swansea before being appointed as Librarian of the National Library of Wales. The final speaker of the afternoon was Linda Tomos (joint honours with History 1970-3), recently appointed as Director of CyMAL, Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales who covered "Creating CyMAL: the future for museums, archives and libraries in Wales". Further talks were given later in the evening by the Vice Chancellor of UWA, by Frank Hogg, Gwilym Huws, and a former member of CLW staff, Ross Shimmon, recently retired as the Secretary General of IFLA.

It seemed fitting that an issue of *Education for Information* should celebrate this 40th anniversary as the journal was established in 1983 by Fred Guy (postgraduate student 1970-1) and Andy Large, both then members of the CLW teaching staff. Indeed the very first paper published in *Education for Information* was by one of the initial members of the CLW staff, Denis Grogan [15]. The current co-editor, Dick Hartley, also has strong Aberystwyth connections, having been a postgraduate student (1982-3) and then a lecturer in the department (1985-1994). This issue brings together a number of authors with past or present connections with CLW/DILS/DIS.

The first paper is by Ian Johnson, currently Professor and Associate Dean at the Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University in Scotland, and who was the Director of LTS at CLW from 1979-1989. The paper identifies the critical success factors that contribute to the successful initiation of international collaborative projects. The international theme is carried on in the second paper from three authors at Charles Sturt University (CSU) in Australia who describe their experiences in providing distance education for LIS students in Asia. One of the authors of this paper, Gayner Eyre, was the Departmental Administrator at DILS (1994-8) before leaving to become a Lecturer in Library and Information Management at CSU (and who is returning to Aberystwyth in 2005 as a Lecturer in DIS). The third paper provides an overview of the changing nature of LIS work in the

UK over the last 40 years and, is based on the dissertation carried out by one author, Anne Andrews (full-time masters student 2001-2 and now Executive Assistant to the Director of Information Services and Systems at King's College London) and supervised by the other author, David Ellis, who joined the staff of the department as a professor in 2000. The fourth paper, written by Geraint Evans (a former postgraduate student and Lecturer in the department since 1974 and who has much experience as the Postgraduate Admissions Tutor)) is also national in scope and describes the changing nature of funding for postgraduate education in LIS in the UK. The penultimate paper is written by Mary Ellis a former undergraduate student at Aberystwyth and, until her appointment in mid-2004 as the Archives Development Officer at CyMAL, Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales, the team leader for the Archives Administration and Records Management postgraduate courses within the department. This paper provides an insight into the current state of academic research within archive administration in the UK. The final paper of this special issue is by Hugh Preston, a former postgraduate student and a Lecturer in the department since 1992, and the team leader for the LIS masters courses; it provides a detailed look at the distance learning postgraduate students and courses within the department.

Former students and staff from CLW/DILS/DIS continue the strong tradition of involvement with the LIS profession in Wales, the UK and in very many countries around the world. It has been a story of remarkable success based on the visionary ideals of the early staff and leading to the world-class department of today. We hope that this selection of papers, covering a number of themes from the local, to the national and the international, proves interesting for our readers and also reflects some of the work of LIS education in Aberystwyth over the last 40 years.

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